



The Experience of Bedouin-Arab Adolescent Girls in Polygamous Families

Nuzha Allasad Alhuzail

Sapir Academic College, Israel

Abstract

Polygamous marriages are widespread and accepted among Israel's Bedouin-Arabs. Yet despite polygamy's many effects on family members, there is almost no research on the experience of adolescents in these families and the effects of the second marriage on their relationship with the father. The current study is a pioneering effort to shed light on the feelings of severe injury among adolescent girls whose fathers have taken a second wife. Thirty in-depth interviews were conducted in 2016 and 2018 with participants ages 18–22, and the data underwent a qualitative thematic analysis. The findings shed light on parent-child relations in the context of marriage, separation, and family reconstitution. They highlight situations of family conflict that generate stress for family members. Three coping patterns of the adolescent girls are identified, offering a glimpse of how a generation of young women in patriarchal traditional societies may begin to challenge longstanding and widely accepted practices and ideas regarding the family. Interventions are proposed at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels.

Keywords: Bedouin-Arab; polygamy; adolescent girls; parent-child relations; traditional society