**A Family-Based Behavioral Intervention to enhance Family Communication and Family Cohesion among Siblings in Polygamous Family**

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**Abstract**

Family communication is important to maintain family relationships and family cohesion as well as wellbeing. Family cohesion, which refers to the extent of the connectedness and solidarity among members in a family, is an important determinant of family functioning. To enhance family cohesion, the “family-based behavioral intervention” was developed with a series of intervention programs in polygamous family with low family cohesion. This intervention, based on both the social ecological model and family-based behavioral model, provided a platform for families to learn, communicate and interact with each other. Objectives of the intervention included the modification of family communication behaviors and cohesion levels through the use of group dynamics strategies. This pre/post intervention without control group design included two family groups, a total of 14 siblings (6 monogamous and 8 polygamous families) used for pre-intervention assessment via semi structured interview. The results of the baseline study indicated that the experience of polygamous households was underlined with negative experiences such as poor family communication and cohesion, conflict, and a sense of deprivation. To alleviate the formulated problems above the 4-month intervention was planned and implemented. The intervention included family group education, social and behavioral group activities and tasks, and social support, embodied by a series of family-based activities, family meeting, coffee ceremony, cultural and religious practices etc. The follow-up (three months after the programs) assessment were conducted in the intervention group (selected polygamous family) to evaluate the impact of the intervention programs on family communication and cohesion. Post intervention assessment outcomes revealed that some improvement on family communication and cohesion has observed. Recommendations are forwarded.

**Keywords:** Polygyny • Family cohesion • Family-based behavioral intervention

**Introduction**

Family is not only the basic unit of society, but also an important place for individual physical and mental growth. A family is made up of every member in the family. At the same time, it affects the growth of every member, and plays an important role in the normal operation process of social system. One of the most significant social relations an individual develops is with his/her family. Family is the first agent of socialization through which a child learns how to interact with society and perceive ourselves and others. The family is an important context for achieving the developmental requirements of children and adolescents [1,2]. An important feature of the family is its structure. Family structure refers to the composition and relationships of a family [3,4]. Many theoretical and research studies have emphasized that type of family structure has inevitable effects on the members of the family, including its children. Many societies practice monogamous marital relationships involving a husband and wife as the basis for the family unit. However, there are societies that permit or even encourage the practice of other types of marriages such as polygamy, either in the form of polygyny or polyandry [5]. Polygyny occurs when a man has more than one wife at the same time [6,7] and polyandry occurs when a woman has more than one husband at the same time. These two types of marriage do not usually occur in the same societies and both create different types of family member relationships. AL-Khateep argued that Polygamous marriage and family structure are related to the cultural norms for each society that practices polygamy, so the social customs differ from one community to another [6].

Some of the factor’s characteristic of the practice of polygamy in various societies across the world and Africa exist in the Ethiopian society as well. These are related to social, economic, cultural and religious factors. The socio-cultural perception of the Ethiopian holds that the larger the social unit, the greater its power, influence, and honor. This perception could be one of the explanations for the prevalence of polygamy: Marrying many wives enhances the chance of having many sons, thus increasing the number of members in the family unit and amplifying one’s honor and influence [8]. Socially and psychologically, then, polygamy and its large families are still associated with power and prestige despite the economic burden of supporting multiple [9].

Another explanation for polygamy is embodied in Islam as a religion that permits a man to marry up to four wives [9]. Yet, Islam permits polygamy only under the following conditions: (1) a man may not have more than four wives at any given time; (2) he must have the appropriate economic resources to provide adequately for more than one woman; and (3) he should pay attention to and care for all women equally (Abu-Baker; Abdel-Ghany). Other circumstances that prompt polygamy is a woman’s sterility, an inability to bear child (for example, male offspring), and mental or physical illness. Due of its strategic importance, the effect family structures and functioning has on an individual has been studied extensively by researchers. As polygamy is a marital state or family structure in which the husband is married to multiple women at one time, this leaves a remarkable impact on the mental health, academic achievements, interpersonal relations, and social adjustment of children from polygamous households [10,11]. Studies conducted in different countries have shown that polygamy can lead to co-wife jealousy, competition, and unequal distribution of household and emotional resources [11] and can generate acrimony between co-wives and between the children of the different wives [8].

Several studies carried out in different countries in the Middle East and Africa show that children of polygamous families may suffer from emotional, behavioral, and physical problems; a more negative self-concept; mental health problems, lower school achievement; and greater difficulties in social adjustment than children in monogamous families [3,12,13]. It has also been found that adolescents are less accepting of polygamy than adults [13], objecting mainly to the economic difficulties and lack of communication among children/siblings of different wives. Existing literatures indicate that polygamous marital structures are exceedingly underlined by inter familial conflicts, parental violence and negative emotions such as jealousy and stress, which make the children from these families increasingly vulnerable to psychological dysfunction [14,15]. Similarly, Al-Krenawi et al. found that children belonging to polygamous households have higher conflicts with siblings and have poor familial relations. Research indicates that the experience of having multiple families is painful and distressing for children belonging to such households [12,13], leading to poor quality relations with the father as well among different mother siblings.
Polygamy marriage in Ethiopia mostly associated with a high prevalence of family problems such as co-wives conflict, poor family communication and cohesion, negative feelings among co-wives' siblings and so on. Thus, it implies that families in polygamous marriage more likely are at risk and need family-based intervention to alleviate the problems. In the current study family-based intervention with a series of group-based intervention strategies was implemented in order to promote family communication and cohesiveness or well-being in polygamous family in Adama city. The intervention program focused on the family as a unit and aimed to identify the sources of family problems, devise appropriate intervention/treatment measures, and promote family communication and cohesion. On the basis of previous studies, it hypothesized that children or siblings from polygamous families would report more psychological, social, familial, and educational functioning problems compared with children from monogamous families.

The present intervention study aimed at studying the long-term and lasting effects of polygyny on the interpersonal and social relations of children or siblings. Despite the increasing literature available on the practice and consequences of polygamy its lasting effects on the interpersonal relationships of the children is truly an ignored area. More importantly, the intervention on polygamy associated effects are truly a more neglected area particularly in Ethiopia family context. Thus this intervention study aimed at conduct pre-intervention assessment and based on the baseline data plan and implement appropriate family-based intervention on the selected polygamy family in the intervention site.

Theoretical model of the intervention

The current intervention was initiated based on both the social ecological model and family-based behavioral intervention model. The social ecological model proposes dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors [18]. The model emphasizes people's behaviors are affected by intra-personal, inter-personal, community, and societal factors [16]. These programs promoted the concepts of Learning Family and family 3Hs (health, harmony and happiness) to the participants (intra- and interpersonal level), and was innovative in extending across multiple levels of factors. The concept of Learning Family indicated that family relationship could be improved when family members participate in learning activities together. These programs also provided a platform for family members to learn together and communicate with each other (inter-personal level), as well as for residents to interact in these community activities (community level). According to the social ecological model by the involvement of family members in the development of the program on family communication and family/community-based group activities, can enhance family cohesion.

Another model used for current intervention was also family-based behavioral intervention model. For the past two decades, family-based behavioral interventions have been shown to produce both short and long-term positive results [19]. The family-based behavioral intervention model developed by Epstein and colleagues was used as a framework for this intervention. That is, it was believed that both family and peer (siblings) support would contribute to the success of the participants and the overall effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, from a group dynamics perspective, a sufficiently large group develops naturally in any collective in which individuals spend time and interact and communicate with one another. However, group dynamics theory, research, and practice show that process of becoming a more unified group can be improved through the introduction of a number of strategies. Many group dynamics-based strategies have been shown to be highly effective in intervention programs targeting special populations such as polygamous families and/or older [20].

Methods

Design

In order to conduct pre-intervention assessment qualitative research approach was employed. A pre/post treatment with no control group design was used in order to monitor the participants' progress and allow for a baseline comparison and also to observe the effect of the given family intervention. Family-based intervention was the main intervention strategy employed. The intervention included family education, group based strategies, embodied by a series of family activities such as family meeting, coffee ceremony, social gathering and social/physical activities. The intervention group received different -family-based intervention sessions delivered to groups of such family structure.Baseline (before the intervention) for both polygamous and monogamous families and follow-up (three month after the intervention) assessment were conducted only in the intervention group (polygamous family members) to assess the impact of the programs on family communication and cohesion.

Participants

The sample of the present pre-intervention assessment study comprised eight participants from polygamous families (3 females and 5 males) and six participants (3 men and 3 female) from monogamous families. All (14 participants) residing in Adam city administration in Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. Their age ranged between 21 and 44 years. The homogeneity of the sample was maintained in polygamous families in terms of family order (all participants were children of the first and second wives) and first as well as last children in their birth order.

Instrument

Semi structured interview (an interview schedule) was designed after consultation with three professionals and reviewing the existing literatures. The questions explored the experiences of individuals in the areas of family interpersonal relations, family cohesion, adaptation and communication, family and social functioning. The questions were structured to be open ended in order to attain thorough information about the experiences of the participants. Topics included in the interview guide are quality of relationship among the family members, family communication, family cohesion, relationships between the step mothers, and relationships among siblings of different mothers and adolescents' attitudes toward polygamy.

Procedures of data collection and Data analysis

After gaining approval from all family members of the target family, the participants were recruited via personal contacts and snowball sampling. Verbal consent from all participants was witnessed and formally recorded preceding the interviews. Detailed, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were carried out to collect the baseline data. Data were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods. The interview sessions ranged from 57 -85 minutes and were written recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts operated as the raw data for the present pre intervention assessment phase. The transcripts were analyzed by using the technique of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), developed by Smith (2008). According to Smith the rudimentary purpose of IPA is to explore systematically and in detail how an individual makes sense of their experiences. In IPA, the investigator aims to make sense of the participant making sense of experiences.

Results

Pre intervention assessment findings

In order to have a baseline data it was decided to follow a qualitative approach of data collection via semi structured interview. Based on the findings of this pre intervention assessment study the following major themes and sub themes were emerged or identified as core problems in the families particularly polygamy families.

Theme 1: Family functioning

Sub theme 1. Father fairness: Concerning father fairness unfair dealing from the father was a common response from the participants. Eleven of 14 (6 monogamy & 8 polygamy family) baseline study participants from the two family structures believed that polygynous fathers treat their wives and children unfairly. For the participants from polygamous families 6 of 8 responded that their fathers provide unfair treatment in many things such as availability, income, and care. These participants reported that the father was unfair through tending to his second wife and her children rather than the first wife and her children. They reported that he (father) is more affectionate and take care of all the responsibilities to his second family. Children from his first family complained about their father’s mistreatment and neglect. Also, father unfairness and his bias to the second wife increased the deterioration of family cohesion.

" my father is unfair, he takes care for our half siblings rather than us, also he loves the step mother rather than my mum and he provides all what they need when we wait for him a long of time to reply to us"
Two respondents responded their father is fair with his wives and children, so their responses for the remaining questions were different to others. In other words, their responses were closest to their peers from monogamous families.

Most participants from monogamous families agreed in their responses that their father is fair and tries to be an ideal father through doing the responsibilities for his family. According to their responses, monogamous fathers were reported to be more cooperative and respectful to their wife and take care of the children as well. Respondents from monogamous families expressed the importance of their fathers being available in their life.

"Yah my father is fair with us in everything. For example, he shares in our interests and deals equally between us and our brothers. He always helps us in school and non-school duties and looks after us if one of us is sick, father is great thing in our life".

Sub theme 2. Family Cohesion: With regard to family cohesion of the participant families mixed findings obtained. In coherent relationship between the family members is an indication of a lack of family cohesion in polygamous families. Words like ‘hate’, ‘jealous’, and ‘arrogant’ were used to describe the quality of relationship with the half siblings. Just one female from a polygamous family had a sound relationship with her oldest half sibling brother. Participants from polygamous families reported that mothers supported the unhealthy relation between the half siblings through encouraging their sons and daughters to be rivals in everything.

"The step mother doesn’t like my mum and even us, she always incites my father to be tough with us and also she keep our half siblings away from us"

In monogamous families, most respondents showed love and mutual respect between the individuals in the family. None of the participants from monogamous families mentioned that he or she hates or wants to outperform the siblings in everything. For example, Participant from monogamy family said "We often stay together to discuss any problem in our family"

Most Participants from polygamous families reported that frequently they are not supportive of each other during difficult time in their family relationship, it is hard for them to make their own opinion, they spend less time together when we are home, they avoid each other at home, they are not consult each other on personal decisions and they have difficulty thinking of things to do together. Moreover, respondents from such family structure regarding their feeling about the family cohesiveness

"I do not feel very close to each other (family members) and I feel closer to people outside the family than to their own family members"

Regarding family contact in family issues participant reported that they tend to do more things separately, it is easier to discuss problems with people outside the family than with their family and in my family, it is hard to share responsibilities.

Concerning family communication participants from polygamous families expressed that they are less likely to discuss problems, they are less likely to spend their free time with each other, they are afraid to say what is on their minds, they are less likely to share interests, worries, concerns and hobbies with each other that are they are too self-centered.

"In our family when someone is upset the others do not know why, we are not frank with each other, even when we don’t like what someone has done, we do not tell them; we are reluctant to show our affection for each other"

From the respondents interview it is reported that planning family activities is difficult because of the misunderstand each other, they cannot talk to each other about the sadness they feel, avoid discussing their fears and concern, there are lots of bad feelings in the family, making decisions is a problem for their family and they don’t get along well together.

From these responses we can understand that there is poor family cohesiveness in such polygamy family members. The report of polygamy family participants reflects that their general family functioning is more dysfunctional and it needs family-based intervention.

Sub theme 3. Family Conflict: Another manifestation of family functioning is the level of family conflict. In polygamous families, family conflict was reported. No one wanted to follow the instructions from the other family, 6 respondents from polygamous families said they live in continuous conflict with their step mothers and half siblings. They reported that wives try to control the father to express their own opinions, they felt their father did not support them. They reported that the second wife imposes her control on the father. Two respondents who were a son or daughter of the first wife described their step-mother as authoritarian and unjust. Also, they mentioned that the application of discipline rules is different between the two families; the father is more tolerant with his second wife and her children and tougher with his first family.

"My father is always afraid of his second wife, she has a strong personality and she controls father’s decisions. When I made a mistake, he punished me severely and he is supportive and forgiving for my half siblings. Not because he loves them but he is scared of the stepmother".

In contrast, the responses of participants from monogamous families reflected the peace and the stability in those families, with the exception of one participant who described the relation between her parents as tense which caused the father to be nervous mostly. For example, one female participant said "We almost agree with our family a decision with our parent’s leading".

Theme 2: Effect of polygamy marriage

Sub theme 1. Emotional and behavioral problems: These above negative attitudes led to the next subtheme which is about the emotional and behavioral problems among the respondents. The most frequent words used to describe the impact of polygamy on the family were "loss of family happiness and harmony". Respondents from polygamous and monogamous families agreed that the greatest effects from polygamy will be on children or even teenagers. From lived experience, some male of polygamous families admitted behavioral problems such as smoking, aggression, antisocial behaviors, sexuality, and involvement in violence, and they referred to their dysfunctional family structure through the interviews. Also, some of the girls were concerned about their brother’s behaviors because their mothers cannot control them, and the father’s absence increased the involvement of boys in many behavioral problems. Females also stated multiple emotional problems like low self-esteem and confidence as well as complaints from depressive symptoms. Participants from monogamous families supported those responses through what they have noticed about their friend’s behavior from the polygamous families in school.

"One of my best friends is from a polygamous family; she is always sad and complains from the trouble situation for her family. I have noticed that she has become depressed and have pessimistic thoughts about her future"

Theme 3: Relationship with parents and siblings

With reference to the interpersonal relationships of the participants with their parents (father and both birth mother as well as step mother) and siblings the following subthemes were derived from the transcribed interviews of all the participants.

Sub themes 1: Relationship with Father: The experience of polygamy was underlined with negative experiences such as disintegration of the family unit, a sense of deprivation and social, economic and educational constraints. These experiences in turn formed the foundations of the participant’s relationship with their fathers. Most participants from polygamous family reported undesirable feelings with regards to their relationship with their father. For example, the fathers’ second marriage led to the formation of distant, impaired and strained relations, characterized by condemnation, conflict, and a lack of trust. Most participants felt that their father was manipulative, materialistic, inaccessible and selfish.

"My father’s second marriage distanced me from him; my communication with him is only on financial matters. Recently there hasn’t been much interaction with him"

"I cannot trust my father in anything. I cannot rely on him to take my decision for me, and even if he gives me a suggestion, I ignore it, because I think he doesn’t know me"

"I can’t approach my father for advice or support. He is only concerned with his own life. He has never been there for me."

It reflects that the children’s resentment over the second marriage of their father was due to the reason that they missed their father on important occasions; he ignored children’s needs and started giving time and preference to the second wife. The extracts also illustrate that the second marriage of the father had shaken the children’s trust on him.

In contrast, some of the participants from polygamous family like the monogamy family respondents showed an ambivalent attitude towards their fathers and reported feelings of love and unconditional love for their fathers at the same time like most of monogamous family participants.

"I cannot stop loving him as my father despite everything he has done. I guess it’s something ingrained in us by the society."

"He is my father and it is unconditional love that I feel for him. It illustrates that some of the participants believe that love for their father is natural and it should not be conditioned with what he has done for them and with his life."

Sub themes 2: Relationship with birth mother: In regards to their relationship with their birth mothers, a number of participants both from polygamous and
monogamous family reported to have affectionate, close, sympathetic, loving and supportive relations.

"I'm very protective about my mother. I think she has suffered a lot and I feel sorry for everything she has been through. I take her side more than anyone else and always support her.

"My mother is my teacher; she is like a best friend to me. I can share everything with her. I can joke around with her. I feel comfortable with her"

As birth mothers were the primary caregivers, most of the participants showed love, care and sympathy towards them. They appeared to perceive that their mother had suffered due to the second marriage of their father. The children seemed to have the realization that their mother had been there to bear the hardships after the marriage of their fathers. However, some participants from polygamous family reported ambivalent relations in which despite the existence of love and care for their mother, the relations were characterized by conflicts, blame and condemnation.

"I think there were a few things where my mom was responsible for my father's second marriage. The extract shows that the children appear to be in a state of confusion and blame their mother for their father's second marriage.

Sub theme 3: Relationship with their mother siblings: Majority of the polygamy family participants reported having a supporting, affectionate, and close knit relationship with their mother siblings. Their experiences outline how their fathers' second marriage promoted a greater degree of reliance and emotional and financial interdependence between the siblings.

"My eldest brother takes care of the entire family financially. He played the role of our guardian, whenever my father was absent or busy with his other family. I look up to him for advice and guidance before doing anything"

"I am very close to my siblings. We tend to share any problems we encounter or if anything good happens we share the happiness with each other. We feel at ease with each other"

Some participants reported to having affectionate relations with their siblings, however, this relationship was characterized by a reluctance to share personal problems and details.

"I care a lot for my siblings, and we discuss all our family problems however I don't share personal matters with them. I don't trust them for sharing my secrets"

"I am very close to my sister and brother, but I feel uncomfortable sharing my feelings with them, especially my sentiments towards my father"

The father's second marriage seems to promote a close and supportive relation between the siblings. They recounted a high degree of emotional and financial interdependence with their siblings, to compensate the lack of support and presence of their father. The elder siblings assumed the role of the head of the family where the father remained absent due to the responsibility of his second family. Despite this care and love they seem hesitant to share with each other, as they lose trust due to their father's infidelity.

Sub theme 4: Relationship with Step-Family: In this particular circumstance, the step families were created through the father's second marriage. The polygamy family participants' characterized by negative reactions, apathy and ambivalence were predominantly experiences with their step-families. The relationship was underlined by the feelings of jealousy, hatred, dislike, blame, condemnation and disownment.

"I severely hate my father's second wife. She knew my father was married and she knew he had children but still she chose to get married to him. I know my father is to blame as well, but the other women destroyed our family completely."

"I was jealous of my stepfamily. They had my father's love, attention and support while we were left to our own devices to manage our problems and take care of our house"

Few participants reported having a neutral and indifferent attitude towards their stepsiblings, relegating them to the status of a passing acquaintance or someone of no significant importance.

"We see our stepsiblings as mere acquaintances"

"My stepsiblings are just like strangers to me. They mean nothing more than that"

It appears that the participants had reasons for dislike and negative feelings towards their stepfamily. They reported to hate their stepmother for intentionally destroying their peace and family cohesion by marrying their father. They felt resentful towards their stepsiblings because the love and attention of their father was divided between both sets of children. The participants believed that the stepfamily was enjoying more than their share of their father's love and care, whilst they were being deprived.

Generally, apparent mixed report was found among children of polygamous families. Different stories were told by the children of polygamous family. The majority of them (polygamy families' participants) described conflicts, disconnected or tense relationships with the other mother and their children (step siblings). However, few respondents described as good relations with the other mother and close relations with her children, their half-siblings, but distant relationships with their fathers.

Discussion on Pre intervention assessment findings

The pre-intervention assessment interviews revealed negative aspects of polygamy in participant families. Unfair treatment by the father in the polygamous families creates a troubled environment for the adolescents' upbringing. Respondents of the first wife reported feeling injustice from the father which could affect their relationship with their father and parental bonding. According to Islamic shariah law the condition of the father being fair between his wives and children is for family stability and may help the polygamous marriage to be successful [7]. However, father bias to his second wife might be the cause of a tough life for the first wife and emotional and behavioral problems for her adolescents.

The outcomes of dysfunctional family structures often results in adolescents having mental health problems and behavioral issues [6,21], as these interviews have shown. Several of the respondents who lived in polygamous families admitted they have a difficult situation with their families that has affected their well-being and behavior. It is noted that there was no gender difference in the type of emotional and behavioral problems. Both male and female from polygamous families shared in the same lack of psychological well-being and conduct disorders.

The adolescents' opinions of the weakness of the father's role in polygamous families, especially the adolescents of the first wife, created negative perceptions and attitudes towards polygamy and towards the father [9]. This was shown in the respondents' answers about their fathers in this study. Father presence is necessary for the growth of adolescents. This is especially important in Ethiopia, where the father plays the greatest role for shaping adolescents' behavior. Thus, in the absence of the father, adolescents in polygamous families lose the educational influence of their fathers. Developmental Psychology researchers stressed that father absence in early childhood negatively affects the child's personality. Also, it was found to influence gender identity. For example, in Saudi society, Al-Sharfi's study found that gender identity disorder and poor social role performance were reported from male adolescents whose father was unavailable.

According to theoretical frameworks about the family, there are several factors that are important for child development in the family, these are: cohesion, homogenous couple, strong bonding, and reasonable socioeconomic circumstances [4]. From the study results, polygamous families are often lacking these criteria that are lack of family cohesion, high level of conflict, unfair relation wish father etc. Through the pre-intervention assessment study and other previous study results, it can be seen that polygamous relationships affect children and adolescents.

The findings of the pre-intervention assessment study also indicated that individuals belonging to polygamous household's experience debilitating effects in their interpersonal relationships with father, other mothers and half/step siblings as a by-product of their fathers second marriage. These findings are supported by previous studies carried out in Arab and Eastern counties, [9] that suggest that the act of polygamy is connected to the varying emotional difficulties faced by members of such families.

The results display how the participants' relationships with their family were characterized by distrust and conflict. Researchers conducted in Israel and Arab countries support these findings, suggesting that the presence of negative emotions such as distrust, blame, anger, jealousy and bitterness contribute towards the prevalence of interfamilial conflicts [12].

The participants' experience and contemplation of love and care in their relationship with their father and their mother coincided with existing literature available on Bedouin and Arab tribes in Middle East, suggesting most individuals from polygamous household experience a distant and detached relationship with their father, while sympathising and relying more on their birth mothers for love and support [6,21]. However, some of the participants have also reported experiences of unconditional love and care for their fathers. These results can be understood in light of religious and cultural paradigms
prevailing in the Ethiopian Muslim society, which preach submission before parents and respect of parents as ultimate virtues. In collectivist societies, such as Ethiopia, birth mothers are the primary care givers to their children. Overall participants showed a sympathetic, loving and caring relation with their mother. Al-Krenawi, Graham, and AlKrenawisuggested that due to the division of the fathers' social and economic resources children form closer bonds with their mothers.

The findings also displayed that most participants from polygamous family had an apathetic and negative relationship with their step families. This relation was defined by feelings of jealousy, dislike, hatred, condemnation, indifference, disownment and an effort to empathize with the step family. These results are in agreement with the research conducted in [10,11], which suggests that the relationships between the children and their step-families are undermined by emotions such as anger, jealousy and detachment. Lev-Wiesel and Al-Krenawi [22] suggest that children of the senior wives are more inclined towards rejecting their fathers' second wife and her children.

This pre-intervention assessment study findings suggest that polygamy, even under the best circumstances, is painful, particularly to women and children. These findings echo other studies suggesting that polygamous family structure is associated with various emotional, behavioral and familial difficulties [8,12,22]. Moreover, when members of the family do not succeed in overcoming their anger, jealousy, and pain, intergenerational suffering in the form of disengagement, fighting, emotional turmoil, and inter relational conflicts are prevalent. It is important that community awareness of these potential negative effects of polygamy be elevated. Awareness might be raised via the local media, religious leaders as well as community elders, and the formal and informal education systems. Such awareness may lead to public discussions about the benefits and the economic and psychological burdens of polygamy, and thereby enhance family cohesion and adaptability in polygamous family structure and also the ability and the freedom of individuals in the community to choose their own ways of family life as well.

Based on conceptualization and formulation of the existing family problem mainly pertaining to family communication and family cohesion problems in polygamy families, the author planned to deliver family-based intervention through group-based strategies for the selected case polygamous family as intervention group. In the following section of the paper the major intervention activities and strategies of the intervention presented.

**Intervention Plan and Actions**

From the presenting problems of the polygamous families above, the system formulation of the problem indicated that high prevalence of poor family communication and family cohesion among family members. Thus, the family is at risk that the family members needs developmentally appropriate intervention to alleviate the family problems.

The author determine to plan and implement most appropriate intervention to alleviate the symptom/presenting problem and building up appropriate behaviors. The problem formulation suggested that the problem is more characterized by poor family social interaction, communication and relationship quality among siblings of such family structure and the symptoms in which lead to develop poor family cohesion. The author planned and implemented family-based intervention programs maintaining the symptom. The intervention/treatment plan should address the social and articulate the goal of the specified intervention in terms of the formulation.

Based on conceptualization and formulation of the existing family problem pertaining to family communication and family cohesion problems obtained from baseline data in polygamy families, the author planned and conducted an intervention. Given the strong theoretical and empirical support for interventions based on group dynamics principles, the practitioner planned and conducted a mini family-based intervention through group based strategies on the selected polygamous families. This Family activities training was developed based on group dynamics principles, the available literature, and the recommendations for effective interventions mentioned in several articles.

**Intervention Plan**

The following Table 1 presented the intervention activities planned to implement during intervention period

**Intervention Components**

Based on the information from the pre-intervention assessment study and identified problems, Planned Family Activities Training intervention such as family group education, group based social and behavioral activities and social support group were delivered in the intervention period from May to August 2019. Intervention participant of polygamous family members attended the intervention at home setting. During the four-month program, the polygamy family children engaged in a variety of group based behavioral and social activities as well as group family education. Each month consisted of at least one family education and group-based activity (social and behavioral) sessions. Both variety and consistency were incorporated into the schedule: group-based family education (eg., education related to importance of family, family cohesion and communication, etc.), social gathering (eg. coffee ceremony, monthly family meeting, religious “sedaqa” program etc.), and behavioral/physical activities (eg., working together, going and praying together, weekend program etc.). Drawing from the pre-intervention assessment of qualitative findings, cultural and religious concepts relevant to family functioning and cohesion were incorporated throughout the intervention program.

The specific objectives of the intervention are to improve: (a) family cohesion levels; (b) psychosocial outcomes (e.g., family communication, positive perception of step family and their siblings).

Participants of the intervention

For the implementation of the family-based intervention one polygamous family were recruited. Participant recruitment for the intervention began after the intervention practitioner provided with oral consent from both family members (siblings) and their parents. Participants were eligible to participate in the intervention if they were participated in pre-intervention assessment study, and above the age of 18.

**Brief description of the intervention group polygamous family**

The husband is 75 years old, his first wife 65, and the second wife 54. He has 7 children from the first wife and 9 children from the second wife. The husband also raised his brother’s 2 children. The family has Gurageh ethnic origin and follower of Muslim in religion. Most of the family members are living in Addis Ababa city administration of Oromiya regional state. The husband is living with chronic illnesses that are Diabetic illness. Both the husband and two wives are currently unemployed (house wife) and the family (21 people) lives on their old children earned and house rent money. The husband and his two wives were raised in polygamous families as well. Husband and wives never went to school. The following presented details of the whole family members profiles pertain to Sex, age, marital status, level of education and occupational status (Table 2).

**Intervention activity 1. Family Education Sessions**

Education about the nature of the presenting and formulated problem is an important component of any clinical or family intervention. In order to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Intervention plan.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention type:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family based behavioral intervention</td>
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</table>
enhance intervention efficacy initially debriefing the rationale for intervention and attempted to get the acceptance from the intervention participants. Typically, the initial educational component of intervention had three stages: (a) discussion of pre-intervention assessment results, (b) discussion of the nature, causes, and prognosis of the problem (e.g., poor family cohesion, communication and conflict), and (c) negotiation of an acceptable intervention plan. Key social learning, parental, and family factors that may contribute to the family problems identified and discussed with the case family.

For the intervention participant, family education was helpful to provide parents and children with an understanding of how their family situation has contributed to the problems they are experiencing (e.g., poor family cohesion, conflict, poor communication, hate, negative perceptions, etc.). Topics which could be discussed include (a) an introduction to the concepts of family education and family cohesion and communication, (b) how to promote family functioning through learning and communicating with family, (c) the expectations family members bring into the family, and (d) the importance of children maintaining contact with their stepmother and half siblings delivered through interactive physical activities/interaction and organized social gathering (e.g., coffee ceremony).

Drawing from the pre-intervention assessment of qualitative findings, cultural and religious concepts relevant to family functioning and resilience were incorporated throughout the intervention program. More importantly, Muslim religious person like “Ustaz” involved in the family education session that preach/teach the importance and value of family cohesion from Islamic cultural and religious concepts relevant to family functioning and resilience could be discussed include (a) an introduction to the concepts of family education and family cohesion and communication, (b) how to promote family functioning through learning and communicating with family, (c) the expectations family members bring into the family, and (d) the importance of children maintaining contact with their stepmother and half siblings delivered through interactive physical activities/interaction and organized social gathering (e.g., coffee ceremony).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family members</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Highest level of education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWS 1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12 completed</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWS 2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWS 3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWS 4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12 completed</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWS 5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWS 6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>12 completed</td>
<td>Private work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWS 7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Government employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>Private employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>Private employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>10 grades</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWS 9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Demographic Information of intervention group polygamous family. Note: “FWS” - First wife sibling and “SWS” - Second wife sibling.
of frequent group-based discussions pertaining to family related issues such as family cohesion, problem solving, and specific challenges and successes that participant siblings experienced throughout the intervention program. These discussions attempted to take place regularly at each month. For example, structured group-based discussions were held for 15 to 30 minutes among the intervention participants. These sessions were led by principal practitioner, and were used as de-briefing sessions in which participant family members were asked: (1) to share their thoughts were interlocking, the cohesiveness level also increased with a more harmonious family. Some participants became more aware of the importance of family cohesion and harmony as well.

"(I) going along better with the step siblings in our family. (Before the intervention) I was not sure how the step families thought. (Now, after the intervention) I have an idea of how the step siblings and their mother think. (The family is) more harmonious." (Participant 1)

"After participating in the activity (intervention), I think that communication and cohesion in family are the most important" (Participant 3)

In addition to increased time for communication, the participants were also able to open the family communication and cohesion in family were the most important. Some participants became more aware of the importance of family cohesion and harmony as well.

"Now they (some of the half and full siblings) tell whenever they are happy or sad. That is, they tell me 'How I feel.' I can also share (the feeling) with them. When I am upset from work, I also share with them too." (Participant 5)

"I started to communicate more with her (the step mother). I tell her the happy and unhappy things encountered in daily life." (Participant 4)
I feel closer to my family members than people outside the family and We(family members) have been attempting to approach each other at home" (Participant 1)

"When problems arise, we compromise and we are not afraid to say what is on our minds. so that we tend to reduce do more things separately" (Participant 2)

As a general functioning of family, the intervention participants reported that the interventions provide them opportunities to understand each other and have a better attempt to get along well together. They can better talk to each other about their family issues, the sadness they feel, fears, worries and concern. Thus it makes them less to have bad feelings in their family.

Discussions

Discussion on the intervention outcomes

The qualitative assessments of intervention findings show that family cohesion improved after this family-based intervention programs implemented through group-based strategies and activities. Compared with the pre-intervention period, the post intervention period showed slightly some increase in family cohesion, closeness of family members and the communication among family members. It implies that the intervention was somehow effective in improving family communication and family cohesion as well as family functioning with a small effect.

With the involvement of family members in family-based intervention programs such as group family education, family-based group tasks and activities (social gathering and social interactive activities like coffee ceremonies), and social support group, the intervention has shown some effectiveness on improving family communication, family harmony, and family cohesion. Possible reasons may be that these intervention activities provided a platform for the participants to learn and communicate with family members as well as chat and share happy moments. They also learnt to discover and appreciate the strengths and weakness of their family members from the intervention program activities.

By the involvement of family members in the intervention programs with an emphasis on family communication and family-based group activities, the present intervention paper showed that the intervention based on the social ecological model can enhance family cohesion. These findings suggest that the social ecological model, which has typically been utilized to guide changes in individuals' community functioning [24] can be modified and extended to benefit the family. The results of the analyses will help further the knowledge in family and group-based interventions aimed at the treatment of poor family cohesion and communications in polygamous families' children.

Moreover, the current intervention study report also adds to the literature by showing that family communication might be the pathway by which the intervention improved family well-being and in turn family cohesion. The plausible explanation that family communication could determine family well-being or function is that family communication is closely related to the development of intimacy and closeness within families [16].

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The present intervention on family dynamics of the polygamy family has some limitations. First, although the intervention practitioner chose one polygamy family as a case for intervention, he could not include pre and post intervention information from parents (first wife, second wife and polygyny father). Second, the intervention activities in some case were not well organized as expected to meet the objectives. Third, not all the participants (non-selected polygamous family members) in the pre-intervention assessment could not participated in post intervention which enables for comparison of the intervention group with control group on the given intervention evaluation. Fourth, lack of more follow up data in order to show the long effect of the intervention. Since the planned and implemented intervention brought some improvement on the target family, in the future well organized family-based intervention programs should be planned and delivered to at high risk polygamous families.

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References
