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Research Article

Lived Experiences of Tagakaulo Parents Practicing “Duway” (Polygamy) in Davao Occidental: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Polygamy, locally known as “duway,” remains a culturally embedded practice among the Tagakaulo community in Davao Occidental, yet limited research has examined the lived experiences of families engaged in this system. Grounded in a phenomenological framework, this study aimed to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway. Using purposive sampling, twelve participants from Demoloc, Malita, Davao Occidental were selected. Data were collected through in-depth interviews (n=7) and a focus group discussion (n=5), and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s framework. Findings revealed three major themes: (1) relational conflict, characterized by perceived inequalities in spousal treatment, attention, and financial support; (2) adaptive coping mechanisms, including negotiated agreements, compromise, and shared understanding among co-wives and the husband; and (3) evolving familial insights, emphasizing responsible parenthood, acceptance of circumstances, and the value of cooperation. These findings highlight the complex interpersonal dynamics within polygamous households and underscore the role of communication and shared responsibility in maintaining family cohesion. The study contributes to a nuanced understanding of culturally rooted marital practices and informs culturally sensitive interventions and policies.

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1. Introduction

Polygamy, defined as a marital arrangement involving more than one spouse, has been documented across diverse cultural and historical contexts. Anthropological and sociological studies indicate that polygamous systems have served social, economic, and political functions, such as strengthening kinship ties, increasing household labor, and consolidating social status (Altman & Ginat, 2018). However, the meanings and implications of polygamy are not uniform; rather, they are shaped by cultural norms, gender relations, and broader socio-economic conditions. Contemporary scholarship increasingly examines polygamy not only as a cultural practice but also as a site of negotiation involving power, agency, and family dynamics.

Globally, polygamy remains a contested institution. In many countries, such as Canada, it is legally prohibited, while in others it is regulated or culturally sanctioned. In the Philippines, multiple marital relationships are generally penalized under the Revised Penal Code as adultery or concubinage. Nevertheless, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 provides legal recognition of the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities to practice their customs and traditions, including marriage systems governed by customary law. This coexistence of formal legal frameworks and customary practices creates a complex socio-legal environment in which polygamy may persist within specific cultural groups.

In Mindanao, several Indigenous communities continue to practice polygamy as part of their traditional social organization (Falcasantos, 2023). Among these is the Tagakaulo community, where polygamy—locally referred to as *duway*—is regarded as a culturally embedded and socially regulated practice. Within this context, *duway* is often normalized and transmitted across generations. However, existing literature suggests that polygamous

family structures may involve complex relational dynamics, including the negotiation of roles, allocation of resources, and management of interpersonal relationships among spouses and children. These dynamics are often influenced by gendered expectations and power relations within the household (Yu & De Catalina, 2024; Knudson-Martin, 2022).

The present study is anchored in phenomenology, particularly as articulated by Creswell and Poth (2018), which emphasizes the exploration of individuals' lived experiences and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences. This perspective is complemented by Family Systems Theory, which conceptualizes the family as an interconnected system in which changes in one relationship affect the entire unit (Brown, 2024; Famiglini, 2023), and by gender and power relations frameworks that examine how authority, decision-making, and roles are distributed within households (Saba, Saultz, & Siveira de Oliveira, 2021). Together, these frameworks provide a lens for understanding how Tagakaulo parents practicing *duway* experience, interpret, and manage their family lives.

Existing studies on polygamy in the Philippine context have largely focused on other Indigenous groups, including the Manobo, B'laan, Bagobo, Kalagan, and Mandaya communities (Yu & De Catalina, 2024). These studies have identified themes such as gender inequality, hierarchical decision-making, and adaptive coping strategies within polygamous households (Naseer, Farooq, & Malik, 2021).

However, despite the cultural significance of *duway* among the Tagakaulo, there is limited empirical research that specifically examines their lived experiences, particularly from the perspective of parents who actively engage in this practice. This gap constrains a comprehensive understanding of how

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polygamous family systems operate within this cultural group.

Moreover, processes of modernization, globalization, and increased access to education and technology have introduced new perspectives on marriage, individual autonomy, and gender equality. These developments may create tensions between traditional practices and evolving social norms, particularly among younger generations (Ergashev & Farxodjonova, 2020). For families practicing duway, such shifts may influence family relationships, parenting roles, and social interactions, including potential

experiences of stigma or cultural misunderstanding in institutional settings.

Given these considerations, there is a need for a context-specific and experience-based examination of duway within the Tagakaulo community. Thus, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of Tagakaulo parents practicing polygamy in Demoloc, Malita, Davao Occidental. By focusing on their experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights, the study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced and culturally grounded understanding of polygamous family life and to inform culturally responsive educational and social interventions.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway. Qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences and social realities (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). This design is appropriate for examining culturally embedded practices and capturing participants' subjective meanings.

Anchored in phenomenology, the study aimed to describe and interpret the essence of participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, the phenomenon under investigation is engagement in duway, and the study focused on how participants perceive, experience, and make sense of this practice within their socio-cultural context.

2.2. Participants and Sampling Procedure

The study involved twelve (12) Tagakaulo parents practicing duway in Demoloc, Malita, Davao Occidental. Seven participants participated in in-depth interviews (IDI), while five participated in a focus group discussion (FGD). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allows the selection of individuals with relevant knowledge and

experience (Neubauer et al., 2019; Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2017). Inclusion criteria were: (1) 21 years old and above; (2) members of the Tagakaulo community residing in the study area; and (3) currently engaged in or with experience in duway.

The sample size was guided by the principle of data sufficiency, where no new insights emerged from additional data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This aligns with qualitative recommendations suggesting flexible sample sizes depending on data richness and research objectives (Dworkin, 2019).

2.3. Research Instruments

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide, designed to elicit participants' lived experiences, relational dynamics, and coping strategies. Semi-structured interviews provide a balance between guided inquiry and participant-led responses (Patton, 2015; Kampambwe, 2018).

The interview guide allowed flexibility for participants to express their views while ensuring alignment with the study objectives. It was subjected to expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness.

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Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

2.4. Data Collection

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in accordance with the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. Permission was also secured from local tribal leaders and institutional authorities.

Participants were provided with informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any stage (Walter, 2016). Interviews were conducted face-to-face in culturally appropriate settings and lasted approximately 30–60 minutes.

Data collection emphasized rapport-building, allowing participants to share their experiences openly. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and returned to participants for member checking to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006; 2021). This method was selected for its flexibility and suitability in identifying patterns across qualitative data.

The analysis followed six phases:

- Familiarization with the data
- Initial code generation
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming themes
- Producing the report

Initial coding involved systematically organizing meaningful units of data. These codes were then grouped into broader themes reflecting shared patterns across participants' experiences. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of key meanings and patterns within the dataset

(Stewart, Placenti, & Diop, 2018; Guest et al., 2017).

To enhance rigor, peer debriefing was conducted, where coding and theme development were reviewed by a research peer to ensure consistency and reduce bias. An audit trail was also maintained to document analytical decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Guest et al., 2017).

2.6 Reflexivity and Research Positionality

The researcher acknowledges his role as an educator and an external observer to the Tagakaulo community. This positionality may influence data interpretation; therefore, reflexivity was practiced throughout the research process.

Reflective journaling and field notes were used to monitor assumptions and biases, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participants' narratives. The researcher maintained an immersion perspective while striving for cultural sensitivity and respect for indigenous knowledge systems.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles guided all stages of the research. Approval was obtained from relevant authorities, including the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, ensuring compliance with indigenous research protocols.

Participants were assured of:

- Voluntary participation and informed consent
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Right to withdraw without penalty

Data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities. The study adhered to ethical standards concerning privacy, risk minimization, and respect for participants (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, & Meyer, 2017; Krefting, 2017).

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2.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was established using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Carcary, 2020; Krefting, 2017).

- Credibility: Ensured through member checking, expert validation, and peer debriefing (Williams, 2018)
- Transferability: Supported by detailed contextual descriptions of participants and setting (Swanson & Chermack, 2018)

- Dependability: Achieved through a documented audit trail of research procedures (Guest et al., 2017)
- Confirmability: Strengthened through reflexivity and systematic data analysis to minimize researcher bias (Connelly, 2016)

These strategies ensured that the findings were grounded in participants' lived experiences and supported by transparent and systematic procedures.

3. Results

This section presents the findings of the study, including the narratives shared by the participants and the themes that emerged from their accounts of experiences, coping strategies, and insights as Tagakaulo parents practicing duway. These themes were generated through careful analysis of participants' descriptions, reflecting recurring patterns and meanings across their responses.

The interpretation of the data is grounded in the ontological assumption that reality is subjective and multiple, recognizing that each participant constructs meaning based on their own lived experiences and social context.

In this study, the researcher adopted an immersion perspective, focusing on identifying commonalities and patterns across participants' narratives rather than emphasizing personal immersion in their individual realities. Consequently, other philosophical assumptions

such as epistemology, axiology, rhetoric, and methodology were not foregrounded in the analysis.

Experiences of Tagakaulo Parents in Practicing Duway

This section presents the lived experiences of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway, as drawn from their narratives and the themes that emerged from their accounts.

Consistent with the ontological stance of the study, these experiences reflect diverse and subjective realities shaped by participants' relational, cultural, and social contexts.

Through an etic lens, the researcher analyzed these narratives to identify shared patterns and variations in experiences, allowing for a structured understanding of how participants navigate the complexities of duway within their families.

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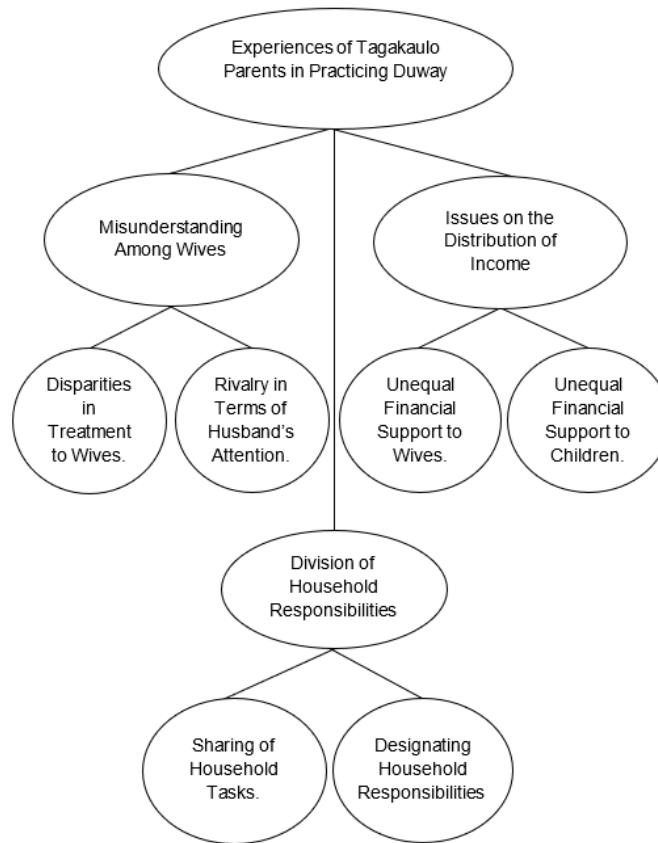


Figure 1. Emerged Themes on the Experiences of Tagakaulo Parents Practicing "Duway" (Polygamy) in Davao Occidental

Three major themes emerged: misunderstanding among wives, division of household responsibilities, and issues in the distribution of income.

These themes reveal the complex interpersonal, economic, and structural dynamics embedded in duway practices. Figure 1 is illustrated.

Misunderstanding Among Wives

Misunderstandings among co-wives emerged as a central relational dynamic, largely shaped by perceived inequality in emotional attention and material support. Rather than isolated incidents, these tensions reflect deeper struggles over recognition, legitimacy, and relational security within a shared marital structure.

Disparities in Treatment to Wives. Participants consistently highlighted unequal treatment as a major source of conflict. One participant shared: *"dili pantay ug tinagdan. Lahi sa unang asawa. Lahi pud sa ikaduha. Mao malibog ko nganong di pareha nga pareha man me niya asawa"* (The attention or treatment is not equal. It is different for the first wife and different for the second. That is why I am confused because we are both his wives.) – IDI. P1. L100 – 108.

This account reflects how perceived favoritism destabilizes relational balance, producing confusion and emotional distress. Inequality in treatment is not merely a behavioral issue but becomes symbolic of hierarchical valuation among wives. The favored wife may internalize

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superiority, while the other experiences marginalization.

Another participant described exclusion from financial support:

“akong nahagdaw... ingnon ko wala koy labot... igo ra kan-on... maypag iagi ni ug dumog...” (I pick up leftovers, then I am told I have no share... only food is mine... it is better to fight this out...) – IDI. P4. L67 – 69.

This narrative illustrates how economic exclusion reinforces emotional neglect, intensifying resentment and prompting confrontational responses. The expression of wanting to “fight” signals how unresolved inequities escalate into potential violence.

Similarly, another participant shared:

“Ang tanan gyud trabaho akoo pag abot sa income wala koy labot... Selos kayo ko...” (I do all the work but when it comes to income, I am not included... I feel very jealous.) – FGD. P2. L19-21.

Here, labor inequity intersects with financial deprivation, producing a sense of injustice. This aligns with the idea that fairness in both emotional and material domains is critical in maintaining relational stability.

Interestingly, narratives also reveal structural hierarchies, particularly privileging the first wife:

“Ako jud ang unang asawa... kabalo ko lamang ko sa ikaduhang asawa niya” (I am the first wife... I know I am ahead of the second wife.) – FGD. P3. L59-61.

This reflects a culturally embedded hierarchy, where seniority translates into authority and access, reinforcing asymmetrical power relations.

Similar patterns have been observed in other indigenous and polygamous settings, where first

wives often hold administrative and symbolic dominance (Stronge, Overall, & Sibley, 2019).

Conceptually, disparities in treatment highlight how duway arrangements are negotiated within unequal power structures, where emotional, financial, and symbolic resources are unevenly distributed.

Rivalry in Terms of Husband’s Attention.

Rivalry, particularly rooted in jealousy, emerged as a pervasive emotional experience. Jealousy functions not only as an individual feeling but as a relational mechanism shaped by competition for limited emotional resources.

One participant narrated:

“nag selos ko... lain sa pamati nga naa siyay lain... lami kayo sila hiluan... pero kadugayan nadawat ra nako” (I felt jealous... it felt strange that he has another... I even wanted to poison them... but eventually I accepted it.) – IDI. P2. L106-109.

This account reveals the intensity of emotional disruption during the transition to polygamy, including extreme thoughts rooted in perceived loss and displacement.

Over time, however, acceptance emerges as a coping mechanism, suggesting adaptive negotiation rather than resolution of inequality.

Another participant stated:

“naglagot jud ko... nagselos ko ug nasuya...” (I really felt anger... I was jealous and envious...) – IDI. P4. L29-31.

Jealousy here reflects resentment toward perceived advantage, reinforcing findings that polygamous households often experience heightened emotional competition (Pace, 2020).

Interestingly, one participant reframed jealousy positively:

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“nagselos siya kay nahigugma man siya...” (She is jealous because she loves you.) – IDI. P6. L163-164.

This interpretation positions jealousy as an expression of affection, complicating its role as both a destructive and relationally meaningful emotion. However, even when framed positively, jealousy still contributes to misunderstanding and tension.

Another participant emphasized its relational impact:

“Selos jud taman... di me magkasinabot...” (There is too much jealousy... we do not understand each other.) – FGD. P4. L65-66.

Thus, jealousy operates as both an emotional response and a structural outcome of shared marital arrangements. It reflects deeper issues of insecurity, competition, and the struggle for emotional exclusivity within a non-exclusive relationship. Overall, rivalry among wives illustrates how emotional economies in duway are inherently contested, with affection becoming a scarce and negotiated resource.

Division of Household Responsibilities. The division of household responsibilities emerged as both a source of tension and a mechanism for maintaining order. In the presence of multiple wives, domestic roles are not naturally assumed but must be negotiated, assigned, and respected (Saba et al., 2021).

Sharing of household tasks. This involves establishing a managerial hierarchy where senior wives often lead decision-making for household necessities (Brown, 2024).

Participants described structured sharing of chores:

“ako... magluto pamahaw ug paniudto... ang ikaduha manglaba... magluto panihapon...” (I cook breakfast and lunch, while the second wife washes clothes and cooks dinner.) – IDI. P2. L34-37.

This arrangement reflects a functional division of labor, reducing workload and promoting efficiency. Rather than competition, cooperation becomes necessary for daily survival.

Another participant noted:

“ako tigbudget... siya tigluto... tabangan nako siya usahay...” (I handle budgeting, she cooks... I help her sometimes.) – IDI. P3. L42-46.

This indicates flexibility within structured roles, suggesting that cooperation is not rigid but adaptive. From an analytical standpoint, shared tasks demonstrate how duway households develop pragmatic systems of labor distribution, aligning with Burton & Obel (2018), where shared responsibilities enhance efficiency in family systems.

Designating household responsibilities. Beyond sharing, a clear designation of roles is crucial to avoid conflict.

One participant explained:

“di jud ko manghilabot... kay kung hilabtan nimo... gubot jud” (I do not interfere... because if you do, conflict will arise.) – FGD. P3. L20-24.

This highlights how boundary-setting is essential in maintaining harmony. Respecting assigned roles minimizes overlap and reduces tension.

Another participant emphasized the authority of the first wife:

“ikaw isip unang asawa ikaw jud magbuot...” (As the first wife, you are the one to decide.) – FGD. P3. L104-105.

This reflects a hierarchical organization of domestic authority, where leadership is tied to marital order. Such structures help maintain order but may also reinforce inequality. Conceptually, the division of responsibilities in duway households reflects negotiated governance systems, where authority, labor, and

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roles are distributed to sustain functionality despite structural complexity.

Issues on the Distribution of Income. Financial distribution emerged as one of the most conflict-prone aspects of duway (Gadban & Goldner, 2025). Income allocation is not merely economic but deeply tied to fairness, recognition, and relational equity (Rashid & Chaudhary, 2021).

Unequal financial support to wives. Participants emphasized that inequality in financial support leads directly to conflict:

“naghatag kog 1,500 sa una... unya 5,000 sa ikaduha... nag away sila...” (I gave 1,500 to the first and 5,000 to the second... they fought.) – IDI. P6. L134-138.

This illustrates how numerical differences in allocation symbolize relational favoritism, triggering disputes.

Another participant expressed:

“wala koy bahin sa income... selos kayo ko...” (I have no share in the income... I feel very jealous.) – FGD. P2. L19-21.

Here, financial exclusion reinforces emotional marginalization, demonstrating the interconnectedness of economic and relational dynamics. Unequal financial support to children. Inequality extends to children, affecting inter-family relations:

“kung muhatag ka... tunga gyud na dapat...” (If you give, it must be equally divided.) – IDI. P5. L35 – 37.

Equal distribution is seen as necessary to prevent conflict, reflecting a principle of distributive justice within polygamous households.

Coping Strategies of Tagakaulo Parents in Practicing Duway

On the coping strategies of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway, two major themes emerged: (1) agreement between wives towards their

Another participant shared:

“gi huna-huna nako e platar ang akong pamilya...aron walay gubot” (I think of ways to organize my family to avoid conflict.) – IDI. P4. L138-141.

This indicates the husband’s role in actively managing fairness to maintain family cohesion. Analytically, financial distribution in duway reflects a balancing act between limited resources and multiple dependents, often exacerbated by poverty (Allegra, 2020).

As noted by Al-Krenawi & Graham (2019), fairness in resource allocation is crucial in preventing conflict in polygamous families.

Synthesis

Across all themes, the experiences of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway reveal that:

Inequality—whether emotional, economic, or structural—is the core source of conflict. Jealousy operates as both an emotional response and a structural outcome. Household organization relies on negotiated roles and implicit hierarchies, and financial fairness is central to maintaining peace.

Rather than functioning as harmonious extensions of cultural tradition, duway households are dynamic systems marked by negotiation, tension, and adaptation. These findings affirm that while polygamy is culturally sanctioned, its lived realities involve continuous efforts to balance equity, authority, and relational stability.

husband, with subthemes setting up compromises and mutual understanding, and (2) agreement on the distribution of income, with subthemes explaining income division to wives and to children. These coping strategies illustrate

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how relational tensions in polygamous households are managed through negotiated

arrangements rather than the elimination of conflict. Figure 2 is illustrated.

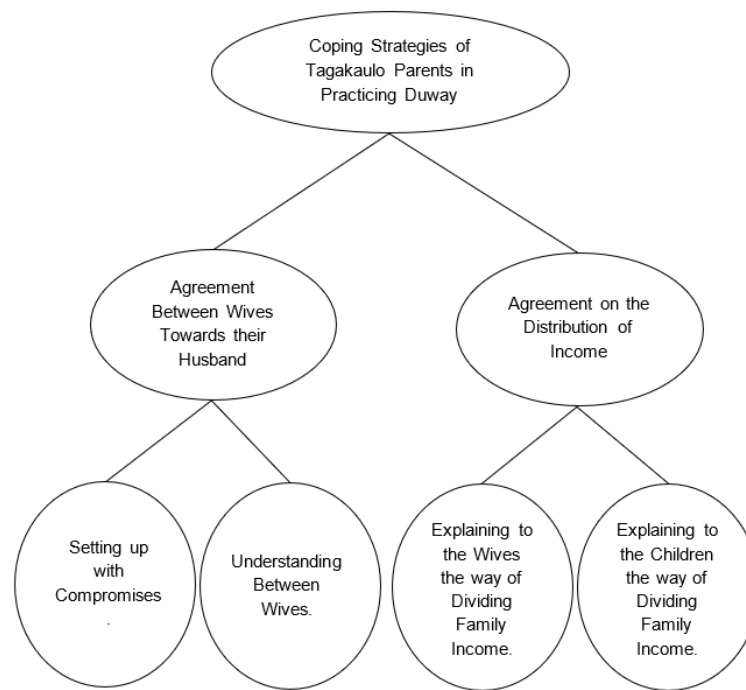


Figure 2. Emerged Themes on Coping Strategies of Tagakaulo Parents Practicing "Duway" (Polygamy) in Davao Occidental

Agreement Between Wives Towards Their Husband

A central coping mechanism among Tagakaulo parents is the establishment of a negotiated agreement between co-wives regarding their husband's time, attention, and emotional presence. Rather than resolving rivalry completely, households develop structured compromises that regulate access to the husband. Setting up with compromises. Unequal treatment by the husband was a consistent trigger of conflict; however, participants described how this was managed through explicit time-sharing arrangements. One participant explained:

"Kay naa may dili panagsabot... gi tunga tunga namo ang oras sa among duha... Lahi sa unang asawa. Lahi pud sa ikaduhang asawa para patas." (Because there was a misunderstanding due to unequal treatment, we divided his time between us... different schedule for the first wife, different for the second, so it is fair.) – IDI. P4. L231–239.

This illustrates that conflict is not eliminated but reorganized through temporal equity, where fairness is defined as equal allocation of the husband's presence. In this context, time becomes a negotiated resource that replaces emotional exclusivity.

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This arrangement is further reinforced through structured scheduling:

“Lunes to Miyerkules kami, Huwebes hangtod Sabado sa pikas... Domingo depende sa among bana kung asa siya.” (Monday to Wednesday he stays with me, Thursday to Saturday with the other wife, Sunday depends on him.) – IDI. P1. L271–279.

Such scheduling reflects a form of institutionalized domestic governance, where emotional tensions are managed through predictable rotation rather than spontaneous interaction. However, the system also reveals the fragility of emotional equity, as fairness is externally imposed rather than internally felt.

The breakdown of this arrangement initially resulted in emotional distress:

“Sa una naa jud me panagbikil... dili tarung pagkabahin sa among panginahanglan sa attention... mao saputon ko ug muaway ko.” (Before, we had conflicts because attention was not properly divided... I became angry and would argue.) – FGD. P1. L158–165.

Over time, however, adjustment occurred through enforced structure, suggesting that coping is not immediate emotional resolution but behavioral regulation through negotiated routines.

Scholars have noted that in polygamous households, emotional stability is often maintained not through equality of affection but through regulated access systems that reduce perceived exclusion (Farris, 2017). This aligns with the participants’ reliance on time-sharing as a stabilizing mechanism.

Understanding between wives. Beyond structural arrangements, emotional coping also occurs through gradual acceptance and interpersonal adjustment between co-wives.

One participant described how emotional tension shifted into compliance and eventual acceptance:

“Sa una nag selos ko... pero hangtod naulian ko... hangtod sa nahuman, nadawat ra nako.” (At first I was jealous... but later I calmed down... eventually I accepted it.) – IDI. P3. L211–216.

This transition reflects emotional normalization, where jealousy is not removed but slowly reduced through lived exposure.

Another participant emphasized relational adaptation through obedience dynamics:

“Sundon ang gusto sa pirmirong asawa para walay gubot.” (Follow the first wife so there will be no conflict.) – IDI. P1. L232–235.

This statement reveals an informal hierarchy where harmony is achieved through compliance rather than equality.

Understanding, therefore, is not symmetrical but structured around dominant emotional regulation by one wife over the other at certain moments of conflict.

Co-wives also recognized emotional reciprocity in managing jealousy:

“Pailob lang jud kay ang unang asawa kung masuko ug magselos, damay tanan.” (Be patient because when the first wife is angry or jealous, everyone is affected.) – FGD. P2. L161–168.

This reflects how jealousy is socially recognized as a contagious emotional state, requiring patience as a coping strategy to prevent escalation.

Overall, understanding between wives functions less as emotional harmony and more as strategic emotional management, where patience, obedience, and adjustment are used to reduce relational instability.

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This aligns with studies suggesting that jealousy in polygamous households operates as a structural emotion tied to perceived inequality in attention and affection, often requiring behavioral negotiation rather than emotional resolution (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2019).

Agreement on the Distribution of Income

Financial conflict emerged as another major source of tension, requiring structured explanation and negotiated fairness.

Explaining to the wives the way of dividing family income. Participants emphasized that misunderstanding often arises from unequal financial allocation, which is later resolved through explanation.

One participant shared:

“Sa una nasuko ko nganong mas dako ang sa pikas... pero tung gipasabot niya sa amoa, nasabtan rapud nako.” (At first I was angry why the other wife received more, but when it was explained, I understood.) – IDI. P4. L295–302.

This highlights that financial conflict is cognitively resolved rather than emotionally suppressed, where explanation transforms resentment into acceptance.

Another participant reinforced the importance of communication:

“Kung wala pa niya giistorya, di ko mahibalo nganong dili pareha... awayon jud nako ang ikaduhang asawa.” (If he had not explained it, I would not understand why it was unequal... I would have fought the second wife.) – FGD. P1. L231–238.

This demonstrates that explanation functions as a preventive mechanism against relational violence, particularly between co-wives. Income distribution is sometimes justified by household needs:

“Mas daku ang bahin sa pikas kay mas daghan man iyang anak.” (The other wife gets a bigger share because she has more children.) – IDI. P5. L221–225.

Here, fairness is reframed not as equality but as need-based distribution, showing an adaptive moral economy within the household. Explaining to the children the way of dividing family income. Children also become part of the financial explanation process, especially in households with multiple maternal lineages.

One participant explained:

“Iya giingon nga mas dako sa pikas kay mas daghan man ang anak didto... pero nisabot ko kay gi-explain niya.” (He said the other family receives more because they have more children... but I understood because he explained.) – IDI. P5. L211–221.

This indicates that financial coping extends beyond spouses into intergenerational understanding, where explanation prevents resentment among children.

Another participant clarified autonomy in income use:

“Ang akoang income para ra sa akong mga anak... lahi na sa hatag sa among bana.” (My income is only for my children... separate from what my husband provides.) – FGD. P2. L227–231.

This suggests partial financial independence within the polygamous system, where individual earnings become a buffer against perceived inequality.

Overall, financial coping strategies are grounded in transparent communication and moral justification of unequal allocation. Rather than enforcing strict equality, the household operates under a logic of contextual fairness, where distribution depends on perceived need and family size.

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This aligns with Bowen's Family System Theory that in polygamous systems, resource allocation is often negotiated through explanation rather than rigid equality, reducing conflict by reframing inequality as functional necessity (Brown, 2024; Famiglini, 2023; Altman & Ginat, 2018).

Synthesis

Insights of Tagakaulo Parents in Practicing Duway

On the insights of the Tagakaulo parents in practicing duway, the following themes emerged: (1) realizing that responsible parenthood brings harmony in the family; (2) learning to accept and embrace their current situation; (3) realizing the importance of understanding differences; and (4) learning the importance of cooperation with one another. Figure 3 illustrates these themes.

Across both relational and financial domains, coping mechanisms among Tagakaulo parents practicing duway are not aimed at eliminating inequality but at managing its emotional consequences through negotiation, explanation, and structured routines. These mechanisms reflect a culturally adaptive system where stability is achieved through compromise rather than equivalence.

Realizing that Responsible Parenthood Brings Harmony in the Family.

The first insight of the Tagakaulo parents in practicing duway is that responsible parenthood contributes to family harmony.

Participants emphasized that despite marital complexities, their priority shifts toward the welfare of their children, which becomes a stabilizing factor in their relationships.

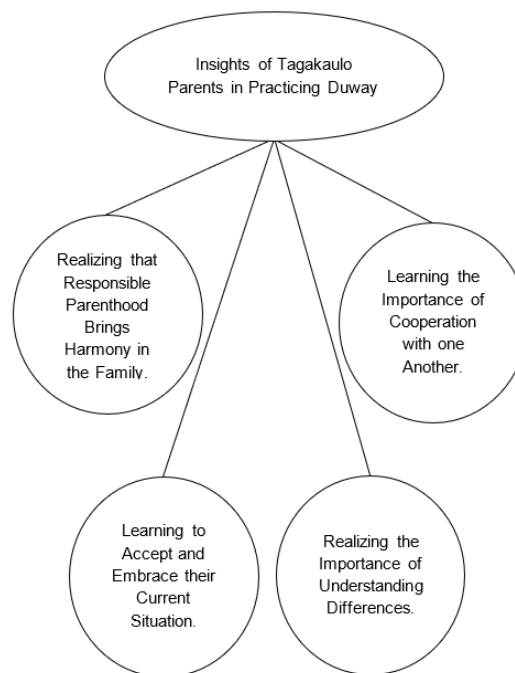


Figure 3. Emerged Themes on the Insights of the Tagakaulo Parents Practicing "Duway" (Polygamy) in Davao Occidental

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One participant shared:

“Kung responsible ka nga ginikanan, huna-hunaon nimo nga para ni sa imong mga anak para wala nay gubot, wa nay selos-selos.” (If you are a responsible parent, you think of your children so that there will be no conflict, no jealousy.) IDI. P4. L347-357.

This indicates that parenting responsibilities help redirect emotional struggles such as jealousy toward a more purposeful focus on children's needs. Rather than eliminating emotional tension entirely, responsibility provides a coping direction that reduces relational conflict.

Another participant added:

“Para sa anak, walaon ang selos... ang away... huna-hunaon nalang nga para sa mga anak imo gibuhay.” (For your children, remove jealousy and conflict... just think that what you are doing is for your children.) IDI. P6. L368-371.

This reflects how children become a central motivation for endurance in a polygamous setup. The emotional burden of jealousy is managed by prioritizing children's future, particularly education and stability.

A father-participant further emphasized long-term parental responsibility:

“Wala man pud nako sila gipasagdaan hangtud karon nga dako na sila...” (I did not neglect them even until now that they are already grown.) FGD. P3. L293 – 298.

This highlights that parental responsibility extends beyond childhood, reinforcing the enduring role of parenting in maintaining family cohesion.

Overall, responsible parenthood functions as an adaptive coping strategy that redirects emotional conflict toward child-centered priorities. This supports the idea that parental responsibility strengthens resilience in complex family structures (Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Caridine, & Abu-Saad, 2017; Anderson, 2017).

Learning to Accept and Embrace Their Current Situation

The second insight centers on acceptance as a coping mechanism in duway relationships. Participants described acceptance as a necessary response to situations that cannot be easily changed, particularly unequal attention or treatment among wives.

One participant stated:

“Dawaton nalang nga naa jud mga ing ana nga sitwasyon... wala kay mabuhay so ang imo ana ang pagdawat.” (Just accept that there are things like this situations... you cannot do anything, so you just accept.) IDI. P4. L387-392.

This suggests that acceptance is framed as a practical response to emotional and relational limitations within the marriage.

Another participant explained:

“Isa sa ako nahuna-hunaan mao ang pagdawat sa mga butang nga bisan unsaon nimo di jud mausab.” (One thing I realized is acceptance of things that cannot be changed no matter what.) IDI. P6. L348-352.

This reflects a shift from resistance to resignation, where emotional conflict is reduced through cognitive reframing of the situation.

During the FGD, participants emphasized the role of communication in reducing misunderstandings:

“Kung kabalo lang ang bana mohatag ug tamang pagtratar... wala untay di sinabtanay.” (If the husband knows how to give proper treatment... there would be no misunderstanding.) FGD. P4. L300-306.

This highlights that acceptance is not passive surrender but is often supported by negotiated understanding among family members.

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However, participants also acknowledged that acceptance becomes the final option when conflicts persist:

“Kung di gihapon masulbad, dawaton nalang jud... kaysa sige ug away.” (If it cannot be solved, just accept it... instead of constant conflict.) FGD. P4. L322-326.

Thus, acceptance emerges as both an emotional adjustment and a conflict-management strategy that enables continuity of family relationships.

Realizing the Importance of Understanding Differences

The third insight emphasizes understanding differences among wives and family roles as essential in reducing conflict.

A participant explained:

“Mas maayo nga lahi-lahi ang buhatonon sa panimalay... para makita ang diperensya.” (It is better that tasks are different in the household so differences are recognized.) IDI. P2. L398-403.

This reflects the recognition that assigning distinct roles reduces competition and promotes functional cooperation within the household.

Another participant shared the importance of communication in clarifying roles:

“Kinahanglan makigstorya jud... para mabaw-an kinsa ang masunod sa panimalay.” (There should be communication to know who should be followed in the household.) IDI. P3. L380-385.

This shows that authority and responsibility in a duway setup are not automatically assigned but are negotiated through dialogue. During the FGD, participants further emphasized clarity in roles:

“Kung prangka ka mo-storya, mas klaro kaysa mag-away.” (If you speak honestly, things become clearer than through conflict.) IDI. P6. L413-417.

This suggests that openness reduces ambiguity and prevents role-related disputes. Overall, understanding differences is linked to clear communication, role negotiation, and reduced competition among wives, contributing to household stability.

Learning The Importance of Cooperation with One Another

The fourth insight highlights cooperation as a key coping mechanism in managing financial and relational challenges.

One participant stated:

“Importante ang kooperasyon kaysa mag-away kay lahi-lahi ang pagtunga sa kwarta.” (Cooperation is more important than conflict because income distribution differs.) IDI. P4. L432-437.

This emphasizes that financial inequality is better managed through cooperation rather than confrontation.

Another participant added:

“Tabanganay kaysa mag-inawayay.” (Helping each other instead of fighting.) IDI. P5. L437-439.

This reflects a shift toward collective functioning, where cooperation becomes essential for household stability.

FGD responses reinforced this idea:

“Panaghiusa, tinabangay, sabtanay para ma han-ay.” (Unity, cooperation, and understanding for order.) FGD. P2. L322-325.

This shows that cooperation is directly linked to household order and emotional balance. Participants also acknowledged acceptance of shared marital arrangements as part of cooperation:

“Dawat na nako nga duway ra ko...” (I have accepted that I am in a duway setup.) FGD. P1. L307-308.

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This indicates that cooperation includes emotional acceptance of shared relationships and structured time-sharing among wives. Overall, cooperation emerges as a practical and emotional strategy that supports financial sharing, reduces conflict, and strengthens family functioning.

Synthesis

Across all themes, the insights of Tagakaulo parents in practicing duway reveal that harmony in a polygamous family is maintained through adaptive strategies: prioritizing children, accepting limitations, recognizing differences, and fostering cooperation. These coping mechanisms demonstrate that family stability is not the absence of conflict but the continuous negotiation of roles, emotions, and resources.

4. Implications

This study explored the lived experiences, coping strategies, and insights of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway in Demoloc, Malita, Davao Occidental using a phenomenological approach.

The findings indicate that while duway is marked by recurring challenges such as jealousy, perceived inequality, division of responsibilities, and financial concerns, families actively construct coping mechanisms grounded in communication, negotiation, and shared understanding.

The findings suggest that duway as a family system operates through continuous negotiation of roles, emotions, and resources. Although jealousy and competition among wives are inevitable, these are mitigated through strategies such as equitable time allocation, open communication, and negotiated agreements on household responsibilities and financial distribution.

The lived experiences of Tagakaulo parents practicing duway illustrate a family system striving for homeostasis amidst chronic emotional and structural tension. In this interconnected unit, the "misunderstanding among wives" and intense jealousy reflect a lack of differentiation of self, where members become emotionally "fused" and reactive to perceived inequalities in affection and material resources (Brown, 2024). To manage this systemic anxiety, the family utilizes triangulation and hierarchical boundary-setting—specifically the division of household responsibilities and the authority of the senior wife—to create a functional order that prevents the entire unit from collapsing into destructive conflict (Famigliini, 2023).

This highlights that relational stability in polygamous families is not inherent but achieved through deliberate interpersonal processes.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the understanding of polygamous family dynamics by emphasizing the role of cultural and ethical relativism. It demonstrates that duway, while often perceived as conflict-prone, can function as a structured and adaptive system when guided by shared cultural norms, mutual understanding, and role clarity.

The findings reinforce the idea that family harmony is shaped not only by structural arrangements but by the capacity of individuals to negotiate meaning, manage emotions, and prioritize collective welfare, particularly that of children.

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Practically, the results underscore the need for culturally responsive approaches in education and community engagement. Institutions such as the Department of Education are encouraged to promote cultural awareness and inclusivity through teacher training, curriculum development, and community-based programs.

5. Recommendations

Future research should expand the scope of inquiry by including the perspectives of children raised in duway families, particularly in relation to their socio-emotional development, identity formation, and school experiences.

Investigating how these children navigate social environments and cultural expectations can provide a more holistic understanding of the long-term implications of polygamous family structures. Additionally, comparative studies

Educators must be equipped to understand diverse family structures to better support learners from indigenous and polygamous backgrounds. Furthermore, strengthening communication within families—particularly in explaining roles, expectations, and financial decisions—can serve as a key intervention in reducing conflict and fostering cohesion.

across different indigenous groups or cultural contexts are recommended to examine variations in the practice and adaptation of polygamy. Such studies may reveal how duway evolves in response to modernization and external social influences. Further research may also focus on policy development, particularly in education and social services, to ensure that programs and interventions are culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of diverse family systems

6. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its qualitative phenomenological design and small sample size of twelve (12) participants, which may restrict the transferability of the findings beyond the Tagakaulo community in Demoloc, Malita, Davao Occidental. The use of purposive sampling may also introduce selection bias, as only individuals who met specific criteria and were willing to participate were included.

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through interviews may be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias, potentially influencing the authenticity of responses. Cultural sensitivity and the deeply personal nature of duway practices may have further limited the full disclosure of experiences by participants.

Moreover, the researcher's positionality may have influenced the data collection and interpretation processes. As an external interpreter of participants' lived experiences, the researcher's perspectives, assumptions, and cultural background may have shaped how responses were understood and thematically analyzed, despite efforts to maintain reflexivity and minimize bias.

Language and translation also present limitations in this study. Since some participant responses were expressed in the local dialect and later translated into English, there is a possibility that subtle meanings, cultural nuances, and emotional depth may not have been fully captured or may have been slightly altered in translation.

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Institutional Review Board (IRB) Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards and was approved by the appropriate academic authorities of Holy Cross of Davao College – Graduate School. Permission to conduct the study within the indigenous community was also secured from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in compliance with Republic Act No. 8371 (IPRA Law).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. No personal or sensitive identifying information was disclosed in the research.

Data Availability and Sharing Policy

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical restrictions and the need to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, particularly as the study involves an indigenous community. De-identified data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to approval and in accordance with ethical guidelines and agreements with the participants.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study or its findings.

AI Disclosure Statement

The researcher utilized artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely for language refinement, grammar checking, and formatting purposes. All core aspects of the research, including conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, were conducted by the researcher. The author takes full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the content.

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