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# Group urges Muslim women to welcome polygamy



Hatijah: Says polygamy is the answer to a woman's *nafsu*.

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A newly-set up club to promote polygamy suggests all Muslim women should welcome the practice.

Ikhwan Polygamy Club spokesperson Hatijah Aam said this was because a woman had nine *nafsu* (internal desires) and one intellect whereas men had nine intellect and only one *nafsu*.

"When women are upset, they make a lot of noise, but men don't. The emotional nature of women makes them broadcast their problems. They rant and rave.

"Because this is their character, God allowed polygamy to challenge women to control their desires," said Hatijah, the second wife of Ashaari Muhammad, the founder of the controversial and now-defunct Al-Arqam movement.

"When the husband hurts them by taking another wife, their *nafsu* are challenged and curbed, and this makes them better people.

"A woman when left to her desires becomes very dangerous like a tiger. In fact, even fiercer than that. If the world is left to women, we will be open to continuous war."

The Al-Arqam movement was declared illegal by the National Fatwa Council in August 1994 after the

group's teachings and beliefs were found to be against Islam. At its height, the movement had 10,000 members.

Polygamy, said Hatijah, would ensure that women were not controlled by their *nafsu*.

"When I feel sad that my husband is with another wife, he (my husband) will remind me that the pain God bestows upon us is a way to eradicate our sins.

"The husband is the leader who saves women from being consumed by their desires. There is a verse in the Quran which says that if the *nafsu* are not controlled, then '*nafsu itu akan menjadi Tuhan*' (the desires will become God).

"Polygamy is the most practical approach, an effective cure to a woman's desire."

Hatijah said women in monogamous marriages were not challenged and that was dangerous as their *nafsu* could then control them.

"Why see only the negative in polygamous marriages? We can share a life as sisters. It is the *nafsu* that do not allow us to share and that is why men are there to suppress it.

"A polygamous marriage is actually beneficial.

"We can help each other with many chores including looking after the husband and children. The other wives come into our life to complement it."

Hatijah said one of the reasons the Ikhwan Polygamy Club was established was because Ashaari wanted to show the world he was living proof that polygamous marriages could be successful.

Ashaari has 38 children, eight of them with Hatijah. Twenty-three of the children are in polygamous marriages.

"Having been in a successful polygamous marriage for 30 years, Abuya (Ashaari) wanted to show that it could be a harmonious way of life.

"We also wanted to shock society. We wanted to show them there is an alternative for those who practise free sex. There are men who need more than one woman."

She said some monogamous marriages were failures as the men cheated on their wives.

"They are leading life as in the Jahiliah era (age of pagan ignorance preceding Islam) when men had many mistresses without any responsibilities."

The idea of the club was mooted in August and was launched in Sungai Petani, Kedah.

Hatijah said the club's activities included counselling, courses and organising weddings for polygamous marriages.

"One of the first activities we will carry out is counselling. We will have one set of lectures explaining practical steps towards a harmonious polygamous marriage.

"We have 40 men and women motivational counselors to conduct this. We will also organise courses every weekend.

"Training towards a harmonious polygamous marriage is more difficult than training to become a doctor."

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When there is a problem in a polygamous marriage, the issue will be taken to the board of advisers which comprise the highest ranking officers in the club.

Five men and five women sit on the board. They include Hatijah and Ashaari.

"Here we will have meetings to decide the outcome of the marriage and whether there should be a divorce or not. Divorce is allowed by God."

About 300 families comprising some 900 individuals are members of the club.

Some of the families are from Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia, Jordan and Syria.

They are all part of the Global Ikhwan Sdn Bhd group, a business entity which has over 10,000 members. Businesses under Global Ikhwan include bakeries, sundry shops and restaurants.

Ashaari helms the group which funds the activities of his followers.

Who is the club open to?

"All individuals who practise the Islamic way of life. We have had many enquiries about the club, including from some Datuks in polygamous marriages."

Asked if she had been criticised for starting such a club, Hatijah said: "There has been no backlash at all, just a lot of support.

"I think I receive this support because people see polygamy as a solution and a way out of adultery."

The club has a theme song entitled *Keluarga Role Model*.

Hatijah said the club would ensure that men who married more than one woman were able to sustain their marriages.

"The men do not choose the wives they marry. Instead, Abuya decides who the men should marry and they rarely refuse.

"Only men who Abuya believes have leadership qualities and who can manage a polygamous lifestyle are chosen."

Asked whether she had ever regretted entering into a polygamous marriage, Hatijah said: "I have been declared founder of this club with my husband.

"There is no way I regret entering this marriage.

"Of course, in the 30 years that I have been married there were times I wished out of this life.

"I asked God for a way out but now after 30 years, I am reaping the benefits and I can say that polygamy is beautiful."

Hatijah said for a man to be just and fair he has to teach his wife that her first love must always be God.

"If you can't teach your wife to love God, marry only one.

"If a man wants to give more to one wife, he will be prevented from doing so because of his love for God. God says that if you love one wife more, you cannot show it."

Asked whether her mother was in a polygamous marriage, Hatijah said: "No, during my mother's time, there was not much emphasis on religion. My mother now accepts my way of life."

As for her controversial move to call on prostitutes to join the club, Hatijah said Ashaari wanted to "save everyone".

"If I was a prostitute, what would my life be like? People can talk, but what is the way out for them?"

"Who says polygamy is oppressive? It is the way out. They can become a wife and be protected legally. In fact we are going to start with five women with HIV soon. We will place them in a shelter.

"We will counsel them, treat them medically and teach them the Islamic way of life.

"When they are back on the right path, we will advise them to get married and assist them in every way." She said wives whose husbands wanted to take another wife should know that their husbands still loved them.

"They should realise how much it hurts their husbands when they (the wives) ask for a divorce. They should realise they are losing a man who loves them."