



MEDIATION EFFORTS IN POLYANDRY CASES IN WEST KOTAWARINGIN REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Polyandry, although rare, is a complex and controversial phenomenon in Indonesia, including in West Kotawaringin District. These cases often involve conflicts of law, religious norms and customs that require specialized resolution approaches. This article aims to explore the effectiveness of mediation as a dispute resolution method in polyandry cases in the region. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research relies on in-depth interviews with perpetrators, mediators, religious leaders, customary leaders, as well as analysis of relevant legal documents. The results show that mediation has significant potential in resolving polyandry cases, especially as this approach prioritizes dialogue, mutual understanding and adjustment to local norms. However, the success of mediation is often constrained by differences in legal interpretation between adat and religion, lack of mediator capacity, and resistance from the parties involved. Nonetheless, some cases were successfully resolved through adaptive mediation, resulting in solutions that were more acceptable to all parties. The research concludes that mediation can be an effective alternative in resolving polyandry disputes if supported by trained mediators, collaboration between stakeholders, and a culture-based approach. Strategic recommendations include improving the training of local mediators and strengthening the integration between customary, religious and state laws to create sustainable solutions.

Keywords: *Polyandry, Mediation, Customary Law, Religious Law West Kotawaringin Regency*

INTRODUCTION

Polyandry, the practice of a woman having more than one husband at the same time, is a controversial phenomenon in Indonesia (Izzati, 2021). From the perspective of Islamic religious law, polyandry is prohibited as it contradicts the principle of monogynous marriage for women. Customary law, which is diverse in various parts of Indonesia, generally also does not accommodate this practice because it is considered to violate the norms of public decency (Adi, 2012). Meanwhile, Indonesian positive law through Law Number 1 Year 1974 on Marriage and the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), explicitly prohibits polyandry and considers it legally

invalid (Meiditya, 2018). Therefore, polyandry cases often raise complex social, legal and cultural issues.

In West Kotawaringin District, the phenomenon of polyandry, although rare, still occurs and causes polemics in the community. Economic factors, social pressure, and a weak understanding of religious and state law are often the main triggers for the emergence of these cases (Sakina, 2017). In addition, local cultural norms that sometimes conflict with religious and state laws exacerbate the situation. Polyandry cases in the region involve not only legal issues, but also internal family conflicts and inter-community tensions, thus requiring a resolution approach that involves all these aspects (Sahputra, 2023). The social, cultural and legal implications of polyandry are significant. Socially, the practice can stigmatize women and their families, create tension in domestic relationships, and affect community harmony (Saadah, 2022). From a cultural perspective, polyandry is often seen as violating local values that uphold marital fidelity. Legally, polyandry cases can result in issues such as the legal status of children, inheritance rights, and the validity of the marriage (Maswandi, 2020). This complexity demands a solution that is not only legal, but also culturally-based and dialogue-based.

Based on these problems, this research formulates three main questions. Firstly, what causes the emergence of polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin Regency? Second, how is mediation used in resolving these cases? Third, what are the challenges and opportunities faced in applying mediation as a conflict resolution method? These questions form the basis for analyzing the phenomenon of polyandry and its resolution in the region. This research aims to examine the mediation mechanism applied in polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin Regency. In addition, this research also seeks to analyze the factors that influence the success or failure of the mediation process. The results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations to improve the effectiveness of mediation as a conflict resolution method, especially those involving complex issues such as polyandry.

By integrating legal, social and cultural analyses, this research provides a comprehensive view of polyandry in West Kotawaringin District. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to the development of more adaptive and effective mediation policies and practices, thus creating solutions that are not only in accordance with the law, but also accepted by the community at large.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon of polyandry in West Kotawaringin Regency and the mediation mechanism applied in resolving its cases. This approach was chosen because it is relevant to understanding complex and contextual phenomena through in-depth and interpretative data mining (Handoko et al., 2024). The research was conducted in West Kotawaringin Regency, a region with distinctive cultural and social diversity. This district was chosen due to the emergence of several polyandry cases that attracted public attention as well as the complexity of the legal, customary and religious dynamics involved in their resolution. This local context is a relevant study area to explore the effectiveness of mediation as a conflict resolution approach.

The research subjects included various parties who were directly or indirectly involved in the polyandry case. The main subjects included the polyandrous perpetrators, the family members involved, the mediator who handled the case, traditional leaders who have an important role in the local community, and religious leaders who provided views and advice based on religious law. Collecting data from these various perspectives allows for a more comprehensive and balanced analysis. The data collection method consisted of two main techniques. Firstly, in-depth interviews were conducted with all research subjects to explore their views, experiences and interpretations of polyandry cases and the mediation process (Achjar et al., 2023). This technique provides rich and in-depth qualitative data. Second, document studies were conducted by analyzing legal decisions, mediation data, social reports, and other relevant documents (Pugu et al., 2024). This data provides additional context and validation to the information obtained through interviews.

The data analysis technique used was thematic analysis. This process involved identifying, organizing and interpreting the main themes that emerged from the data collected (Rifa'i, 2023). Analysis was conducted systematically through stages of coding, categorization, and in-depth interpretation to reveal patterns, relationships, and meanings of the data (Saleh, 2017). This approach allows the research to explore the complex dynamics of polyandry cases and the role of mediation in their resolution. With this research method, an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of polyandry in West Kotawaringin Regency, the mediation mechanism applied, and the challenges and opportunities faced in resolving the conflict is expected. This structured

approach is designed to produce findings that are valid, reliable, and relevant to both local and academic contexts (Judijanto et al., 2024).

RESULTS

Factors Causing Polyandry Cases in West Kotawaringin District

This research reveals a number of complex factors behind the emergence of polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District. Economic pressure is one of the main causes, especially in areas with significant poverty levels. Women involved in polyandry cases are often in difficult economic conditions, where one source of income from the main spouse is considered insufficient to fulfil the basic needs of the family (Nurseha, 2024). In this situation, polyandry is seen as an alternative to getting financial support from more than one partner, even though it violates religious and legal norms. In addition, unresolved household conflicts are another driving factor. Issues such as domestic violence, disharmony, and the husband's inability to fulfil the emotional or material needs of the family are often the main triggers for women to seek other relationships outside of official marriage (Simanjuntak, 2013). This condition is exacerbated by women's lack of access to family counselling or mediation services that can help resolve conflicts constructively.

Another contributing factor is the lack of understanding of religious and positive law. Many individuals involved in polyandry cases do not fully understand the legal implications of their actions, both according to Islamic law and Law No. 1/1974 on Marriage. This ignorance causes them to ignore formal rules in resolving marriage problems (Susanto, 2007). Equally important is the influence of local culture, which in some aspects shows flexibility towards the interpretation of marriage norms. In some communities in West Kotawaringin District, customs do not strictly prohibit polyandry, as long as it is practiced in private and does not cause scandal in the community. This approach often contradicts the principles of religious law and state law, creating moral and legal dilemmas for the individuals involved (Millah & Jahar, 2021). The findings show that polyandry in West Kotawaringin District is not solely a legal issue, but also a complex social and cultural phenomenon. Therefore, resolution efforts must involve a holistic approach that includes economic, social, cultural and legal education aspects to create a sustainable solution.

Mediation Process Applied

The mediation process in resolving polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District shows unique characteristics, with an emphasis on a dialogue-based approach and the participation of all parties involved. The process begins with the initial identification of the problem through in-depth interviews with the polyandrous perpetrator, the family, and other parties involved, such as the husband, mediator, and community leaders (Siregar, 2021). This interview aims to understand the root causes of the problem, the motives behind the act of polyandry, and the expectations of each party towards the resolution of the case. The next stage is a joint meeting facilitated by a mediator, who usually consists of traditional leaders, religious leaders, or individuals trusted by the local community. The mediation is conducted in an informal yet structured setting, creating a safe space for all parties to express their views and feelings without pressure or threats.

In these meetings, the mediator plays an important role as a facilitator, who not only directs the dialogue but also bridges the different views of the parties. The role of traditional and religious leaders was very dominant in the mediation. Traditional leaders provide views based on local cultural values upheld by the community, such as the importance of maintaining family and community harmony. On the other hand, religious leaders provided guidance based on Islamic law, emphasizing the prohibition against polyandry, and offering solutions in accordance with religious teachings. This combination of customary and religious perspectives provided a strong normative dimension to the mediation process. The solutions proposed in mediation varied, depending on the context of the case and the consent of the parties involved (Wibisono et al., 2024). The most common solution is the cancellation of the additional marriage, which is considered invalid under both religious and state law. In some cases, mediation also results in amicable settlements, such as compensation or economic support for the woman, to avoid further conflict (Prayoga & Rinaldi, 2023). In addition, mediation often ends with a mutually agreed upon written agreement to ensure that all parties adhere to the outcome that has been formulated.

However, the mediation process also has challenges, such as the lack of formal training for mediators in handling complex cases such as polyandry, as well as resistance from some parties who do not fully accept the results of the mediation. Nonetheless, this dialogue-based approach is considered effective because it prioritizes peaceful settlements that are accepted by

the local community, rather than litigation approaches that tend to be coercive and can trigger new conflicts. The mediation process implemented in West Kotawaringin District reflects local values that value dialogue, deliberation and social harmony. The results show that collaboration between customary law, religion and community-based mediation approaches has great potential to resolve conflicts in a sustainable manner. However, strengthening the capacity of mediators and clearer regulatory support are still needed to increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of this mediation process.

Mediation Success Rate in Resolving Cases

The results show that the success rate of mediation in resolving polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District varies, depending on a number of key factors. These factors include the complexity of the case, the involvement and willingness of the parties involved to compromise, and the mediator's capacity to facilitate the settlement process (S. H. A. R. D. Harahap, 2024). In general, mediation has been successful in preventing the escalation of conflicts into the formal legal realm and offering quicker and more socially acceptable solutions. Several polyandry cases were successfully resolved through amicable agreements, where all parties involved, including the perpetrator, legal spouse, family, and mediator, reached a mutual understanding (Tarantang, 2020). In these cases, successful mediation is often underpinned by the willingness of all parties to prioritize family interests and maintain social harmony. Such settlements usually involve practical solutions such as additional marriage cancellations, the provision of economic compensation, or written agreements guaranteeing the parties' commitment to abide by the outcome of the mediation.

However, there are also cases that do not reach a solution due to several obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the refusal of one of the parties to accept the outcome of the mediation, especially if the proposed solution is considered detrimental or incompatible with their interests. Another obstacle is the mismatch between the solution reached through mediation and positive legal rules in Indonesia, such as the legal status of the marriage or the rights of children born from an illegitimate marriage. This mismatch often creates a dilemma between maintaining social harmony based on customary and religious norms, and complying with the formal legal framework. The success of mediation is generally influenced by the mediator's expertise in maintaining a balance between customary norms, religious law and state law (Rois & Qomaro, 2023). An inclusive approach, where the mediator takes into account the perspectives of all

parties and offers equitable solutions, has proven to be more effective in producing satisfactory outcomes. In addition, the support of community leaders, such as traditional and religious leaders, plays an important role in legitimizing the mediation outcome.

Although success rates vary, mediation in West Kotawaringin District is considered quite effective as an alternative to formal litigation for conflict resolution. Mediation not only reduces the cost and time of resolution, but also prevents the escalation of conflicts that have the potential to damage social relations in the community. However, to increase the effectiveness of mediation in the future, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of mediators, align mediation outcomes with the positive legal framework, and develop mediation guidelines that can be applied consistently across cases. Thus, the findings suggest that although mediation has its challenges, it remains a viable and relevant solution in dealing with polyandry cases in communities with legal, social and cultural complexities such as West Kotawaringin District.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of Mediation Effectiveness Based on Legal Principles and Customary Norms

Mediation in the resolution of polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District has shown significant effectiveness, largely due to its balanced approach between customary law, religious law and state law. The mediation process applied in this region aims not only to resolve conflicts between individuals, but also to maintain social harmony in a broader context. This is reflected in the application of mediation principles that prioritize open dialogue and peaceful resolution based on local values valued by the local community. This dialogue-based approach allows all parties involved in the polyandry case, including the perpetrator, the family, and the community, to express their opinions and negotiate in an impartial atmosphere (Huda & Dodi, 2020). Traditional and religious leaders played a key role in facilitating these conversations, providing perspectives rooted in local culture and religious teachings. Customary leaders often provide solutions based on the familiar principle of *musyawarah mufakat* in their traditions, while religious leaders use Islamic law to ensure that the mediation outcome remains in line with religious teachings, particularly in relation to the prohibition against the practice of polyandry.

However, despite the balance between customary norms and religious law, differences in interpretation between customary law and state law often give rise to significant legal dilemmas. One of the main issues that arise is the validity of the marriage and the status of the children

born from the marriage. Indonesian state law, through the Marriage Law, stipulates that a valid marriage can only be between a man and a woman, while polyandry is expressly not recognized (Triyana, 2023). This conflicts with some of the more lenient customary practices in terms of marriage norms, which allow for polygamous or polyandrous relationships among local communities, provided that it does not lead to open conflict within the community. On the other hand, the status of children born from polyandry is also a complicated legal issue. State law stipulates that children born outside of a legal marriage, whether according to religious or state law, can face issues related to inheritance rights and legal recognition of the child's status (Matnuh, 2016). Meanwhile, customary norms in some areas of West Kotawaringin are more flexible and tend to prioritize family settlements to ensure children's welfare, although these are not necessarily recognized by state law.

These legal dilemmas require the mediator to have a broad understanding of not only customary and religious norms, but also applicable state laws (Sinaga, 2020). Often, mediators endeavor to bridge these differences by promoting the best interests of all parties, especially in relation to the rights of women and children. However, the agreements reached in mediation often emphasize social solutions that are more acceptable to the local community rather than ensuring compliance with more formal legal provisions. Overall, mediation in the context of polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District can be said to be effective in creating solutions that are socially acceptable to the local community, but there are major challenges related to the adjustment between mediated solutions and state law. The success of mediation is not only measured by conflict resolution, but also how customary and religious values can be integrated with state law, maintaining social harmony and ensuring the protection of the rights of the individuals involved (H. S. M. Harahap et al., 2022). As a recommendation, updates are needed in legal regulations that can better accommodate local social and cultural dynamics without ignoring human rights and higher legal provisions.

Key Challenges in Implementing Mediation

The implementation of mediation in polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District faced several significant challenges, both in terms of socio-cultural aspects, mediator capacity, and trust in the mediation process itself. One of the biggest challenges is the cultural resistance that arises when the solution proposed by the mediator is considered to be contrary to local norms or local customs (Azra, 2023). Communities in West Kotawaringin District have strong

traditions and culture, and in some cases, customary norms are more flexible than state and religious laws when it comes to marriage. Therefore, solutions proposed in mediation often face resistance because they are not in line with long-accepted local traditions or values of the community. This complicates problem solving, as mediation that does not take into account local norms may be perceived as an outside intervention that undermines the social harmony that has been maintained over the years.

The lack of mediator capacity is also a major challenge in the implementation of mediation. Although mediators in West Kotawaringin District usually consist of respected adat and religious figures, not all mediators have a deep understanding of both positive and religious law. Most mediators focus more on resolutions based on customary and religious principles, but they lack training in understanding the more complex provisions of state law, such as regulations on marital status or the rights of children born from illegitimate relationships (Lukito, 2008). The inability to harmonize these two legal systems - the more flexible customary law with the more rigid state law - often leads to disagreements between the parties involved. For example, issues of the legality of marriage and the status of children are often not given enough attention, so mediation can end up with solutions that are not legally valid or cause legal problems later on.

In addition, distrust of the mediation process is another obstacle that needs to be considered. Some parties, especially those who feel aggrieved or dissatisfied with the initial outcome of the mediation, often doubt the fairness and objectivity of the mediator. This distrust can arise due to a number of factors, such as a feeling that the mediation is more favorable to one of the parties, or that the decisions made are not fully in accordance with applicable legal principles. In some cases, this distrust can even lead to a refusal to follow the outcome of the mediation, which hinders the achievement of the desired agreement. In addition, parties often feel that mediation does not have as strong a legal effect as a judgment issued by a court. Thus, they choose not to continue with mediation and take the case to formal legal channels, even though it may worsen social relations in the community.

These challenges emphasize that while mediation has great potential to resolve polyandry cases more peacefully and efficiently, its success is highly dependent on the mediator's ability to overcome cultural conflicts, improve legal capacity, and build community trust in the mediation process itself. To overcome these challenges, efforts are needed to strengthen training

for mediators to comprehensively understand the applicable legal systems - customary, religious and state laws - and to introduce more transparent and fair mediation mechanisms to gain greater legitimacy in the eyes of all parties. In addition, the success of mediation also depends on a more inclusive and participatory approach, where all parties feel valued and are given space to express their views freely without fear or pressure.

Comparison with Similar Cases in Other Regions

In comparing polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District with other regions in Indonesia, there are notable differences in the approaches taken in the mediation process. In West Kotawaringin, mediation often features the role of traditional and religious leaders as the main mediators. This approach is driven by the strength of cultural and religious norms in the local community. Traditional and religious leaders are considered to have strong moral and social legitimacy to mediate conflicts, so the solutions they propose are more easily accepted by all parties, as they are considered to be those who best understand the social, cultural and spiritual conditions of the community. In addition, an open dialog-based approach led by traditional and religious leaders enables a more harmonious agreement to be reached without damaging social relations between individuals or groups within the community.

On the other hand, in many other parts of Indonesia, mediation processes are often more formal and involve government institutions or even religious courts. These processes tend to be more structured and standardized, involving clearer legal regulations and oversight from the authorities. In some areas, mediation is conducted by official authorities, such as dispute resolution agencies or religious courts, which focus on the application of positive law, with little room for local customary and religious norms (Munawaroh, 2013). This approach sometimes focuses more on formal legal conformity than cultural and social aspects, which often leads to tension or resistance from those who prioritize social harmony based on custom and religion.

The success of mediation in West Kotawaringin District shows that a local community-based approach can be more effective in dealing with culturally and socially sensitive cases, such as polyandry. This approach allows for solutions that are more flexible, inclusive, and easily accepted by the community as they are guided by local values that are closer to their daily lives (Paramansyah & Parojai, 2024). In contrast, in other areas that rely on formal approaches, while they may guarantee justice from a legal perspective, they often ignore cultural aspects, which can lead to social tensions and rejection. The mediation process conducted by traditional

and religious leaders provides an advantage for communities that prefer to settle through deliberation and consensus rather than through legal channels that can worsen social relations and cause negative stigma towards the individuals involved.

However, while local community-based approaches have shown significant success, serious attention needs to be paid to the standardization of mediation procedures to ensure that the mediation process remains compliant with the national legal framework. In some cases, solutions reached through community-based mediation may not be compatible with positive law, especially in terms of marital status and the rights of children born from marriages that are not legal under the state (Widayati, 2024). Therefore, there needs to be an effort to harmonize the results of mediation with state law, both through education and training for mediators and the development of mediation guidelines that are more structured and accommodate legal, social and cultural aspects simultaneously.

Overall, while the local community-based approach proved effective in West Kotawaringin, lessons learned from other areas where formal mediation has been implemented provide important insights into the need to increase the capacity of mediators to integrate customary, religious and state law. Thus, mediation in the context of polyandry cases can be more holistic and comprehensive, and more capable of creating equitable and sustainable solutions. This research provides important insights into the effectiveness of mediation in resolving polyandry cases, while identifying challenges and opportunities to improve this process in the future. Stronger integration between customary, religious and positive law is needed to create more sustainable solutions.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that mediation in polyandry cases in West Kotawaringin District has significant effectiveness, mainly due to the dialog-based approach involving traditional and religious leaders as key mediators. The success of mediation often depends on the mediator's ability to accommodate the strong customary and religious norms in the local community. However, the main challenges faced are cultural resistance to solutions that are perceived to be contrary to local values, as well as the mediator's lack of capacity to deeply understand positive law. These factors can affect the success or failure of mediation, leading in some cases to distrust of the process and rejection of proposed solutions. As a recommendation, there needs to be a

strategy to increase the capacity of local mediators, who not only master customary and religious norms, but also understand the positive legal system that applies in Indonesia. Increased training for mediators in state and religious law will strengthen their ability to resolve conflicts fairly and in accordance with applicable legal provisions. In addition, to increase the effectiveness of mediation, closer collaboration between traditional leaders, religious leaders and the government is needed. This collaboration will ensure that mediation not only resolves conflicts socially, but also in accordance with the legal framework of the state, as well as strengthening the legitimacy of mediation in the community.

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