

## Menstruation and Fasting in Islamic Discourse: A Study of Muhammadiyah Youth and KUPI Interpretations

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### Abstract:

This research discusses the views of KUPI Ulama regarding menstruation. In 2020, the issue of menstruating women fasting went viral on social media, and the KUPI network faced pressure. The purpose of the study was to examine the opinions of KUPI scholars and female activists of the organization about fasting for women who menstruate. This study used a qualitative method, combining literature review, interviews and open questions during 'Gender Equality' training and 'Reproductive Health' discussion via zoom (available on youtube). The theory used is grounded theory. namely the experiences of women and men in the KUPI Network who have the idea that menstruating women can fast as primary data. The research respondents were young women aged between 20 to 42 years who are active in Muhammadiyah and women's movements. The first result showed that women in the KUPI Network who agreed that menstruating women could fast were attacked for their opinion and undermined for their expertise, and were seen as being more associated with their body than men in the KUPI Network. Second, young women who are active in Muhammadiyah but are not involved in the women's movement argue that the prohibition of fasting and sexual relations during menstruation is because it is considered "dirty". Third, respondents who are active in Muhammadiyah and the women's movement believe that menstruation during fasting is permissible, depending on the woman's ability, and that menstruation is not something dirty. Fourth, women who are active in the women's movement and KUPI but not involved in Muhammadiyah say that women can fast during menstruation because it is a normal reproductive cycle for women.

**Keywords:** *fasting during menstruation, reproductive health and religion, gender and islamic discourse.*

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini membahas pandangan ulama KUPI tentang menstruasi. Tujuan penelitian menelaah pendapat ulama KUPI dan perempuan aktivis organisasi tentang puasa bagi perempuan yang menstruasi/haid. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, menggabungkan kajian pustaka, wawancara, dan pelatihan kesehatan reproduksi. Teori yang digunakan adalah *grounded theory*. yakni pengalaman perempuan dan laki-laki Jaringan KUPI yang memiliki pemikiran perempuan haid boleh puasa menjadi data primer. Termasuk responden penelitian yakni perempuan muda yang aktif di Muhammadiyah dan gerakan perempuan usia antara 20-42 tahun. Teknik pengambilan data adalah wawancara mendalam dan pertanyaan terbuka melalui pelatihan 'Kesetaraan Gender' dan diskusi via zoom (tersedia di youtube) tentang 'Kesehatan Reproduksi'. Hasilnya pertama, perempuan di Jaringan KUPI yang setuju perempuan haid boleh puasa mendapatkan serangan atas pemikiran tersebut dengan merendahkan kepakarannya dan lebih dikaitkan dengan kebertubuhannya dibandingkan laki-laki Jaringan KUPI. Kedua, perempuan muda yang aktif di Muhammadiyah tetapi tidak bersinggungan dengan gerakan perempuan berpendapat larangan puasa dan hubungan seksual saat haid karena kotor. Ketiga, responden yang aktif di Muhammadiyah dan gerakan perempuan berpendapat, haid saat puasa boleh, tergantung kesanggupan perempuan itu sendiri, dan haid bukanlah hal yang kotor. Keempat, perempuan yang aktif di gerakan perempuan dan KUPI tetapi tidak bersentuhan dengan Muhammadiyah mengatakan perempuan boleh puasa saat haid karena itu siklus reproduksi normal pada perempuan.

**Kata kunci:** *puasa saat haid, kesehatan reproduksi dan agama, gender dan wacana islam.*

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of women's reproductive health remains a contentious subject, with some individuals considering it to be a taboo or unimportant topic. For instance, menstruation is a natural phenomenon that women experience and is observed in various ways across different cultures. Historically, in the Arabian Peninsula, menstruating women faced social exclusion, ostracism, and even expulsion from their familial units due to the prevailing belief that they were impure or polluted.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of impurity and estrangement is not confined to the *Jabiliyah* period in the Arabian Peninsula (the period of ignorance preceding Islam); rather, it has endured until recent times. For instance, in 2019, a 21-year-old Nepali woman named Parwati Bogita died during a period of exile in a "menstruation hut."<sup>2</sup> In India, the practice of the "menstrual hut" tradition is observed by the Gond and Madia Tribes of Gadchiroli, the people of Tukum village, and certain tribes in the West Indian State of Maharashtra, including those who have recently given birth.<sup>3</sup>

The practice of menstrual exclusion, known as Chhaupadi, involves the social exclusion of menstruating women. This practice is an ancient cultural norm that deems menstruating women and those who have recently given birth as impure and believed to bring bad luck. As part of this cultural practice, menstruating women are subject to various prohibitions, including the restriction of contact with water, plants, places of worship, and even their own homes. As a consequence, menstruating women are required to live separately from their families in structures referred to as menstrual huts. These huts, often lacking in proper ventilation and illumination, are characterized by their damp, cold, and dark interiors. In the absence of a designated menstrual hut, these women are permitted to reside with the livestock in the barn. This practice is accompanied by a significant susceptibility to illness, leading to detrimental effects on their reproductive health and even posing

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<sup>1</sup> Mutawali asy-Sya'rawi. (2019). *Fiqhu al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah*. Maktabah Taufiqiyah, pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> BBC News Indonesia. (2019). Perempuan Nepal mati lemas di gubuk pengasingan untuk yang sedang haid'. [5/2/2019]. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia-47112696>

<sup>3</sup> Geeta Pandey. (2021). Perempuan di India Diasingkan ke 'Gubuk Menstruasi' Saat Haid Karena Dianggap Najis. [BBC News Indonesia:6/6/2021]. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah-57359791>

a risk of mortality,<sup>4</sup> including fatalities resulting from snake bites.<sup>5</sup> This practice remains prevalent in numerous regions.

According to the United Nations Women (2019), socio-cultural norms and taboos surrounding menstruation have resulted in the exclusion and discrimination of women and girls in multiple countries. These restrictions manifest in various forms, including limitations on movement, exclusion from religious ceremonies, and restrictions on contact with river water. Furthermore, menstruating women and girls are often prohibited from participating in religious practices, handling food, and even cooking. Furthermore, taboos are in place that prohibit activities such as nail-cutting, hair-brushing, and hair-washing during menstruation. These restrictions can lead to severe consequences, including the loss of basic human dignity and the risk of life-threatening health complications. Furthermore, there is a prevalent concern among menstruating women that the use of menstrual pads may potentially compromise their virginity. Consequently, they resort to using cloth as a substitute for unsanitary pads, often lacking access to secure and hygienic toilets and washing facilities. Furthermore, the separation of sanitation facilities from their workplaces or classrooms contributes to the disruption of reproductive health.

In addition to the aforementioned practices, pre-Islamic religious teachings viewed menstruation as a curse for women. It was believed that menstruating women experienced discomfort during this period as a form of retribution for having tempted Adam to be expelled from Heaven. Consequently, menstruating women were regarded as impure and abhorrent, and were ostracized, exiled, and compelled to leave their familial homes.

In certain regions of Indonesia, menstruating women are regarded as bearing misfortune, ailments, and even mortality. To mitigate these perceived risks, these women are compelled to engage in a practice of exile, formally referred to as the Pinamou tradition. This practice is observed by the Naulu tribe community in Rohua hamlet, Central Maluku District, Maluku Province. In addition to being exiled, women in this community are burdened with domestic work and are not permitted to enter public spaces. The role of the mother in this tribe is to accompany her daughter through the Pinamou process. During this period, it is believed that the water used for bathing will

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<sup>4</sup>United Nations. (2021). FIELD BULLETIN Chaupadi In The Far-West. [01/4/2021]. [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Water/ContributionsStigma/others/field\\_bulletin\\_-\\_issue1\\_april\\_2011\\_-\\_chaupadi\\_in\\_far-west.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Water/ContributionsStigma/others/field_bulletin_-_issue1_april_2011_-_chaupadi_in_far-west.pdf) See more

Dipendra S. Thakuri, et.al. (2021). A Harmful Religio-Cultural Practice (Chhaupadi) During Menstruation among Adolescent Girls in Nepal: Prevalence and Policies for Eradication. Plos One Collection. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0256968>

<sup>5</sup> The Kathmandu Post. (2018). Teenage girl dies of snake bite in Chhaupadi hut, Kathmandu, Nepal. In: ekantipur.com [Internet]. 2018. <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-06-11/teenage-girl-dies-of-snake-bite-in-chhaupadi-hut.html>.

contaminate the water source, which is also utilized for bathing. As a result, women are prohibited from bathing or showering during this time. Brushing one's teeth is the only permitted form of personal hygiene.<sup>6</sup> It is noteworthy that this prohibition extends not only to menstruating women but also to postnatal women<sup>7</sup>, a demographic that faces heightened susceptibility to venereal diseases and other afflictions due to the aforementioned prohibition from bathing during the postpartum period.

The role of mothers as *Nuhu Ne Upu e* in Central Maluku society is in contrast to previous research findings by El-Ganiya, Badawi, and El-Fedawy<sup>8</sup> Ali and Rizvi<sup>9</sup> Thakre,<sup>10</sup> Marvan, and Abolnik<sup>11</sup> and Kavitha,<sup>12</sup> which suggests that mothers are typically the primary educators on reproductive health for their daughters. However, within the Central Maluku community, the fulfillment of this role is impeded by prevailing cultural taboos and systemic discrimination against women.

Regrettably, the prevailing perception of menstruation as a form of bodily discharge persists, continuing to inflict harm on women. Advertisements for menstrual pads have been known to remove the portrayal of red menstrual blood, which is the actual color of the blood that flows from a woman's body, and replace it with a blue color to eliminate disgust and promote sterile, clean conditions, similar to antiseptic fluids.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the aforementioned circumstances, women need to take an active role in changing the harmful cultural and societal views surrounding menstruation. The establishment of the Indonesian Women's Ulema Congress (KUPI) in 2017 has contributed to the recognition of women's knowledge and expertise, particularly through their personal experiences. Female Islamic

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<sup>6</sup> Yonna Euinike Tanahitumesseng, et.al. (2017). Makna Menstruasi Bagi Perempuan Suku Naulu-Dusun Rohua Kabupaten Maluku Tengah Provinsi Maluku. *Jurnal IJWS*, 5(1). <https://ijws.uib.ac.id/index.php/ijws/article/view/110/103> Accessed 30/3/2023.

<sup>7</sup> Norce Kainama, et al. (2021). Tradisi Melahirkan Suku Naulu Di Posune Kabupaten Maluku Tengah. *Jurnal Keperawatan Indonesia Timur*, 1(1). <https://www.jurnalpoltekkesmaluku.com/index.php/JKIT/article/view/236> Accessed 30/2/2023.

<sup>8</sup> El-Ganiya, A.H., Badawi, K. & El-fedawy, S. (2005). Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescent Schoolgirls in Mansoura, Egypt. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 13(26):147–152.

<sup>9</sup> Ali, T.S. & Rizvi, S.N. (2010). Menstrual Knowledge and Practices of Female Adolescents In Urban Karachi, Pakistan. *Journal Of Adolescence*, 33(4): 531–41.

<sup>10</sup>Thakre, S.B., et al. (2011). *Menstrual Hygiene: Knowledge And Practice Among Adolescent School Girls Of Saoner, Nagpur District*.1027–1033.

<sup>11</sup> Marván, M.L. & Molina-Abolnik, M. (2012). Mexican Adolescents Experience of Menarche and Attitudes Toward Menstruation: Role of Communication Between Mothers and Daughters. *Journal of pediatric and adolescent gynecology*, 25(6):358–63.

<sup>12</sup> Kavitha., V.R.S., M.Phil, M.A. (2012). Reproductive Health and Hygiene among Adolescents. *Language in India*, 2 (12): 293-300.

<sup>13</sup> Aquarini P.P, (2005). *Jurnal Perempuan*.

scholars, including clerics, are increasingly asserting their role in religious authority and representation, signifying a paradigm shift in Islamic scholarship.<sup>14</sup>

A multitude of endeavors have been undertaken to eliminate detrimental practices such as Chhaupadi. One notable example is the film 'Pad Man' (2018), which depicts the plight of Indian women who are forced to use unhygienic materials and sleep outside their homes during menstruation, making them vulnerable to harassment and violence. The lack of clean water and proper toilet facilities exacerbates the situation, as shown in the film 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha' (2017), which also stars Akshay Kumar. This includes the promotion of global campaigns through accessible and easy-to-understand educational information about menstruation, which is often misunderstood.<sup>15</sup>

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method, integrating a comprehensive review of literature from writing scholars, in-depth interviews with 34 participants, and open-ended inquiries with 16 participants during the "Gender Equality" training session held on November 12, 2022. The participants included young women aged between 20 and 42 years who are actively involved in the activities of Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah and women's movements, along with those engaged in the discourse on Reproductive Health via Zoom on May 1, 2020, and July 5, 2020. The present study employs the grounded theory approach, drawing upon the experiences of both men and women within the KUPI Network who subscribe to the belief that menstruating women are permitted to fast as primary data. The objective of the study was to examine the perspectives of Indonesia Women Ulama Congress (KUPI) scholars and female activists of the organization regarding fasting for menstruating women. A crucial aspect of the study was the call for a global campaign to promote a more comprehensive understanding of menstruation and to disseminate readily accessible information regarding it. At the grassroots level, KUPI Network members can organize public education programs on reproductive health, including the correction of misconceptions about menstruation through discussions or training sessions.

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<sup>14</sup> Kloos, David dan Mirjam Kunkler. (2016). "Studying Female Islamic Authority: From top down ti bottom-up Model of Certification". *Asian Studies Review*. 40(1).

<sup>15</sup> UN Women. (2019). Infographic; End the Stigma. Period. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2019/10/infographic-periods> Accessed 30/3/2023.

## DISCUSSION

### Understanding Menstruation

In Indonesia, menstruation is defined as a regular monthly occurrence for adult women.<sup>16</sup> This phenomenon has been a subject of discourse in international conferences, notably the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, where it was incorporated into the definition of reproductive health. This encompasses the physical, mental, and social dimensions of health related to the reproductive system, its functions, and its processes. Reproductive health services encompass a wide range of areas, including maternal and child health, family planning, the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), adolescent reproductive health, the prevention and management of complications of abortion, the prevention and treatment of infertility, reproductive health for the elderly, the early detection of reproductive tract cancer, and other reproductive health issues such as sexual violence and female circumcision.

The Indonesian government takes menstruation seriously and has implemented Menstrual Health Management (MHM) to maintain the cleanliness and health of teenage girls during menstruation. The term MHM is socialized to promote understanding and awareness of maintaining women's reproductive health from an early age. Several ministries and agencies have published guidebooks and brief information on menstruation, such as the 'Menstrual Health Management Guide for Teachers and Parents' by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017)<sup>17</sup>, the 'Community-Based Integrated Child Protection Reproductive Health Module' by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2018)<sup>18</sup>, and the 'Menstrual Health Management' co-published by academics from the National University (2017)<sup>19</sup>. UNICEF and Komnas Perempuan have also actively campaigned for MHM through publications such as 'What Is Menstruation?' (2016)<sup>20</sup> or the book *Why the Bleeding? Special Guidance for Girls for Elementary*

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<sup>16</sup> Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. <https://kbbi.web.id/menstruasi>. Accessed 30/3/2023.

<sup>17</sup> Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. (2017). 'Panduan Manajemen Kesehatan Menstruasi bagi Guru dan Orang Tua'

<https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/sites/unicef.org/indonesia/files/201905/MHM%20Guidance%20for%20Teacher%20and%20Parents-PMRC-Recommendation.pdf> Accessed 30/3/2023.

<sup>18</sup> Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak. (2018). 'Modul Kesehatan Reproduksi Perlindungan Anak Terpadu Berbasis Masyarakat'. <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/lib/uploads/list/58557-14092018-buku-modul-kespro-patbm-2-.pdf> Accessed 25/2/2023.

<sup>19</sup> Ernawati Sinaga, et. al. (2017). Manajemen Kesehatan Menstruasi. <http://ppi.unas.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/BUKU-MANAJEMEN-KESEHATAN-MENSTRUASI-OKE.pdf> Accessed 30/3/2023.

<sup>20</sup> Smeru. (2018). Apakah Menstruasi Itu? [https://smeru.or.id/sites/default/files/events/unicef\\_apa\\_itu\\_menstruasi.pdf](https://smeru.or.id/sites/default/files/events/unicef_apa_itu_menstruasi.pdf) Accessed 15/2/2023.

Schools or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah,<sup>21</sup> and 'Reproductive Health and Anti-Violence Modules for Women with Disabilities' (2022).<sup>22</sup>

Through these books, the notion or definition of menstruation is briefly explained as 'a sign of maturity in girls marked by the discharge of blood as a natural process that occurs on average every month'. An alternative definition is provided as follows:

Women experience menstruation because they have a reproductive system consisting of ovaries, eggs, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix (neck of the womb), and vagina. When women enter puberty, which is around the age of 10-15 years, these organs prepare for a pregnancy process if fertilization occurs. Firstly, the hormone estrogen in a woman's body increases, making the lining of the uterus grow and thicken. The lining of the uterine wall is where the embryo or prospective fetus (baby) is implanted if pregnancy occurs. Meanwhile, the egg in one of the ovaries begins to mature. Once mature, the egg leaves the ovary and travels to the uterus through the fallopian tube. If the egg is fertilized by a male sperm cell and attaches to the uterine wall, a woman becomes pregnant. However, if the mature egg is not fertilized, it breaks and decays along with the lining of the uterine wall, which was previously thickened and becomes a place for blood to gather.

The seriousness of the government and UNICEF in discussing MHM is also evident from their partnership with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to discuss reproductive health and menstruation from a religious perspective. This is reflected in the book *Menstruation and Health According to Islamic Teachings* (2016)<sup>23</sup>, as well as in the collaboration with Muslimat NU, which resulted in the publication of *'Menstrual Hygiene Management and Prevention of Child Marriage'* (2020).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> UNICEF, GIZ, et.al. (2016). 'Kenapa Berdarah? Panduan Khusus Anak Perempuan untuk Sekolah Dasar atau Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.' <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/3-2759-7-1490353238.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Komnas Perempuan. (2022). 'Modul Kesehatan Reproduksi dan Anti Kekerasan bagi Perempuan Penyandang Disabilitas'. Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan. <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/download-file/822> Accessed 30/3/2023.

<sup>23</sup> Majelis Ulama Indonesia. (2016). *Haid dan Kesehatan Menurut Ajaran Islam*. Jakarta: MUI dan UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/sites/unicef.org/indonesia/files/2019-05/MHM-IslamicPerspective.pdf> Accessed 27/3/2023.

<sup>24</sup> Muslimat NU. (2020). 'Manajemen Kebersihan Menstruasi dan Pencegahan Perkawinan Anak'. Jakarta: Muslimat NU dan UNICEF. [https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/media/9491/file/MHM%20and%20Child%20Marriage%20Prevention%20\(Indonesian\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/media/9491/file/MHM%20and%20Child%20Marriage%20Prevention%20(Indonesian).pdf) Accessed 27/3/2023.

In addition to the aforementioned publications, the National University (Unas) has released a book that defines menstruation from an Islamic perspective. According to Muslimat NU, menstruation in the context of *fiqh* is defined as dirty blood that comes out of a woman's uterus in a healthy or normal condition, not due to illness or childbirth. There are other types of blood that can come out of a woman's uterus besides menstruation, namely postpartum blood and istihadhah blood. Postpartum blood is the blood that comes out of a woman's uterus after giving birth, while istihadhah blood is the blood that comes out of a woman's uterus due to an abnormal cycle/illness where her menstrual period exceeds 15 days.

The MUI book currently offers a definition of menstruation as "the first menstrual period, which is an important event in a young woman's life." Consequently, it is crucial to talk to her about it in an informative and reassuring way before it happens. Teenage girls must develop a comprehensive understanding of their bodies, and the natural changes associated with puberty, thereby mitigating the potential for surprise or fear when their first period occurs. Furthermore, it is important to instill the idea that with the arrival of menstruation, Allah/God has made it obligatory to carry out all His commandments and stay away from all His prohibitions. This condition is applicable to women who are in good health and not due to childbirth or post-natal conditions.

A comparative analysis of the three definitions reveals notable distinctions. Muslimat NU employs the Arabic term for menstruation, which translates to "dirty blood." Conversely, MUI and Unas prioritize reproductive health approaches, which are associated with *akil baligh* or signs of a person's maturity, as discussed in the following pages.

### **Menstruation (*Haidh*) in Islamic Perspective**

Menstruation, in Arabic, is called '*haidh*'.<sup>25</sup> The word '*haidh*' is interpreted and translated differently. The word 'haidh' is taken from the second surah of the Quran, al-Baqarah (2):222. Based on the translation of the Quran version by the Ministry of Religion published in 1971, QS. 2:222 which means " They ask you [Prophet] about menstruation. Say, 'Menstruation is a painful condition, so keep away from women during it. Do not approach them until they are cleansed; when they are cleansed, you may approach them as God has ordained)."<sup>26</sup>

With regard to menstruation, Wahbah az-Zuhaili in his book *Al Fiqh Al Islamy Wa Adillatubu* defines it as 'blood that comes out when a woman is in good health'. The word '*haidh*'

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<sup>25</sup> Translation by Departemen Agama was roten mustruation with 'haidh', with alphabet 'h' in the last word.

<sup>26</sup> M. A. Abdel Haleem, ed., *The Qur'an*, Oxford World's Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

according to language means flooding or flowing. So, when a flood occurs in a valley, the Arabs call it '*hoadha al-waadi*.' As for menstruation in Sharia terms, it is blood that comes out of the end of a woman's uterus when she is healthy, not during childbirth or when she is sick, and this blood comes out for a certain period. Usually, the color of menstrual blood is black, very hot, painful, and smells bad.<sup>27</sup>

Second, Ash-Syekh Zainuddin's opinion in *Fathul Mu'in* defines menstruation as the blood that comes out of a woman's uterus at certain times.<sup>28</sup> Third, Ibn Rushd in *Bidayatul Mujtahid* defines menstruation as the blood that comes out of a healthy woman's uterus.<sup>29</sup> The three scholars mentioned above do not interpret menstruation as dirt or dirty blood. Instead, they focus more on the biological factors of a woman's body, unlike the translations from the Ministry of Religion and Muslimat NU, which describe menstruation as dirty blood. The current translation of the Quran from the Ministry of Religion still refers to menstruation as dirty blood in women, which means that the definition of menstruation has not changed since the 1971 Ministry of Religion translation.

The Islamic perspective explains that when a woman is menstruating, she can still be with her husband and sleep together, as long as they do not have intercourse or engage in sexual activity involving the insertion of the penis into the vagina. This is based on a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, as narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, at-Timidzi, an-Nasai, and Mrs. Majah, which states that "When one of the Prophet's wives was menstruating, the Messenger of Allah wanted to fondle her. So, he ordered her to cover the holes of her menstrual blood with a cloth. After that, he fondled her." Another hadith narrated by Aisyah mentions that "I (Aisyah) drank when I was menstruating, then I gave it to the Prophet Muhammad, then he put his mouth where mine was. I also took a bite of meat when I was menstruating, then I gave (the rest of the meat) to the Prophet, so he put his mouth where mine was" (HR. Aisyah).

This is what was presumably mentioned by Sheikh Abu Abdillah Muhammad bin Abdullah Waliyuddin at-Tabrizi (who died in 741 H), that when the Prophet's wives were menstruating, the Prophet continued to eat, sleep with them, fondle them, and did not separate them from his house. This means that they continued to carry out activities as normal days when the Prophet's wives did not menstruate. The Prophet Muhammad also once asked Aisyah to enter the mosque and fetch his turban left in the mosque, even though he knew Aisyah was menstruating. This situation shows

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<sup>27</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili. No Year. *Fiqh Islam Wa Adillatuhu*. Darul Fikir. Gema Insani Press. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. pp.508.

<sup>28</sup> Asy-Syekh Zainuddin Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Maribari. 1993. *Fat-Hul Mu'in*. Terj. Ustadz Abdul Hiyadh. Surabaya: al-Hidayah. pp.93.

<sup>29</sup> Ibnu Rusyd. No Year. *Bidayatul Mujtahid Takhrij* Ahmad Abu Al Majd. Pusatkan Azam. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. pp.104.

that Islam has made significant corrections to the situation of menstruation which initially insulted women and humanized them.

When a woman finishes her menstrual period, she is required to do *thaharah* (purification) by taking a *junub* bath or big bath. Even during menstruation, women still have to purify themselves by bathing, even though it is not a *junub* bath. This is the significance of the teachings brought by Prophet Muhammad.

### **Deconstructing the Meaning of "Dirty Blood"**

Based on the definitions provided by the three scholars mentioned earlier, menstruation is not actually "dirty blood" but rather a potential life (egg cell) that disintegrates or dies because it is not fertilized. From a health or medical perspective, menstruation is a natural biological cycle for women, and it is not considered dirty blood. It is uterine bleeding that occurs as a result of the periodic shedding of the endometrium in women. It is also understood as the dissolution of a mature egg that travels down the fallopian tube and attaches to the wall of the uterus. If sperm does not fertilize the egg within 24 hours, it dies and dissolves into menstrual blood through the vaginal opening.

Islam views menstruation as a natural biological process and seeks to correct traditions that discriminate against women. In the Quranic al-Baqarah [2]:222, it is stated that a menstruating woman is not impure, and she is still considered pure, except for the prohibition of sexual intercourse with her husband through the vagina. It is also expected that the husband will refrain from having sexual intercourse (*i'tizal*).

However, some scholars differ on what religious rituals a menstruating woman can or cannot perform. In general, it is agreed that prayer and tawaf (circling the Kaaba) are prohibited during menstruation. This is because just passing wind through the rectum (farting) invalidates ablution, and maintaining ablution is a requirement for the validity of prayer and tawaf.

One of the prohibitions during fasting is menstruation, even though the verses about fasting do not specifically mention it. For example, in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:183, it is narrated that fasting is obligatory for those who believe, just as it was obligatory for previous nations. Sick people (marid) or travelers are exempt from fasting and are required to make up for it on another day or pay *fiyah* (feeding the poor), as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:184-185. Fasting requires one to be a believer, sane, mature (*baligh*), able to distinguish between good and bad deeds (*mumayyiz*),

and physically healthy. Additionally, being free from menstruation (menstruation) is a fiqh requirement.<sup>30</sup>

KUPI Network Individual Name	Activities performed		
	Media used	Date	Response
Imam Nakhai'	The Facebook status "Women who are menstruating can fast" implies that there is an opinion among Muslim scholars that women who are menstruating can observe fasting.	11 May 2017	Pros and cons, the response is still relatively positive, waiting for the next article
	Mubada.id; 3 Reasons Menstruating Women May Fast <sup>31</sup>	26 April 2021	Get written responses from other writers on Mubada.id, for example Wahid Sumenep. <sup>32</sup>
	Facebook status, apologizing for the controversial status	28 April 2021	112 comments, the majority regretted that the post was withdrawn.
Yulianti Muthmainnah	Discussion on Women's Reproductive Health Rights; Verses of the Koran, Hadith, and National Policy, discussion on zoom, uploaded on YouTube. <sup>33</sup>	1 May 2020	464 views on YouTube, 33 likes, and was used as writing material by Ananul Nahari <sup>34</sup> , and received constant responses. The response given was not based on scientific studies about menstruation or interpretive debates, but rather employed sarcasm, attacked the authority of female ulama, or belittled women as if they have no right to express religious views. <sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Yulianti Muthmainnah. (2020). Mendiskusikan Darah Haid. Media Indonesia [Sabtu, 9 May 2020]. <https://mediaindonesia.com/opini/311659/mendiskusikan-darah-haid>

<sup>31</sup> Imam Nakhai. (2020). 3 Alasan Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa. Mubadalah.id [26 April 2021]. <https://mubadalah.id/3-alasan-perempuan-haid-boleh-berpuasa/>

<sup>32</sup> Wahid Sumenep. (2021). Ijmak Perempuan Haid Haram Puasa Itu Anak. Mubadalah.id. [28 April 2021]. <https://mubadalah.id/ijmak-perempuan-haid-haram-puasa-itu-aneh/> this writing to respond Kyai Nakhai's paper, but his paper not attack personally to Kyai Nakhai.

<sup>33</sup> PSIPP ITB Ahmad Dahlan Jakarta Youtube. (2020). Diskusi Hak-hak Kesehatan Reproduksi Perempuan; Ayat-ayat al-Qur'an, Hadits, dan Kebijakan Nasional'. Youtube. [1 Mei 2020]. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy0\\_FmnUk2I&t=456s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy0_FmnUk2I&t=456s)

<sup>34</sup> Ananul Nahari. (2020). Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa. Ibtimes.id. [4 Mey 2020]. <https://ibtimes.id/perempuan-haid-boleh-puasa/> see more: Ananul Nahari. (2020). Sekali Lagi Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa Kok. Rahma.id. [19 Mei 2020]. <https://rahma.id/sekali-lagi-perempuan-haid-boleh-puasa-kok/>

<sup>35</sup> Royan Utsany. (2020). Menelaah Kembali Pendapat Perempuan Haid Boleh Berpuasa. Ibtimes.id. [5 Mei 2020] <https://ibtimes.id/menelaah-kembali-pendapat-perempuan-haid-boleh-berpuasa/> Ilham Ibrahim. (2021). Perempuan

	Mendiskusikan Darah Haid (Discussing Menstrual Blood), Media Indonesia Newsppaer	9 May 2020	Set as a status by Taufik Damas on Twitter with 2,274 retweets, 384 quotes, 6,401 likes, and 612 bookmarks. As well as being a lively discussion in several WhatsApp groups.
Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir	Mubadalah.id; Can Menstruating Women Fast? Polemic Interpretation of Verses 185 and 222 of Surah al-Baqarah. <sup>36</sup>	5 May 2020	There are no comments on the Mubadalah.id website. However, there has been a lot of discussion on the pros and cons on IG Mubadalah.id and received written responses.
Abdul Moqsith Ghazali	Swara Rahima; Can Menstruating Women Fast during Ramadan? <sup>37</sup>	3 May 2021	There are no comments on the Swara Rahima website.

In a discourse held on May 1, 2020, entitled "Women's Reproductive Health Rights; Verses of the Koran, Hadith, and National Policy," scholars have posited the notion that menstruating women may elect to fast. On the other hand, some scholars hold the opinion that menstruating women cannot fast because they believe menstrual blood is considered dirty and unclean, which makes the person experiencing it impure or in a state of badness. As a result, they are not allowed to perform acts of worship such as fasting, praying, staying silent in the mosque for worship (*'itikaf*), and even holding the Quran.

However, the Quran views menstruation as a natural biological cycle for women, which can cause them pain, weakness, and other discomforts. For women who are menstruating or postpartum and are unable to fast due to their vulnerable state, there is a form of relief from worship (*rukhsah*) available for them as mentioned in QS al-Baqarah [2]:184-185. But for those who feel healthy and strong even during menstruation, they may choose to fast or not and make up for the missed fasting on another day.

*Haid Tidak Boleh Puasa Titik*. Muhammadiyah.or.id. <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/perempuan-haid-tidak-boleh-puasa-titik/>. Aabidah Ummu Aziizah. (2020). *Sekali Lagi Perempuan Haid Tidak Boleh Puasa*. Ibtimes.id. [6 Mei 2020] <https://ibtimes.id/sekali-lagi-perempuan-haid-tidak-boleh-puasa/>. M. Husnaini. (2020). *Apakah Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa*. Ibtimes.id [4 Mei 2020] <https://ibtimes.id/apakah-perempuan-haid-boleh-berpuasa/> and see Twitter from Taufik Damas in <https://twitter.com/TaufikDamas/status/1388586434173435904?s=19>.

<sup>36</sup> Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. (2020). *Bolehkah Perempuan Haid Berpuasa? Polemik Tafsir Ayat 185 dan 222 Surat al-Baqarah*. Mubadalah.id; [5 Mei 2020]. <https://mubadalah.id/bolehkah-perempuan-haid-berpuasa/>

<sup>37</sup> Abdul Moqsith Ghazali. (2021). *Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa Ramadhan*. Swararahima.com. [3 Mei 2021]. <https://swararahima.com/2021/05/03/perempuan-haid-boleh-berpuasa-ramadan/>

On the other hand, fasting differs from prayer, which requires a person to clean and purify themselves from small *hadats* (bowel/urine) or large *hadats* (*junub*, menstruation), and use clean tools or places of prayer (*thabarab*). Two groups are exempt from fasting: the *marid* (sick) and those who are on a long journey or travelers (QS 2:184), as they may not be strong enough to fast and it may interfere with their health. In the past, people traveled by foot, using camels or horses, and the scholars defined the distance of a traveler as approximately two *marhala* (about 88-112 km). At that time, there were no cars, trains, or planes that could travel hundreds of distances without fatigue or time constraints. It was also impossible to travel between places in one prayer time. For example, the Jakarta-Surabaya flight (840 km) takes only 1.10 hours, which does not exceed one prayer time, especially if it falls between 07.00-11.00. Therefore, the permissibility of not fasting is null and void, even if the distance is more than two meters. In such situations, fasting is mandatory, as the time needed is short and does not cause fatigue, unlike in the old days.

### **Fasting during menstruation; Starting Contemporary Ijtihad**

Traditional views of menstrual blood being dirty is being challenged by scholars in the KUPI Network. They hope to discuss this issue, as well as the exemption of the sick (*marid*) from fasting, in both internal discussions and in the mass media. This discussion has been publicly carried out by Kyai Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Kyai Imam Nakhai', Kyai Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, and Yulianti Muthmainnah.

The four individuals mentioned above share a similar view regarding the verses of the Quran, particularly verses 183, 184, and 185 in Surah Al-Baqarah. They believe that these verses do not prohibit menstruating women from fasting, and there is no evidence in either the Quran or Hadith to support such a prohibition. Additionally, three of the scholars, Kyai Nakhai', Kyai Kodir, and Kyai Ghazali, have cited the opinions of contemporary *fiqh* experts such as Dr. Ahmad Imarah from Egypt and Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Bayindir from Istanbul University, who argue that menstruating women can fast because they are not required to make up missed prayers on other days.

Kyai Kodir refers to the opinion of Bayandir, who is an expert on Islamic studies and former Deputy Mufti of Turkey (1976-1997) and believes that a menstruating woman may fast if she is strong. According to him, the existing prohibition against menstruating women fasting came from *fiqh*'s influence by the social context at that time and not from the Quran or Hadith. The Quran requires all adult Muslims to fast during Ramadan, unless they are sick or traveling. Kyai Nakhai' also agreed with Kyai Kodir's view that menstruating women may fast. Furthermore,

Yulianti Muthmainnah's writing draws strength from the experiences of menstruating women and argues that menstruation should not be seen as dirty blood that bars women from fasting, but rather as a natural biological process that should not discriminate against women and position them as sacred beings in line with the spirit of Islam.

However, Kyai Ghazali concluded his writings with a narration "towards new *fiqh* opinions that may continue to emerge in the future, Islamic students need not be surprised and panic. Immediately take an attitude as stated in *fiqh* rules: take what is clear and avoid what is cloudy (خذ ما صفا ودع ما كدر). And if we are hesitant with a new opinion, there is no problem sticking with the old opinion, especially if the old opinion is more cautious (*ibhtiyath*) and reliable (*mu'tabarab*)."<sup>38</sup> This means that if one is not yet able to accept new opinions, then the old opinion which is more cautious (*ibhtiyath*) can still be used as a guideline, namely not fasting during menstruation.

Among the refusals to fasting during menstruation came from the MUI which was conveyed by Kyai Anwar Abbas.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the writings of the four members of the KUPI Network on social media received various reactions. While Kyai Kodir and Kyai Nakhai' were accused of being liberal clerics, their study of interpretation, hadith, qiyas (analogical reasoning), jurisprudence, and the opinions of the ulema received little criticism. However, in my case, the attacks were more focused on the biological aspects of being a woman, suggesting that my opinion was not worthy of *ijtihad* and deserved criticism and mockery. This seems to be a feminist critique, highlighting that women's opinions are often considered less authoritative than that of men.

So far, no writing has been found that supports Muthmainnah's opinion, even though both Kyai Kodir and Kyai Nakhai' agree on the permissibility of fasting during menstruation. Meanwhile, posts supporting Kyai Kodir or Kyai Nakhai' have been quite popular on social media, in the form of statuses on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or in the form of long narratives, including an article by Tia Istianah, entitled "Women's Experiences: Menstruation and Fasting."<sup>39</sup>

### **Reproductive Health Training; Discussing Contemporary Ijtihad to Young People**

In order to address women's issues that intersect with religion, it's important to engage young people in discussions through platforms such as Zoom or reproductive health training. For instance, a Zoom discussion on July 5, 2020, which was live-streamed on YouTube, focused on

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<sup>38</sup>Arief Ikhsanudin. (2021). "Viral di Medsos 'Alasan Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa', MUI Angkat Bicara" [detikNews, 2 Mei 2021]. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5554601/viral-di-medsos-alasan-perempuan-haid-boleh-puasa-mui-angkat-bicara>

<sup>39</sup> Tia Istianah. (2021). 'Pengalaman Perempuan; Menstruasi dan Puasa'. Mubadalah.id. 2 Mei 2021. <https://mubadalah.id/pengalaman-perempuan-menstruasi-dan-puasa/>

reproductive health, body, and mind while adapting to the new normal. The discussion was led by medical professionals, emphasizing the importance of not neglecting reproductive health during the new normal, particularly during menstruation. They stressed the importance of diligently changing pads and carefully planning and preparing for pregnancy.

Reproductive health training aims to address not only topics such as menstruation, sexual intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, but also the issue of violence against women and children. This kind of violence violates their human rights and has the potential to cause harm to their reproductive organs. The training was attended by 34 participants, including lecturers, female employees, and students from the Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Technology and Business in Jakarta. Most of the participants were between the ages of 20 and 45 and were actively involved in Muhammadiyah autonomous organizations such as the Muhammadiyah Student Association, Naswiatul Aisyiyah, and the 'Aisyiyah Community.

During the training, a question was raised about whether menstruation is a woman's natural state or a reproductive role. Thirty-one participants answered that it is a natural state, while two were confused between nature and reproductive role, and one person answered reproductive role. The reason for this was that some women do not menstruate regularly or at all, and they believed that nature is something that is inherent from birth, whereas menstruation is not present at birth.

All 34 participants agreed that menstruation is considered as dirty blood. Next, they were asked about which activities are permissible during menstruation, such as fasting, praying, tawaf, cutting nails, washing hair, staying in the mosque, reciting the Koran, holding the Koran, or having sexual intercourse between husband and wife. The following are the responses provided by the participants:

Religious matters	Yes and why	No and why
Fasting,	-	34, there is a reason
Salat,	-	34, there is a reason
Thawaf,	-	34, there is a reason
Cutting nails,	28	6, experience in Islamic boarding schools/madrasas
Washing hair,	28	6, experience in Islamic boarding schools/madrasas
Stay in the mosque	29, because there are pads	7, still hesitant
Recite the Quran	19	15, still hesitant
Hold the Quran	19	15, still hesitant
Having sexual relations among husbands and wives	-	34, dirty and sinful, even though there is a condom it is still unclean

Based on the responses provided, it is evident that menstruation prohibits women from fasting, praying, and performing tawaf. In other cases, the answer was either yes or no. Regarding the question of whether women can stay at the mosque for prayer services or listen to religious lectures, 29 participants responded positively, citing the use of sanitary napkins to prevent menstrual blood from contaminating the mosque. This suggests a change in understanding, as previously it was not allowed to stay in the mosque during menstruation, but now it is considered permissible.

In addition to the training, I also conducted in-depth interviews with 16 women. These women were classified into four categories: Category 1 consisted of three women who were active in the Ortom Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Student Association), Category 2 had six women who were only active in the 'Aisyiyah Community, Category 3 included four women who were active in Ortom Muhammadiyah (IMM, Nasyiatul Aisyiyah, or Muhammadiyah Students) and were involved in women's issues, and Category 4 had three women who were not active in Ortom Muhammadiyah but were involved in women's issues.

During the interviews, I asked these women various questions related to reproductive health such as the recommended duration for bathing, proper wiping techniques, whether it is obligatory to pray during more than 15 days of menstruation, whether menstruating women can fast, and whether they can have sexual intercourse while menstruating. The participants provided the following answers:

Question	Category 1 = 3 people	Category 2 = 6 people	Category 3 = 4 people	Category 4 = 3 people
How many times to bathe in a day during menstruation	2 times, on average	2 times, on average	2 times, on average	2 times, on average
How to clean	There are no conditions depending on when bathing = 3 people	There are no conditions depending on when bathing = 4 people	From front to back, not back and forth = 4 people	From front to back, not back and forth = 3 people
		Do not know, if there are conditions or rules = 2 people		

Is it obligatory to pray for more than 15 days of menstruation?	Mandatory prayer because of dirty blood = 3 people	Mandatory prayer because of dirty blood = 6 people	Mandatory prayer due to blood disease = 4 people	Mandatory prayer due to blood disease = 3 people
Can menstruating woman fast?	a No, because the blood is dirty = 3 people	No, because the blood is dirty = 6 people	New issue, still undecided, waiting for fatwa = 3 people  Without a fatwa, if the argument is correct, then it is permissible for a menstruating woman to fast, because fiqh is dynamic in nature = 1 person	It is permissible to fast during menstruation as it is not considered to be dirty blood but rather a natural bodily process; you are just sick
Can menstruating women have sexual intercourse?	No, because it is sinful	it is not permissible and considered a sin to worry about the possibility of having children with disabilities during pregnancy = 5 people  No, it is sinful = 1 person	Not allowed, because it disrupts women's reproductive health = 4 people	Not allowed, because it disrupts women's reproductive health = 4 people

The questionnaire answers and in-depth interviews with the respondents reveal that young women who are actively involved in women's issues and movements (category 4) as well as those who are active in Ortom Muhammadiyah and women's issues (category 3) have a good understanding of reproductive health. For instance, they know the correct method of wiping and are aware of the fact that menstruating women can fast. Category 4 respondents were the only group that agreed that menstruating women could fast because they believed that women themselves could determine if they were strong enough to fast or not due to weakness. However,

the category 3 group still needs support from Fatwa to be certain that they can fast during menstruation.

On the other hand, young women who are active in Ortom but not involved in women's issues (category 1 and 2 groups) still have conflicting views regarding reproductive health and religious issues. The results of the in-depth interviews combined with the training revealed that religious understanding was acquired from Islamic boarding schools or madrasas, and therefore, some respondents still refused to cut their nails or wash their hair during menstruation. However, the decision of the Tarjih and Tajdid Muhammadiyah Councils allows menstruating women to wash their hair and cut their nails for health purposes and to hold, open, read the Koran and stay in the mosque for religious study purposes.

## CONCLUSION

The translation of "menstruation" as "dirty blood" in the Indonesian Ministry of Religion's Quran translation has led to a misinterpretation among some readers, who have come to believe that menstruating women are prohibited from fasting during Ramadan. However, if the term "menstruation" is translated as "biological elements" or "health," it can foster a novel understanding that menstruating individuals are not impure but rather are indisposed and may opt to fast or not based on their physical condition and well-being, similar to those who are traveling or in poor health.

The KUPI network was established with the objective of promoting gender equality and empowering women within Islamic organizations. However, its efforts have not yielded the desired outcomes in practice. The religious authority accorded to female network members is frequently less than that of their male counterparts. Moreover, their ideas are often rejected and undermined.

In Islam, menstruating women are permitted to engage in all activities except for sexual intercourse involving penetration. It is important to note that these women are not forbidden from bathing or touching water, and they are even permitted to bathe with their husbands. The advent of Islam has served to rectify earlier misconceptions and limitations concerning menstruation.

The results of interviews and reproductive health training sessions conducted with young women and women activists affiliated with the Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah, suggest a correlation between participation in the women's movement and a shift in perspective on menstruation. Specifically, non-participation in the movement is associated with a more conservative view of menstruation, often characterized as "dirty," and consequently, with the belief that fasting and sexual relations during this period are prohibited. Conversely, individuals involved

in both Muhammadiyah and the women's movement recognize menstruation as a natural reproductive cycle and permit fasting during this period, contingent on the woman's personal capacity. Women who are active in the women's movement, but not in Muhammadiyah, subscribe to the belief that fasting during menstruation is permissible.

The women's movement plays a critical role in promoting public awareness and education on reproductive health issues. Furthermore, the movement can serve as a means to eliminate discrimination. It is imperative for institutions such as Ortom in Muhammadiyah to provide comprehensive training to young individuals, ensuring that they develop a nuanced understanding of traditional culture and avoid misinterpretations. Future research endeavors should encompass a more extensive sample size and incorporate Muhammad-Health charity businesses, such as hospitals or clinics, to illustrate a symbiotic relationship in addressing issues related to reproductive health and menstruation.

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