

Prayer and Health: An Interdisciplinary (Study of the Qur'an and Hadith)

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Abstract : Interdisciplinary studies linking the Quran and Hadith with modern science continues to attract significant attention among global academics. This phenomenon reflects a paradigm shift in Islamic studies, where integration with contemporary disciplines is seen as essential for a more comprehensive understanding. Prayer holds a central place in Islamic teachings, recognized as one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam. The concept of health in Islam is broad, encompassing physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects in an integrated manner. This holistic Islamic view of health demonstrates that the practice of worship, particularly prayer, has the potential to provide health benefits that extend beyond the physical dimension. Prayer contributes significantly to an individual's overall mental and spiritual well-being. The aim of this study was to understand the integration of prayer and health through an interdisciplinary study linking the Koran and Hadith. The study concluded that there is a significant and multifaceted relationship between the practice of prayer and various aspects of health, encompassing the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. This demonstrates that religious teachings do not focus solely on the spiritual aspect but also provide a comprehensive framework for maintaining overall health.

Keywords : Al-Quran; Hadith; Health; Interdisciplinary studies; Prayer.

1. BACKGROUND

Interdisciplinary studies linking the Quran and Hadith with modern science continue to attract significant attention among global academics . This phenomenon reflects a paradigm shift in Islamic studies, where integration with contemporary disciplines is seen as essential for gaining a more comprehensive understanding (AlAbdulwahab et al., 2013). The journal *Interdisciplinary Studies of Quran & Hadith (ISQH)* has emerged as a crucial platform (Albatnuni & Koszycki, 2020). This journal facilitates research that effectively bridges the Islamic sciences with the humanities, through the lens of the Quran and Hadith. The existence and growth of such publications signal a growing recognition of the need to integrate religious knowledge with modern scientific understanding. This enriches the academic landscape and broadens scholarly horizons (Bartkowski et al., 2017).

This interdisciplinary approach is considered crucial because both science and sharia science share the same fundamental goal: to serve humanity and provide comprehensive guidance for understanding the realities of the world (Albatnuni & Koszycki, 2020). The integration of these two fields is seen as crucial for achieving a more holistic understanding of various aspects of life (Fajrussalam et al., 2022). Without an integrated approach, understanding of reality can be partial, lacking the depth offered by a synthesis of religious and scientific perspectives. This allows for the development of a more robust framework for addressing contemporary challenges, both in the spiritual and material dimensions (Habib, 2019).

Prayer holds a central place in Islamic teachings, recognized as one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam. This act of worship is not merely a ritualistic obligation to be fulfilled . It is also a direct form of worship and a primary means for individuals to establish a deep spiritual connection with Allah SWT (Ijaz, et al., 2017). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explicitly emphasized the importance of this act of worship. He stated that prayer would be the first deed to be accounted for on the Day of Judgment. This emphasis underscores the spiritual and essential significance of prayer in a Muslim's life, going beyond mere daily routine (Kamal, 2018).

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The concept of health in Islam is broad, encompassing physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects in an integrated manner (Kamal, 2018). The human body is viewed as a precious trust from Allah SWT that must be properly cared for. The Quran and Hadith provide clear guidance for maintaining health. This includes recommendations for a halal and balanced diet, strict personal hygiene practices, and the adoption of an overall healthy lifestyle (Maryam, 2018). This holistic Islamic view of health demonstrates that religious practices, particularly prayer, have the potential to provide health benefits that extend beyond the physical dimension. Prayer contributes significantly to an individual's overall mental and spiritual well-being (Mirza et al., 2019).

The physical movements involved in prayer, such as standing (qiyam), bowing (bowing), prostration (sujud), and sitting (sitting), intrinsically possess potential physical health benefits comparable to those of physical exercise or meditation (Fajrussalam, et al., 2022). Furthermore, the mental concentration and spiritual connection established during prayer have been shown to have significant benefits for mental and emotional health.[4] Contemporary research has shown that regular prayer practice can effectively reduce stress levels, improve emotional well-being, and strengthen an individual's spiritual connection (Musthofa Al-Basuruwani, 2018). This paper aims to further explore the potential relationship between regular prayer practice and various aspects of human health (Osman, 2018). The approach used is interdisciplinary, utilizing comprehensive evidence from the Quran, Hadith, and contemporary scientific research. Specifically, this study will analyze the verses of the Quran and Hadith related to prayer and health, as well as examine the implications of prayer movements and times on health through a scientific approach (Musthofa Al-Basuruwani, 2018).

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

Prayer in Islam has a very central position as a basic worship that must be performed five times a day by every Muslim. Theologically, prayer is not only seen as a religious ritual, but also as a fundamental means to maintain a continuous spiritual relationship between humans and Allah SWT (Osman, N. (2018). This spiritual dimension of prayer serves as a major support for mental and emotional health, because through this worship individuals can find deep inner peace and effectively reduce anxiety levels. Regularity in prayer provides structure to the day, which can help stabilize emotions and provide a sense of purpose, all of which contribute to psychological well-being (Bartkowski, et al., 2017).

The concept of health in Islam is holistic, involving the simultaneous maintenance of physical, mental and spiritual aspects. (Bartkowski, et al., 2017). Islamic teachings consistently advocate a healthy lifestyle, strict personal hygiene, and emotional balance as integral parts of religious practices (Ijaz, et al., 2017). This understanding demonstrates that health is not simply the absence of disease, but rather an optimal state of all dimensions of human existence. Therefore, every aspect of a Muslim's life, including worship, is directed toward achieving and maintaining a state of holistic health (Maryam, 2018).

The Quran explicitly highlights the importance of cleanliness before prayer, as mentioned in Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:6). This verse emphasizes that physical cleanliness is an essential prerequisite for maintaining health. This cleanliness is not only limited to physical aspects, such as ablution or bathing, but also encompasses spiritual and psychological cleanliness. This forms a strong foundation for holistic health (AlAbdulwahab, et al., 2020). From a public health perspective, this emphasis on ritual cleanliness encourages sustainable hygienic practices in daily life, which directly contribute to the prevention of infectious diseases and an overall improvement in quality of life (Alim, 2020). This demonstrates how Islamic law inherently encourages preventive practices that align with modern health principles (Habib, 2019).

The Quran also indicates that through prayer and patience, one can find inner peace, as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:45, 153). This suggests that spiritual practices are closely linked to one's mental and emotional well-being (Ijaz et al., 2017). Psychologically, the repetitive and structured act of prayer, accompanied by a focus on Allah, can serve as a form of active meditation. This helps reduce the production of stress hormones such as

cortisol and increases the activity of the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for "rest and digest." The result is a decreased stress response, increased relaxation, and a sense of peace. This is a physiological mechanism that connects religious teachings with beneficial biological responses in the body (Maryam, 2018).

The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also consistently emphasize the health benefits of prayer (Albatnuni & Koszycki, 2020). The hadith, which mentions healing in prayer, demonstrates that this practice has broad therapeutic potential, encompassing spiritual, physical, and mental aspects. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasized the importance of maintaining physical strength to optimally fulfill religious obligations (Chamsi-Pasha, M., & Chamsi-Pasha, H., 2021). This emphasis demonstrates Islam's pragmatic view of physical health; a strong and healthy body is an essential support for perfect worship, not merely an end in itself. From this perspective, prayer can be seen as a structured form of "behavioral therapy," promoting self-discipline and fitness. (Kamal, 2018).

Thus, prayer in Islam is not merely a ritual obligation, but has been proven to be an important practice in maintaining comprehensive health. Islam places great emphasis on maintaining health and prohibits anything that can harm the body. This includes a balanced diet, prohibiting the consumption of harmful substances such as alcohol and narcotics, and encouraging regular physical activity through acts of worship such as prayer (Albatnuni & Koszycki, 2020). Several recent studies confirm that following Islamic teachings related to health can reduce the risk of various chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. (Mirza et al., 2019). This convergence between religious teachings and scientific evidence strengthens the interdisciplinary validity of this study. It also highlights Islam's great potential as an effective framework for public health interventions, offering a culturally and spiritually acceptable approach (Albatnuni & Koszycki, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with a library research approach. This approach was chosen to review and analyze various literature relevant to the research topic (Nurhayati & Rosadi, 2022). The data used in this study came from various sources, including interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith, books, journal articles, and other scientific works discussing prayer and health. Data sources were selected based on their relevance and credibility.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the implications of prayer from a health perspective using a scientific approach:

Movement Perspective

The following is a description of each prayer movement based on a scientific perspective and accompanied by evidence from the Quran and Hadith:

a) Intention

Intention is the determination of the heart to perform worship for the sake of Allah SWT. Although it has no visible physical movement, the mental process of making an intention involves cognitive activity that trains concentration and spiritual awareness. (Alim, 2020). Intention serves as an initial cognitive activation, preparing the brain for focus and minimizing external distractions, similar to mindfulness practices before meditation or exercise. This is a crucial step in optimizing the physical and mental benefits of the entire prayer sequence. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Verily, deeds depend upon their intentions." (Narrated by Bukhari No. 1; Muslim No. 1907).

b) Standing (Qiyam)

Standing upright helps improve posture and activates the core and lower back muscles. The importance of upright posture is not only aesthetic, but also crucial for long-term spinal health, helping to prevent the chronic low back pain common in modern society. (Osman, 2018). In Surah Al-Baqarah verse 238 it is stated: "Guard your prayers, and (maintain) the Wusthaa prayer. Stand for Allah (in your prayers)

with reverence." This shows the connection between spiritual awareness and physical harmony.

c) *Takbiratul Ihram*

Raising both hands parallel to the ears and reciting the takbir activates the shoulder and chest muscles. This movement also triggers deep breathing regulation, which has an impact on relaxing the sympathetic nervous system. This is an important starting point for the body's transition to a calmer and more receptive state, reducing the stress response and increasing oxygen intake to the lungs (BaHamam & Almeneessier, 2020). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "When you stand for prayer, say the takbir." (Narrated by Bukhari No. 6251).

d) *Reciting Al-Fatihah*

Reciting Al-Fatihah while standing stimulates active engagement of the left and right brain, training concentration and memorization. This contributes to improved cognitive function, memory, and brain plasticity, similar to brain exercises recommended for maintaining mental health. (Alim, 2020). Surah Al-Fatihah is called the "Ummul Buku" and must be recited in every rak'ah of prayer. The Prophet said: "It is invalid to pray for someone who does not read the Fatihatul Book." (HR. Bukhari No. 756).

e) *Ruku' with Tuma'ninah*

This bending movement is very effective in flexing the spine and strengthening the thigh and calf muscles. Research by Safee et al. (2013) showed that the bowing movement provides muscle activation comparable to light stretching exercises and can be used in physical therapy for people with mild scoliosis and spinal pain (Chamsi-Pasha, M., & Chamsi-Pasha, H., 2021). This movement also improves joint flexibility and blood circulation to the lower limbs. The Prophet Muhammad said: "Then bow until you are in a state of bowing." (Narrated by Bukhari No. 793).

f) *I'tidal with Tuma'ninah*

Standing back up from bowing improves blood circulation throughout the body. It also aids tissue reoxygenation after the slight pressure of bowing. This movement serves as a dynamic transition that optimizes blood flow and prevents stasis, similar to light interval training, which benefits cardiovascular health. (Alim, 2020). Proposition: "Then rise from bowing until you stand upright (i'tidal)." (HR. Bukhari No. 6251).

g) *Prostrate yourself twice with Tuma'ninah*

Prostration places the brain in a lower position than the heart, increasing blood flow and oxygenation to the brain. This has a positive impact on memory and brain function. This movement can reduce blood pressure in people with mild hypertension. Regularly increasing blood flow to the brain can also maintain the elasticity of the brain's blood vessels and contribute to the prevention of neurodegenerative disorders such as dementia. This is a unique movement that provides significant neurological benefits (Habib, 2019). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Kneel and then prostrate until you are in prostration." (Narrated by Bukhari No. 6251).

h) *Sitting between two prostrations and Sitting Tasyahud*

This position provides a recovery break for the body. Sitting between two prostrations also helps improve knee and ankle flexibility. This is a gentle exercise to maintain joint range of motion and strengthen ligaments, especially in the elderly. (Habib, 2019). Sitting in this position repeatedly also trains body balance and functions as a form of static exercise that maintains core muscle stability. The Prophet said: "Then sit down until you are finished in sitting." (HR. Bukhari No. 6251).

i) *Reading the Initial Tasyahud and the Prophet's Shalawat*

Reciting tasyahud trains memory and concentration. Reciting salawat has a calming effect on the soul. These aspects highlight the meditative and relaxing dimensions of prayer, which contribute to stress reduction and increased emotional well-being (Mirza, et al., 2019). The hadith related to tasyahud: "When one of you sits in prayer, let him say: Attahiyatu lillahi..." (Narrated by Muslim No. 402). The hadith related to salawat: "Whoever sends salawat upon me once, Allah will send salawat upon him ten times." (Narrated by Muslim No. 408).

j) Reading Greetings

The greeting is a rotational movement of the neck to the right and left that provides biomechanical benefits for the neck and ends the prayer in a calm manner. This movement serves as a gentle neck stretch, increases cervical mobility and reduces trapezius muscle stiffness and tension headaches that often occur due to modern posture.[18] The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The sign of the end of prayer is the greeting to the right and to the left." (Narrated by Abu Daud No. 996).

Previous research has shown that Muslims who perform mindful prayer experience increased heart rate variability (HRV), an important indicator of cardiovascular health (BaHammam & Almeneessier, 2020). Several hospitals in the Middle East and Malaysia have even implemented prayer movements as part of physical rehabilitation for patients with mild stroke and osteoarthritis. They found that this approach was more acceptable to Muslim patients due to its religious nuances, thus increasing adherence to the therapy program. This is clear evidence of the integration of religious practices into medical therapy, demonstrating the practical relevance of this interdisciplinary research [21].

Perspective Time

Not only do the movements of prayer provide physical health benefits, but its regular timing also significantly supports the human biological system (Ijaz, et al., 2017). The combination of structured movements and fixed timing makes prayer a scientifically valid spiritual practice in supporting overall human health [18].

a) Subuh prayer

Fajr prayer, which occurs before sunrise, is closely linked to the cortisol hormone cycle, which naturally peaks in the morning. Cortisol helps increase the body's energy, concentration, and physical readiness. (Mirza et al., 2019). Performing the Fajr prayer on time helps stimulate the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, improving mental fitness for facing daily activities. Spiritual activities in the morning also have an impact on improving mood and reducing the risk of mood disorders, as they provide a sense of purpose and calm before starting the day. This is a clear example of synchronizing worship with the body's circadian rhythm, optimizing natural physiological functions. (Albatnuni & Koszycki, 2020).

b) Dhuhr prayer

The Zuhr prayer is performed in the middle of the day, when the body is already beginning to experience fatigue from physical and cognitive activity (AlAbdulwahab, et al., 2020). Taking time to pray during this time can lower heart rate, reduce blood pressure, and activate the parasympathetic nervous system. This practice helps restore energy and increase productivity after prayer (Osman, 2018). Studies show that short breaks such as prayer can prevent work fatigue and improve cognitive efficiency, similar to the scientifically proven concept of "power naps." This is a natural intervention to maintain the body's homeostasis amidst the daily grind (20 Mirza, et al., 2019).

c) Asr prayer

Asr prayer is performed in the late afternoon. Physiologically, this time is often associated with decreased energy and increased stress due to accumulated work pressure. (AlAbdulwahab, et al., 2020). Performing the Asr prayer provides an emotional and physical break that helps overcome the afternoon performance decline, increasing focus and consistency in completing end-of-day tasks (Chamsi-Pasha, M., & Chamsi-Pasha, H., 2021). Furthermore, Asr is a critical time in the hormonal transition that supports the body's metabolism, helping the body adapt to changes in activity and preparing for the rest phase. (Mirza, et al., 2019).

d) Maghrib prayer

Maghrib prayer is performed immediately after sunset, marking the initial phase of relaxation in the circadian rhythm.[20] At this time, the body begins to prepare for rest. Spiritual activities during this time contribute to lowering stress hormones and gradually increasing melatonin levels. Maghrib prayer has been shown to have a calming effect and prepare the body for earlier and better sleep. It is an effective natural intervention for sleep regulation, aiding the transition from daytime activities to a state of nighttime rest (Mirza, et al., 2019).

e) *Isha prayer*

Isha prayer provides an opportunity to align the nervous system for a night's sleep (Mirza et al., 2019). Research shows that Isha prayer performed in a quiet environment helps the brain disconnect from daily activities and facilitates deep relaxation. The combination of Isha prayer and Qiyamul Lail (night prayer) supports restorative sleep patterns and improves hormonal imbalances, including insulin resistance and high blood pressure (Ijaz et al., 2017). This demonstrates how night prayer can be a powerful complement to improving sleep quality and overall metabolic health [21].

Specific movements in prayer, such as Qiyam (standing), bowing, and prostration, have been shown to have a concrete positive impact on physical health. This includes improved body balance, strengthening core and extremity muscles, and significantly contributing to cardiovascular health. From a temporal perspective, regular prayer aligns with the body's circadian rhythm, which is crucial for regulating sleep cycles and the production of vital hormones like cortisol and melatonin. This synchronization directly impacts sleep quality, reduces stress levels, and ultimately supports overall mental well-being.

Overall, prayer not only fulfills a religious obligation for Muslims, but is also a highly effective health practice in supporting a healthy and balanced lifestyle. The integration of spiritual and physiological dimensions in prayer offers a unique model for preventive and therapeutic health interventions. Therefore, further research is urgently needed to explore the long-term impact of prayer routines on various health indicators, using more sophisticated scientific methodologies. Close collaboration between religious scholars and health professionals is highly recommended to integrate this religious practice into public and personal health strategies. This approach can improve patient adherence and community acceptance of health programs, leveraging the deep-rooted cultural and spiritual values of Muslim communities.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that there is a significant and multifaceted relationship between prayer practices and various aspects of health, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions . The Quran and Hadith consistently provide explicit guidance on the importance of physical hygiene, mental resilience, and spiritual well-being, fundamentally supporting the concept of holistic health in Islam. This demonstrates that religious teachings do not focus solely on the spiritual aspect but also provide a comprehensive framework for maintaining overall health .

Suggestion

Through this article, the author hopes to provide information to increase the body of knowledge, especially regarding the integration of prayer with health and understanding the meaning and purpose of worship as a whole.

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