



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14762> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14762

Received: 08 July 2022, Revised: 10 August 2022, Accepted: 25 August 2022

Published Online: 04 September 2022

In-Text Citation: (Hassan et al., 2022)

To Cite this Article: Hassan, W. Z. W., Harun, C. S. C., Mastor, K. A., Idris, F., & Mahmood, A. R. (2022). The Effects of Fasting in The Month of Sya'ban on Good Behavior and Character Building Prior to Ramadan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(9), 183 – 197.

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Vol. 12, No. 9, 2022, Pg. 183 – 197

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www.hrmar.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

The Effects of Fasting in The Month of Sya'ban on Good Behavior and Character Building Prior to Ramadan

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Abstract

The act of fasting in the month of Sha'ban holds virtues that it may have a positive effect on the behaviour of a Muslim according to religious tradition. Therefore, fasting in Sha'ban is strongly recommended for Muslims before entering the holy month of Ramadhan. To date, there has been no empirical study to investigate this effect. Therefore, the study of this matter is important because it can prove to the community about the advantages and effectiveness of circumcision fasting, including fasting in the month of Sha'ban, on the personal development of a person in a better direction. The aim of the present study is to explore the effects of voluntary fasting in Sha'ban on the behaviour. In completing this study, a short-term longitudinal design methodology was used. A total of 111 participants completed the questionnaire repeatedly throughout the month of Sha'ban. Data analysis was carried out using 7.0 hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) methods. Results showed a positive and significant effects of fasting in Sha'ban on the behaviour changes prior to Ramadan. This finding supports the notion that fasting in Sha'ban has an effect on behaviour reveals the hidden wisdom of voluntary fasting performed during the month of Sha'ban prior to the holy month of Ramadan. The results of the study also found that when a person fasts Sha'ban will increase his positive personality at the beginning of Ramadan which is from a value of 0.36 to 0.40. The findings of this study support the evidence found in the Qur'an and hadith about the advantages of fasting, including the circumcision fasting of Sha'ban. Muslims should therefore strive to perform the voluntary act of fasting during the month of Sha'ban following the positive effects proffered to one's personality in preparing for a spiritual journey in the holy month of Ramadan. The next study can continue with the study of the relationship between Ramadan fasting and circumcision fasting in the month of Syawal. If the fasting of Sha'ban has a relationship and role in the formation of the personality of students, then it is not impossible that the fasting of Ramadan will also have a positive effect on the personality in the month of Syawal.

Keywords: Fasting, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Behavior, Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM).

Introduction

It is widely known that Muslims observe its obligatory fasting in the month of Ramadan. However, that Muslims also are encouraged to fast on several days in Sha'aban, a month before the Ramadan. The reason for observing this fasting is to emulate the sunnah or tradition of the prophet Muhammad.

Usman bin Zaid narrated: "I have asked Rasulullah s.a.w, O Rasulullah, I have never witnessed the number of your fasts in other months such as the month of Sya'aban; then he replied, that is the month of Sha'aban is a month that many people neglect about it that is between the month of Rajab and the month of Ramadan; this is the month in which all deeds are elevated to the lord of the universe. Therefore, I (Rasulullah) would like my practice to be lifted while I am fasting" (Ahmad, 1978; Nasai, 1986)

From Abu Salamah r.a said, I asked Aisyah r.a about the fast of the Prophet SAW. Then he replied:

Meaning: "He usually fasts until we say he has fasted (continuously). And he breaks his fast until we say he has broken his fast. And I do not see him fasting more than in the month of Sha'ban. Usually he fasts in the month of Sya ' ban everything, and usually he fasts in the month of Sha'ban except a little. " Hadith Narrated by Muslim (no date), hadith no 1156.

Second: 'A'ishah r.a told Abu Salamah:

"The Prophet SAW never fasted in a month that is more than the month of Sha'ban. He fasted the whole month of Sha'ban. "Al-Bukhari (2001), hadith no 1834.

According to Al-Ghazali, when some one fast in the month of Sya'ban, he or she experience hunger and thirst throughout the day.,

For Imam Al Ghazali (2013), fasting (either in the month of Ramadan or in other months) is not enough to simply refrain from eating, drinking, and marital relations alone. People who fast should also restrain other limbs from things that anger Allah SWT. By doing so, a person who fasts will get a double reward from Allah SWT and not just thirst and hunger alone.

Al-Ghazali (2001) explains that the perfection of fasting that will be obtained by people who fast in addition to refraining themselves from eating, drinking, and jima', it is also by refraining all limbs from the things that anger Allah SWT . A person who fasts should keep his eyesight, keep his ears, keep his tongue, keep his hands and feet, and keep his stomach from the things that anger Allah SWT.

Al-Ghazali (2013) teaches us ways to protect the limbs from things that can bring the wrath of God:

First, keep an eye out. The way to keep an eye is by lowering the gaze to things that are reprehensible and angered by God. Likewise, restrain the view that can busy the heart so that it neglects to recite dhikr to Allah SWT.

Second, keep it oral. The way to guard the tongue is to restrain the tongue from lying, backbiting, sheep-fighting, foul speech, useless words, hostility, and arguing. Al Ghazali said "it is best to increase silence, remembrance and recitation of the Qur'an".

Third, keep hearing. The way to maintain hearing is to refrain from things that are criticized while being listened to. As for things that are reprehensible to be heard are things that are reprehensible and forbidden to be said. So things that are reprehensible when spoken, then reprehensible to be heard.

Restrain other limbs such as hands, feet from forbidden things. Similarly with the stomach, the way to take care of it is to avoid eating food that has no certainty whether it is halal or haram when breaking the fast. Do not eat excessively when breaking the fast even if the food

eaten is halal food. According to Imam Al Ghazali, "filling the stomach with food is something that God hates even from halal food."

Fasting holds a special importance in Islam and is obligatory upon every Muslim in the month of Ramadhan. Then find out previous studies on the benefits of hunger and thirst – from religious sources and also medical. In one study by Cott (1997), an American physician reported psychological research proving that fasting affects a person's degree 2 intelligence. The test is performed on a group of people who are diligent in fasting and a group of people who are not fasting. The results showed that people who were diligent in fasting obtained a much higher score (score) in the test compared to people who did not fast. When the stomach and intestines perform the digestive process, the brain cannot function properly. This is because energy and blood flow are focused on the work of digesting food. That is why when we eat until we are too full, our brain will become weak to think and the body will feel sleepy and lazy. During fasting, energy and blood flow are concentrated in the brain. This allows the brain to work smoothly and gives us the opportunity to perform activities that use mental and physical effectively.

The importance of fasting is exemplified in the Quran where it is mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an:

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous. (al-Baqarah 2:183)

Fasting for] a limited number of days. So whoever among you is ill or on a journey [during them] - then an equal number of days [are to be made up]. And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] - a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers excess - it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew...(al-Baqarah 2:184)

Fasting is predominantly an act of worship and devotion for a Muslim to willingly abstain oneself from eating or drinking beginning from dawn (fajr) to dusk (maghrib) and indirectly is a process of building up a spiritual self discipline and self control.

The distinctive aspect of fasting is the hidden wisdom underlies in the act itself. Serves as an indirect process of building up a spiritual self-discipline and self-control, fasting is somehow perceived negatively as being counterproductive, stifling progress and promoting laziness whilst on the contrary fasting harbours physical and spiritual benefits both in this living life and the hereafter, from the Islamic perspective (Qahtani, 2017).

Based on the above background, the summary of the problem in writing this article is (1) Why is sunat sha'ban fasting encouraged in Islam? (2) Is there an effect of Sha'ban fasting on Muslim individuals? (3) How the fast of Sh'aban circumcision helps the Muslim individual in shaping his personality. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) To find out why Islam encourages Muslims to fast circumcision in the month of Sha'ban. (2) To know the effect of fasting sunat Sha'ban on oneself and (3) To identify how fasting sunat sunat Sha'ban helps Muslim individuals in shaping their personality.

Previous studies on fasting

Most of the studies on fasting refer to the Ramadan fasting only. For example, study by Mohamad (2012) on the effects of fasting on quality of life. In essence, the definition of fasting extends more than just refraining from eating and drinking from dawn till dusk. Rather, it serves a greater purpose in purifying the soul where one is trained to refrain from evil acts of violence and anger, avoiding negative feelings of envy, greed, lust and to have a good intersocial relationship avoiding gossips and retorts. Additionally, this also includes steering clear of obscene and irreligious incitements as in Islam, purity of both thought and action is

of utmost importance. The level of purity of the heart which is attained from fasting increases the level of closeness to God.

A fully observed fasting is a worship act leading to the attainment of a "Muttaqin", someone who has attained a high spiritual relationship with Allah the Almighty. Fasting serves as a means for Muslims to be self-trained and self-disciplined improving their quality of life (Qahtani, 2017; Miftah, 2007; Hasbi, 2001).

From the clinical and health perspectives, fasting was showed to have positive effects on health where glycemic or sugar levels in individuals are controlled, in particular for diabetic patients who are on adjusted doses of antidiabetic agents during Ramadan (Siew et al., 2014). Studies also showed that fasting poses positive effects on cardiovascular risk factor with no significant damaging effects on patients with stable heart disease (Suwaidi et al., 2014). A meta-analysis study concluded that Ramadan fasting has a positive effect on cardiovascular risk factors (Kul et al., 2014).

The effects of fasting on personality and character development were explored in a book entitled 'Kitab Al-Fiqh Al-Islami wa Adillatuhu' which was written by (Zuhaili, 1985). He also mentioned that fasting teaches people to be trustworthy and integrity and always feel that they are being watched by Allah SWT either openly or in secret. This is said so because no one knows the person who actually fasts except Allah SWT. In addition, fasting can improve memory, purify the mind and inspire thoughtful thinking. Luqman once said to his son; "O my son, when your stomach is full of food, the mind will become dull, wisdom will become dumb and the organs of the body will become lazy to worship (Al-Zuhaili, 1985).

Fasting also according to Al-Zuhaili (1985), teaches a person to live systematically and disciplined because people who fast are allowed to eat and drink according to the period and time that has been set]

Nevertheless, studies on the benefits of fasting in the month of Sha'ban in particular on character development are still lacking, although its benefits have been mentioned in the prophetic hadith.

Sha'ban Fasting in Islam

Muslim scholars are of the view that fasting is permissible all year throughout, which also includes the month of Rejab and Sha'ban with the exception on the days of Tashriq in which Muslims are prohibited to fast. The days of Tashriq are the days of 10th to 13th Day of Dzulhijjah following Eidhul Adha (Ibn Rajab, 2007). Additionally voluntary fastings are anticipated on Mondays and Thursdays, 13th to 15th day of any Hijri month, alternate days like the fast of Prophet Dawud PBUH and finally the month of Rajab and Sha'ban.

Majority Muslim scholars on Islamic jurisprudence (fuqaha') from the school of Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'i were of the view that fasting in the month of Sha'ban traced back to the history of 'A'ishah who narrated that the Prophet (saw) observed much fasting in the month of Sha'ban besides the obligatory fasting in Ramadan (Hadith History of al-Bukhari from 'A'ishah, Sahih al-Bukhari (2001), hadith no. 1969).

It was also narrated by Saidatina 'A'ishah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would fast most frequently in the month of Sha'ban until the month of Ramadan (Abu Dawud's (no dated) hadith no 2433; Ahmad (1978) hadith no. 25589). Moreover, Syarbini al-Khatib in Sahih Muslim says that the Messenger of Allah fasted almost in the whole month of Sha'ban, except for very few (from those days) (Muslim History Hadith, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. 2778 and the Hadith of the History of the Nazis, Sunan an-Nasai, hadith no. 2179, of 'A'ishah). This is indicative of the highly anticipated fasting in the month of

Shaaban where the Prophet PBUH was keen not to miss the fasting even though it is not obligatory.

The scholars were of the view that the second hadith further clarifies the first hadith bringing meaning to the whole importance of fasting in Shaaban. Additionally, regarding the hadith from 'A'ishah (ra) which contains her narration: "I do not see the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) to complete the full month of fasting except for the month of Ramadan," the scholars agreed that the hadith where the Messenger of Allah never completes the fast of any entire month except for Ramadhan, nonetheless, underscores the fact that fasting in other months are not to be taken as an obligation" (Abdullah. 2010; Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs of Kuwait. 1457H)

Hence it is therefore permissible to fast in the month of Sha'ban, although there are no specific instructions or instances where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared that he performs fasting at a particular time in the month of Sha'ban or the full month it. Aply so, Muslims are therefore allowed to fast both in Shaaban and Ramadhan without violating the Prophet's instructions (Abdullah, 2010).

Character Building According to Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam al-Ghazali put forth that character building is a process of changing the quality of life for the better putting emphasis on the matter of the heart followed by the change of the heart. Stemming from the change of the heart, character building encompasses thoughts and emotions as well as behaviors. Hence, changes of the heart which is from bad to good pose effects to the thoughts, feelings and behavior. The importance of the heart is evident in Al-Ghazali's works which are Tazkiyah al-Nafs (Purification of the Soul), Riyadah al-Nafs (Disciplining the Soul) and Al-Nafs Mujahadah (Self struggle). The heart is strongly linked to the spiritual soul and influences the mind. Through thoughts, emotions such as of happiness, sadness, frustrations and so forth will be translated to behaviours which would have effects on the social behaviour of a person.

In essence, according to Al Ghazali, four major aspects are important to a human body in a spiritual sense; namely the qalb (heart), ruh (soul), nafs (self, ego or psyche) and aql (mind) which play important roles in education and character building. In a broad sense, according to Al Ghazali the emphasis is to take into account all the four components which are prerequisites for any framework for human development.

Additionally, in solving moral decadence, al-Ghazali put forward three theories which are related to human capital development. The first is 'traditional interaction theory' where "physical action influences the soul, so the soul influences the body" which demands for a certain spiritual environment in building character. As an analogy, in an environment where a leader uses his generosity and kindness as a public stunt in winning votes, it is important to note however, that the displayed attitude or physical action should not be considered as generous (Abd Jalil, 2007)

Character building as outlined by al-Ghazali (2001) also includes 'Tazkiyah al-nafs' meaning 'purifying the soul' which underscores cleansing the soul from the 'filth' in which 'filth' are results of evil deeds. This purifying process involves replacing the 'filth' with 'mahmudah' acts or 'praiseworthy' acts. This is complemented with the process of 'tahalli' which is to beautify oneself with attributes of admirable moral qualities and this requires a lot of persistence and determination.

There are two types of mujahadah or struggle in Islam namely 'Mujahadah al Akbar' which is a greater struggle or strive and 'Mujahadah al asghar' which is a lesser struggle. Self struggle

with the determination to fight against lust and to overcome the lust for evil deeds known as 'Mujahadah Al Nafs' is considered as a major struggle or Mujahadah al Akbar', Mujadah al-nafs' is ridding oneself from negative traits and feelings such as envy, worldly love, ripple, pride and the like. Additionally, 'Mujahada Al-asghar' meaning the lesser or minor struggle includes the fight for infidelity where one ascribes or establishes partners besides God.

Purification of the soul 'Tazkiyaul al nafs' is followed by 'Riyadah al-nafs' meaning 'Disciplining the soul' where one should discipline oneself from doing vices which are prohibited in religion and occupying oneself with good deeds. A difficult undertaking in the initial phase, 'Riyadah al Nafs' will become natural with with practice. This takes being consistent in performing religious duties which are obligatory in Islam as well as the voluntary ones.

The Benefit of Fasting to Character Building

Fasting in Ramadan or or any voluntary fasting if duly observed would serve as a catalyst in inculcating Islamic values and in building characters. Fasting is a great exercise of self-restraint, a much needed trait both individually and socially. Self-restraint provides a shield and protects oneself from negativities such as idleness, bad gossiping and other immoralities.

Secondly, fasting is not only a good training to feel what hunger and thirst feel like but also teaches one to be considerate, diligent in performing religious duties and good deeds hence may serve as a motivating factor in counteracting negativities. Additionally, bearing patience and perseverance in fasting nurtures resilience in putting one's best efforts in any undertakings in life journey despite any upheavals faced.

Essentially, fasting also nurtures empathy where one would be cognizant of the pain of others. Empathy will nurture and strengthen family bonds. Among Muslim communities, fasting can foster love and brotherhood especially during breakfasting activities. In the long run, Muslims with high empathy promotes unity in a community and good social behaviour especially when there is a strong sense of helping the poor and the underprivileged ones hence prevailing common humanity at large.

Character Building Through Sha'ban Fasting

Voluntary fasting like fasting in Sha'aban is a self-education in cultivating honesty, responsibility and granting tranquility as well as piety which may greatly influence a Muslim's daily conducts. Voluntary fastings that are consistently practised would have the effects to permeate to the environs; the family, the school and the local community. It teaches self-discipline if practised from a young age and helps in bulding good charactered Muslims (Syarifuddin, 2008).

The present study will explore the relationship between fasting in Sha'ban and character building and self-potential towards Ramadan fasting. As physical and spiritual wellbeing are just as important, al-Ghazali's work Ihya' Ulum al-Din impart strong emphasis on the spiritual or internal aspects in which the knowledge could be dissected both explicitly and nwardly (Yatimiah & Mohd, 2008). Parallely, fasting serves as one of the alternatives in educating a Muslim's character and personality, inculcating good values as one is becoming accustomed to doing good. Hence, fasting in Sha'ban serves as a shield from negativities (Shihab, 2007).

In Islam, fasting is a spiritual journey to be closer to God and it is important to have a journey that solely seeks the pleasure of God, a concept known as 'ikhlas'. In performing fasting, only for the sake of Allah, fasting would be seen as shield protecting oneself from performing

negative deeds as one would be cognizant of the presence of God at all times. Hence uttering useless words such as swearing, telling lies, speaking profane and slanderous words would be avoided at all cost. Therefore, apart from health benefits, fasting inculcate perseverance and patience (Safrilsyah, 2013).

Of late, Sya'ban fasting is getting less practised amongst Muslims despite being highly anticipated by the Prophet (PBUH) (al-Nasai). According to Ibn (2007) amongst the good deeds that is loved by Allah is the deeds which are done even when others seem to leave the practice of it.

In addition, it is also highly commendable if the person performing the voluntary fast in Shaaban to conceal it from the knowledge of others to avoid any underlying feeling of insincerity. The sincerity of doing the deeds only for the sake of Allah will bring calmness and serenity to the doer and in return serves as a motivation to do more good deeds in seeking Allah's pleasure. Righteous deeds performed purely for the sake of Allah acts as a protection from misfortunes and loss in one's life (Ibn, 2007). Taken together, the present study explored into the possible impacts of fasting in the month of Sha'ban on the personality or character of a Muslim in the month of Sha'ban and the month of Ramadan.

Research Methods

Recruitment Of Study Respondents And Procedures

A total of 400 questionnaires booklet were distributed to Muslim participants and only 216 (54%) books or 58% were returned. Most books were returned unsatisfactorily as the answers were not adequately given by respondents. A cut off point was taken in which any questionnaires which were not answered for more than 10% of the whole questionnaire were excluded (105 respondents) leaving only 111 sets of questionnaires accepted for analysis. This accounted for 27.8% of the total questionnaires distributed to the respondents. The majority of the 111 participants were comprised of students from nine (9) faculties in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK).

Out of a total of 111 study participants, 91 respondents were females (82.0%) and 18 were males (16.2%) with the age ranges from 20 to 50 years. According to age groups, 103 respondents (92.8%) were 20 to 30 years old, followed by 6 respondents (5.4%) aged from 31 to 40 years whereas only 2 respondents (1.8%) were aged 41 years and above. As in Islam, females who are having menses are exempted from fastings, the respective female respondents were not required to answer questions on the number of obligatory prayers offered in congregation and the self-assessment on the quality of daily fasting.

Most respondents were Malay (108 respondents, 97.3%), followed by Indian Muslim (2 respondents, 1.8%) and Kadazan Dusun (1 respondent, 0.9%). According to household income groups, respondents from each income group were: above RM5001 (15 respondents, 13.5%), RM3001 to RM5000 (25 respondents, 22.5%), RM1001 to RM3000 (36 respondents, 32.4%) and below RM1000 (14 respondents, 12.6%). There were however, a total of 21 respondents (18.9%) who did not answer the income group question.

Conducted in the month of Sha'ban and respondents were initially briefed on the overview of the study and given the questionnaires. Daily reminders via 'WhatsApp Group' were given to respondents to ensure questionnaires are answered. Filled questionnaires were finally submitted manually or by post.

Research Questions

The research questionnaire was divided into three sections, Part A, Part B, and Part C. The items for each section are as shown in Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1
Items in questionnaire

Subdimention	Aspect
Part A: Demografi	Gender Age Religion Race Faculty
Part B: Positive Personality	Patient Hardworking Clever Friendly Do good Caring
Part C: Fasting Sya'ban quality	Frequency of Praying in Congregation Frequency of doing zikr Self-asesment on fasting quality

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling version 7.0 to test all hypotheses (Raudenbush, et. al., 2011). The variables were standardised and nested in two levels, namely level 1 within the individual (intra-individual) and level 2 among 111 individuals (inter-individuals). To test the longitudinal hypothesis, level 2 was used to independently predict level 1 (Mathieu & Taylor, 2007).

Aggregation Procedures

In order to meet the needs and objectives of the Multilevel Modeling analysis, a few preliminary steps were taken namely intra-class coefficients (ICC) testing, inter-rater reliability ($r(wg)$) testing and FIII testing. All the three tests were conducted to ensure that the fasting quality in Shaaban could be aggregated at the inter-individual level (level 2). The ICC value (1) is the variability values of inter- individuals and is used as a measurement of the strength of the units in the same group in relation to each other (Koch, 1982).

The estimated percentage of inter-individuals variance was obtained using ICC test (1). Validation of the test was carried out using null models in hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). The ICC values (1) should be between 0.05 and 0.20 (Peugh, 2010) or greater than 0.15 (Mathieu et al., 2012).

The ICC (1) value for the quality of the fast fasting was 0.63 and was greater than 0.15, in agreement with Mathieu et al., 2012 indicating 63% variance between individuals in terms of the quality of fasting in Sha'ban. High ICC (1) value, indicates that the individual's strength to belong to the same group is high. Thus, the ICC (1) value of the quality of fasting was sufficient for the further investigation.

Next, the mean ($r(wg)$) test was utilised to evaluate the homogeneity among predicted individuals. It also refers to the consistent and relative agreement made by various evaluators

of various targets (Bliese, 2000; LeBreton et al., 2003; Kozlowski & Hattrup, 1992). Thus in the present study the mean ($r(wg)$) test refers to the consistent agreement among all individuals involved across various faculties.

The mean value ($r(wg)$) should be 0.70 and above, indicating mutual agreement between individuals (Mathieu et al., 2007; LeBreton & Flashlight, 2008). The present study showed the min ($r(wg)$) test value was 0.89 (standard deviation (SD) = 0.05) indicating that in terms of the variable quality of Sha'ban fasting between individuals, there was an 89% similarity (James et al., 1984).

There was a high degree of uniformity in terms of the quality of the fasting at the inter-individual level. In addition to the ICC (1) and ($r(wg)$) test requirements, FIII tests were also conducted to study the significance if this is significant. The FIII test was a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) between the individuals studied. It refers to the differences in variance between the individuals studied. In the present study, FIII tests showed that each individual has uniqueness in each of the variables studied. The results showed that the FIII value of the quality of the fast fasting was 11.20 ($p < .001$). Thus, the quality of the fast fasting showed a significant FIII value for further studies.

Hypothesis Test

In both Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, the present study analysed the upper level effects of the quality of fasting in Shaaban at the inter- individual level as a way to predict the positive character in Shaaban and at the the intra-individual level to predict the positive character in Ramadan

Hipotesis 1

Level -1 Model

$$\text{personalitySya'banij} = \beta_0j + r_{ij}$$

Level -2 Model

$$\beta_0j = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Sya'banfastingj}) + u_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

and

Hipotesis 2

Level -1 Model

$$\text{personalityRamadan1ij} = \beta_0j + r_{ij}$$

Level -2 Model

$$\beta_0j = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Sya'banfastingj}) + u_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

Results

To assess the reliability of the test items, Alpha Cronbach test was performed. The Alpha Cronbach (α) value for Shaaban fasting quality represented by 18 items was ($\alpha = 0.898$) whilst for positive personality in the fasting in Sya'ban which was represented by 36 items the value was ($\alpha = 0.960$), and finally for Ramadan positive personality which was represented by 36 items, the value was ($\alpha = 0.966$). All the alpha values were more than a minimum alpha coefficient which should be between 0.65-0.80 suggestive of the reliability of the items in assessing the same underlying concept.

All of the items represent the number of repetitive questions for 6 days in the month of Sha'ban and the first 6 days of the month of Ramadan. Table 1.2 represents the values of mean, standard deviation and correlation between variables at the intra-individual and inter-individual levels, FIII and ICC values (1).

Table 1.2

Mean, standard deviation and correlation

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	FIII	ICC (1)
Fasting Sya'ban quality	1.90	.80	1	.42**	.42**	11.20***	.63
Positive personality Sya'ban	3.36	.67	.34**	1	.84**	11.55***	.66
Positive personality Ramadan	3.40	.68	.30**	.63**	1	16.49***	.74

Nota: Upper corner, aggregate; bottom corner, individual. (N = 111 individual, 9 faculties). *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)

Table 1.3

Multilevel model random coefficient

	Positive personality Sya'ban			Positive personality Ramadhan		
	γ	S.E	t	Γ	S.E	t
Fasting Sya'ban quality	.36	.07	4.78***	.40	.09	4.19***

Nota: N = 111 individual, 9 faculties, *p < .05, ***p < .001 (two-tailed) γ = parameter budget, S.E. = Standard Error, t-ratio.

Table 1.4

Analysis results HLM cross level effect Sya'ban fasting to lower level

Model	Positive personality Sya'ban	Positive Personality Ramadhan
	1	2
Cross level effect		
Sya'ban fasting quality	0.36 (0.07)***	0.40 (0.09)***

Nota: N = 111 individual, 9 fakulty, *p < .05, ***p < .001 (two-tailed) first value is parameter budget and in brackets is standard deviation (Standard error)

Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 indicate that the quality of fasting is able to positively predict the positive personality in the month of Sya'ban and the positive personality in Ramadhan. The present study found that Hypothesis 1 showed a positive and significant relationship between the quality of fasting in Sha'ban and the positive attitude in the Sha'ban month. Hypothesis 1 ($\gamma = 0.36$, SE = 0.07, t = 4.78, p < 0.001; Table 1.3 and Table 1.4, Model 1). Whereas the results also showed a positive and significant relationship for Hypothesis 2 ($\gamma = 0.40$, SE = 0.09, t = 4.19, p < 0.001; Table 1.3 and Table 1.4, Model 2). Overall, the finding in the present study is in corcordance with the the Quran and the hadiths and the view of the scholars on the benefits of fasting in Sya'ban which contribute to positive personality in the month of Sha'ban until the beginning of Ramadan.

Voluntary fasting in the month of Sha'ban serves as a part of self-training especially in building the closeness with Allah SWT. Additionally, it is a form of self-control from indulging into all negativities which render the readiness and piousness in embracing the holy month of Ramadhan (Shiddiqy, 2005). In other words, fasting in the month of Sha'ban is a 'warm up' before entering Ramadan. Being accustomed to fasting in Sha'ban prior to Ramadan, bequeaths one with more physical and mental strengths, with the right motivation to perform the obligatory fasting in Ramadan (Ibn, 2007).

Additionally, the present study reinforces the benefits of Sha'ban fasting towards character building by providing an empirical means of the appropriateness of fasting in the month of Sha'ban prior to observing the fasting in the holy month of Ramadan. Increased spiritualness through fasting in Sha'ban would pave the way for a more cognizant spiritual journey in Ramadan hence in line with the anticipation of fasting in Shaaban by Prophet Muhammad PBUH and the Muslim scholars. This indirectly reveals the wisdom behind fasting as being ordained by the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet that it is compulsory on all Muslims to fast in the month of Ramadhan if they are to stay righteous.

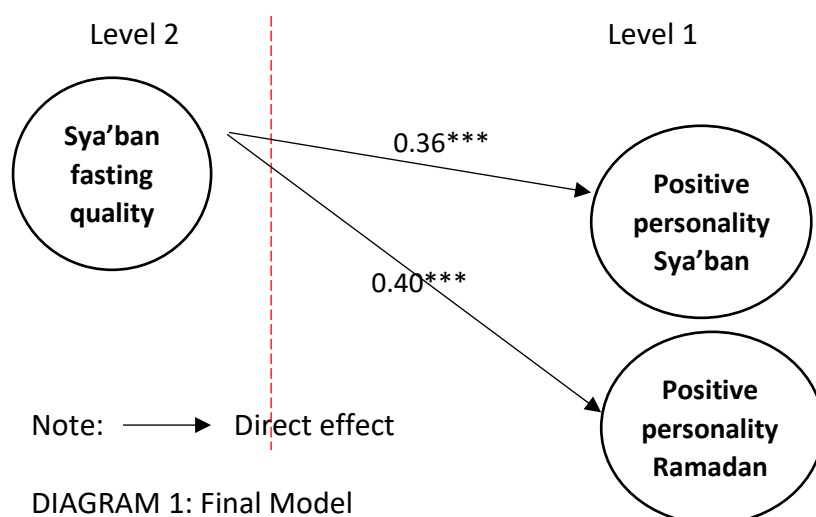


DIAGRAM 1: Final Model

Discussion

The present study further confirmed the great benefits offered by voluntary fasting. Apart from serving as one of the means in strengthening one's self discipline, voluntary fasting allows a closer and sincere relationship with God avoiding His displeasure. This is very much in line with what was stated by al-Zuhaily (1985) who said that this fasting worship teaches people to be trustworthy and integrity and to feel that they are always with Allah SWT.

Moreover, fasting renders one to be cognizant of God and acts as a preventative measure from performing negative deeds apart from refraining from eating and drinking but also from swearing, telling lies, gossiping and all other vices. Additionally, fasting is a good self-control exercise whilst cultivating patience and perseverance. These findings are seen to be very consistent with what has been presented by Imam al-Ghazali about the actual function of fasting. According to him, the perfection of fasting that will be obtained by people who fast in addition to refraining themselves from eating, drinking, and jima 'is also by refraining all limbs from the things that anger Allah SWT. A person who fasts should keep his eyesight, keep

his ears, keep his tongue, keep his hands and feet, and keep his stomach from the things that anger Allah SWT.

It is also understandable that fasting is not only a mere act of worship. Hence, despite the fact it is not obligatory to perform voluntary fasting but such act of worship lends significant positive effects on one's character building.

The present study provides an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the quality of fasting during the month of Sha'ban to the personality traits during Sha'ban and the beginning of Ramadan. The quality of fasting in Sha'ban at Level 2 was able to predict the positive attitude of the month of Sha'ban and the positive attitude of early Ramadan which is at Level 1.

Furthermore, voluntary fasting in the month of Sha'ban fast enhances positive moods when approaching the beginning of Ramadan from the value of 0.36 to 0.40. The results provide further evidence in supporting the validity of the Qur'an and the hadith on the benefits of fasting, including the fasting in Sha'ban.

The findings of this study also prove that fasting can help produce a clear view of all problems. Islam has the practice of obligatory fasting and sunnah. This is a sign that Islam is very concerned about human health, both physical health and spiritual health. So this shows that Islam has a comprehensive way of life and not just worship to Allah.

Fasting is really to make a person pious. Taqwa is the attitude of the soul (baṭin), its sublime behavior and personality. Refraining from all kinds of bad, evil and reprehensible things has been a heavy struggle of the soul, heart or mind, which requires the practice of habits. Fasting is tried to strengthen soul, control behavior and shape personality.

Conclusion

The fasting in Sha'ban offers potential benefits in shaping the character of a good Muslim. Not only a mere act of worship, Sha'ban has so many positive upsides such as help in weight management hence better healthy appearance and self-esteem. As a result of this study, one of the main findings was being able to understand and describe more deeply the experiences of individuals who fasted Sha'ban a few days before fasting Ramadan. Researchers have found some amazing discoveries, namely the individual process of fasting Sha'ban, as well as the advantages of the Sha'ban Fast.

This research found that Sha'ban fasting affects the level of religious practice in life. Respondents stated that their religious practices were better than before fasting Sha'ban. Before fasting Sha'ban the respondent explained that he lacked religious practice. However, after fasting Sha'ban, the respondent became a simple person and felt to stay away from all immoral acts. In addition, the respondents admitted that Sha'ban fasting is not only beneficial for health, even Sha'ban fasting also strengthens the power of control over all desires, so it (fasting) becomes a person's training and will develop patience and perseverance. The study also found that fasting Sha'ban can train the respondent to obtain true sincerity.

In addition, fasting on Sha'ban is able to feel that the respondent is always being watched over by God even though he is alone. Sha'ban fasting can also not only train respondents to refrain from the desire to eat and drink, but they can also refrain from swearing, telling lies, saying vile words, slandering and other vile acts.

Therefore, this study found that the Sha'ban circumcision fast has benefits in shaping the personality of a Muslim. The results of this study show that circumcision fasting is not just an act of worship, but also has an important influence on a person's entire behaviour. Fasting

also has a role in shaping a person's appearance in a better direction. Although respondent is busy with the world of learning, but fasting Sha'ban can have a positive influence on them to face Ramadan. When fasting they are trained in handling emotions, being patient and calm. Their training through fasting is related to controlling their passions. They will be better able to control the positive which will later be very useful for their life. Familiarizing oneself with the practice of fasting, whether obligatory or circumcised, has a relationship with the formation of a person's personality. The next study can continue with the study of the relationship between Ramadan fasting and circumcision fasting in the month of Syawal. If the fasting of Sha'ban has a relationship and role in the formation of the personality of students, then it is not impossible that the fasting of Ramadan will also have a positive effect on the personality in the month of Syawal.

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