

The Use of Modern Contraceptives among Women and its Implications to Menstrual Cycle According to Shariah

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Abstract

The use of modern contraceptives is recommended by the Ministry of Health Malaysia (KKM) for the health of women, and it is mandatory by law. The use of these contraceptives has implications for the stability woman's menstrual cycle, which in turn affects matters such as taharah activities, religious practices, marital relations, and others. The methodology used in this study was qualitative research using case study design, specifically examining the forms of abnormal bleeding as a result of the use of modern contraceptives. Data for the study were obtained through a literature review, analyzing classical and contemporary fiqh documents as well as medical literature. The study found that the legal adaptation for women who undergo this contraceptive treatment and experience abnormal bleeding is to refer to the legal rulings of women with *istihādḥah*. The management of these women's religious practices can be handled correctly according to Islamic law, when the status of the blood can be identified as either menstrual blood or non-menstrual blood (*istihādḥah* blood).

Keywords: Modern Contraceptives, Menstrual Blood, *Istihadḥah*, Family Planning.

Introduction

The Fourth Edition of Dewan Dictionary stated that the word "*kontraseptif*" refers to matters related to contraception (PRPM, n.d). The Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary defines contraception as the prevention of unwanted pregnancies that can be achieved through various methods (Law & Martin, 2020). Jain and Muralidhar (2011) in their article concluded that any devices intended to prevent a woman from pregnancy is classified as a contraceptive. According to the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN), 52.2% of married women between the ages of 15 and 49 use family planning methods. 34.3% from this this percentage use modern contraceptive methods (LPPKN, 2018). The population progress report by LPPKN defines modern contraceptives as medications or devices used to prevent pregnancy, including birth control and emergency contraception pills, condoms, intrauterine devices and systems, injections, implants, vaginal rings and others. Meanwhile, data from World Health Organization (WHO) shows 874 million women worldwide use modern contraceptive in 2021 (United Nations, 2023).

Research Problem

The main goal of using modern contraceptives is to ensure the complete recovery of the mother's health before subsequent childbirth. Additionally, increased cost of living and career commitments contribute to the use of these modern contraceptives (Hazlina, 2015). Besides, there are contraceptives that have dual protections at once, to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Beksinska, 2020). When the world plagued by COVID-19 pandemic crisis has increased the risk of COVID-19 infection complications for pregnant women (Amly, 2021). A facebook page name Public Health Malaysia (PHM) that actively spreads health awareness recommends the use of modern contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancy during the pandemic (2021) to reduce the risk and complication of COVID-19 infection among pregnant women (Aly et. al., 2021).

Therefore, the use of these modern contraceptives can be practiced by both women and men (Huber-Krum & Norris, 2020). However, most modern contraceptives used by women contain hormones (Monga & Dobbs, 2011). This leads to important hormonal changes in women, such as estrogen, progesterone, follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), and luteinizing hormone (LH), to prevent pregnancy. Furthermore, it affects the menstrual cycle. For Muslim users, disruptions in the menstrual cycle that cause abnormal vaginal bleeding burden them in determining their religious obligations (Hazlina, 2015). This article aims to explain the blood status experienced by women who take the approach of preventing pregnancy by using these modern contraceptives.

Research Methodology

The methodology used in this study is qualitative research employing case study design, specifically examining forms of abnormal bleeding due to the implications of using modern contraceptives. Data for the study were also obtained through literature review, analyzing classical and contemporary fiqh documents, as well as medical sources. Additionally, data were acquired by referring to relevant articles and other related works. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using a thematic approach.

Literature Review

The study titled "The Methods of Determining Menstruation and Istihadah from the Perspectives of Fiqh and Medical Science" by Yaakub (2020) discusses the basic use of

contraceptives in its findings. She states that the use of contraceptives is one of the factors contributing to irregular menstrual cycles. Additionally, the researcher does not analyze the type of bleeding that occurs as a result of contraceptives.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Muttaqin (2019) in the conclusion of his research entitled "Menstruation in the Perspective of Islam and Science: A Study on Irregular Menstruation of Contraceptive Users," he condemns the practice of considering the bleeding that exceeds 15 days and nights as menstruation due to the use of modern contraception. This contradicts the view of the majority of fuqaha, who stated that the maximum duration of menstruation is 15 days and nights (Zaidan, 2012). Any woman whose bleeding exceeds 15 days and nights is considered to be experiencing *istihādah* (abnormal bleeding) (Al-Bayjūri, 2007). The Shafi'i school of thought divides women experiencing *istihādah* (women whose menstrual blood is mixed with abnormal bleeding) into seven categories (Al-Bayjūri, 2007). Before issuing a ruling on the status of the bleeding for women experiencing *istihādah*, the category must first be determined. Deeming the bleeding that exceeds 15 days and nights as menstruation implies imposing the burden of religious obligations on the woman, such as prayer and fasting, and also prohibits marital relations for an extended period of time.

To address these issues, the views of past scholars should be considered by referring to their *istiqrā'* (research) and examining them with the opinions of medical experts. A woman experiencing abnormal vaginal bleeding should approach the determination of the status of her bleeding with caution, as it involves laws related to purity, worship, and marital relations. The medical perspective helps provide a realistic understanding of the vaginal bleeding that occurs in women who are using contraceptives.

A study by Hamadi and Chik (2018) titled "Management of Istihadah according to Islamic Jurisprudence and Medicine" elucidates the general management of *istihādah* for all women experiencing *istihādah*, to align with the perspectives of both Shariah and medicine. However, this study does not explain the factors causing istihadah from a medical standpoint.

The next study by Musyafa'ah (2013) entitled "Reconstruction of Fiqh on Pervaginal Bleeding with a Medical Approach" suggests that the fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) on women's bleeding should be reconstructed by taking into account medical perspectives. Additionally, the researcher also proposes that texts regarding women's bleeding should be reinterpreted.

Based on the stated previous studies, the objective of this study is to explain the status of women's blood due to the use of modern contraceptives. To achieve this goal, the study will elucidate the forms of vaginal bleeding caused by the use of modern contraceptives, as well as present the perspectives of past jurists as indicators in addressing issues of abnormal vaginal bleeding by discussing the methods outlined by relevant jurists corresponding to the occurring forms of vaginal bleeding.

Therefore, this study helps women who use modern contraceptives determine the religious legitimacy of their practices, whether they comply with Islamic law or otherwise.

Findings Analysis

Contraceptive Methods and Abnormal Vaginal Bleeding

The use of these contraceptive methods has been deemed lawful by the National Fatwa Committee of the Islamic Religious Affairs Council Malaysia on its 12th and 28th meetings. The fatwa committee has ruled that the use of modern contraceptive methods is obligatory for the purpose of family planning for the well-being, education, and happiness of the family, and not for the purpose of sterilization or limiting the number of children (JAKIM, 2015).

There are several popular modern contraceptive methods in Malaysia used by women to prevent pregnancy, such as oral contraceptive pills, hormonal injections, intrauterine devices and systems, contraceptive implants, vaginal rings, and emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs). The detailed use of these modern contraceptive methods are as stated in the following table (Monga & Dobbs, 2011; Hazlina, 2015; WHO et. al., 2018)

Num.	Contraceptive Methods		The Contraceptive Methods Act	Effect on menstrual cycle
1.	Birth control pills	Single hormone pill (progesterone)	To change the cervical mucus and uterine lining to prevent fertilization from occurring.	<p>If women take the pill correctly, it should not affect their menstrual cycle.</p> <p>In fact, this pill also functions to stabilize the menstrual cycle and reduce vaginal bleeding for those who experience excessive vaginal bleeding.</p> <p>However, menstrual cycle problems arise when women are careless in following the birth control pill schedule.</p> <p>Most likely, women will experience heavy and prolonged vaginal bleeding.</p>
Combined pill (progesterone and estrogen hormones)				
2.	Hormone injections	The hormone progesterone, specifically Norethisterone enantate	Thinning the uterine wall to prevent embryo implantation on the uterine wall.	<p>Based on the received reports:</p> <p>1. During the 3-6 month period of usage,</p>

		<p>The progestin hormone, Medroxyprogesterone acetate (Depo-Provera) DMPA</p> <p>- These types are more popular in Malaysia.</p>	<p>Thickening the cervical mucus to block the entry of sperm into the woman's uterus to prevent fertilization from occurring.</p>	<p>vaginal bleeding can become heavy and prolonged.</p> <p>2. After 6 months of usage, vaginal bleeding will decrease and the number of days will become shorter.</p> <p>3. Vaginal bleeding does not occur either during or after usage.</p>
3.	<p>Intrauterine devices and intrauterine systems</p>	<p>intrauterine device (IUD)</p>	<p>Prevents sperm from entering the uterus so that fertilization does not occur.</p> <p>Acts to prevent the implantation of fertilized ovum to the uterine wall.</p>	<p>The problems that occur of using an intrauterine device:</p> <p>1. Late menstrual cycle. 2. There is irregular vaginal bleeding. 3. There is heavy bleeding.</p>
		<p>Intrauterine system (Mirena)</p>	<p>Similarly to intrauterine device that prevents sperm from entering the uterus and prevents implantation of a fertilized ovum.</p> <p>This intrauterine system also works to thin the uterine wall so that implantation will not occur. In addition, it thickens the cervical mucus to prevent the entry of sperm into the uterus.</p>	<p>The pattern of vaginal bleeding of this intrauterine system's users is as follows:</p> <p>1. Experiencing slight and short bleeding. In fact, sometimes users only need to wear pantyliner because of the small amount of bleeding.</p> <p>2. There are women who experience amenorrhoea, i.e. do not experience vaginal bleeding.</p>
4.	<p>Implant injection: contains etonogestrel (a type of progesterone hormone)</p>		<p>Prevent ovulation by reducing the production of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH).</p>	<p>Most of the implant injection's users experience problems with menstrual disorders as follows:</p>

		In addition, it acts to thicken cervical mucus to prevent sperm from entering the uterus.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amenorrhea (not experiencing vaginal bleeding at all). 2. Experiencing slight and intermittent vaginal bleeding. 3. Having heavy vaginal bleeding.
5.	Vaginal ring: combination of hormones that are estrogen and progestin	Thicken cervical mucus to prevent sperm from entering the uterus.	<p>Women who use this vaginal ring usually experience the following vaginal bleeding within a few months of use;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vaginal bleeding which flow rate is more or less the same as menstruation, but the color of the blood is weaker than menstrual blood. 2. Having blood spots on the vagina between two periods.
6.	Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs).	Preventing or delaying the eggs release from the ovaries.	<p>The following are the changes that occur in the menstrual cycle:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Irregular light bleeding after 1-2 days of intake. 2. Shorten or lengthen the menstrual cycle.

Method for Determining Blood Status for Women who are Using Modern Contraceptive Methods According to Sharia Law

Based on the pattern of vaginal bleeding resulting from the use of modern contraceptives, there are several methods established by Sharia law in this regard, which need to be considered in the process of determining blood status. For this purpose, the study analyzes this issue based on the following themes

1. Basis in the science of women's blood

Discussions on menstrual and purification periods are fundamental aspects in the science of women's blood. These basic matters are important and must be understood by every Muslim woman (Al-Shirbini, 1994). They must also be studied and understood by every Muslim man so that he can teach his wife and daughters about these matters.

Jurists divide a woman's menstrual period into three parts: the minimum, the customary, and the maximum period (Al-Shirbini, 1994). The minimum period for a woman to experience menstruation is one day or within a twenty-four-hour period. The customary period for a woman to experience menstruation is six or seven days, based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in response to Hamnah bint Jahsh's question (Sunan Abi Dawud, Kitab Al-Taharah, Bab Man qala 'iza 'aqbalati al-haidah tada'u al-salah, No. 287.) (Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, Kitab Al-Taharah, Bab fi al-mustahadah 'annahā tajma'u baina al-salatain bi ghuslin wahid): It means, "You will menstruate for six or seven days as Allah has knowledge." The maximum period for menstruation is fifteen days, including the nights.

In addition to the menstrual period, a woman also has a period of purity. The period of purity refers to the time when no bleeding occurs between two menstrual cycles. It is divided into three categories: minimum, habitual, and maximum period (Al-Nawawi, n.d.). The minimum period of purity for a woman is fifteen days and nights. The habitual period of purity for a woman is twenty-three or twenty-four days. As for the maximum period of purity, the jurists unanimously agree that there is no limit to its duration (Al-Nawawi, n.d.).

When vaginal bleeding does not correspond to the characteristics of menstruation, such as the duration of bleeding not reaching the minimum period of menstruation or bleeding exceeding the maximum period of menstruation, then that blood is considered *istihādah* bleeding.

2. Category of Women in Menstrual Irregularity

Modern contraceptive users are at risk of experiencing disruptions in their menstrual cycles due to their usage. Therefore, Muslim women need to be aware of the category of women known as *mustahādah*. The category of *mustahādah* women is divided into seven (Al-Shirbini, 1994)

(a) *Al-Mubtada'ah al-Mumayyizah* refers to a woman who experiences menstruation for the first time and can distinguish the characteristics of the blood. According to Islamic law, this woman should consider the strong-flowing blood as menstrual blood (*hayd*) and the weak-flowing blood as irregular bleeding (*istihādah*).

(b) *Al-Mubtada'ah ghairu al-Mumayyizah* refers to a woman who experiences menstruation for the first time but cannot distinguish the characteristics of the blood. According to Islamic law, the menstrual period for this woman is only one day and any bleeding that occurs for twenty-nine days is considered irregular bleeding (*istihādah*).

(c) *Al-Mu'tadah al-Mumayyizah* refers to a woman who has previously experienced menstruation and can distinguish the characteristics of the blood. According to Islamic law, this woman should consider the strong-flowing blood as menstrual blood (*hayd*) and the weak-flowing blood as irregular bleeding (*istihādah*).

(d) *Al-Mu'tadah ghairu al-Mumayyizah dhākirah li 'ādatiha qadran wa waqtan* refers to a woman who has experienced menstruation but cannot distinguish the nature of the blood. However, she remembers the duration and timing of her previous menstrual cycles. The ruling regarding the blood of this woman is based on the customary practice of the previous month.

(e) *Al-Mu'tadah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah nāsiyah li 'ādatiha qadran wa waqtan*, also known as *al-Mutahayyirah (al-mutahayyirah al-muṭlaqah)*, refers to a woman who has experienced menstruation but cannot distinguish the nature of the blood. In fact, she forgets the duration and timing of her previous menstrual cycles. The ruling for this woman is that she must exercise caution (*'iḥṭiyāṭ*) at all times because at any given time, the blood she experiences can be either menstrual or *istihādah* blood. It is prohibited for her to engage in sexual pleasure from the navel to the knees with her husband, recite non-obligatory verses of the Quran during prayer times, touch or carry a mushaf (copy of the Quran), walk or sit in the mosque if it is feared that she may soil it.

In this situation, the woman should follow the ruling of a woman in a state of purity for acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and tawaf. She must even perform ritual bathing (*ghusl*) before each obligatory prayer.

(f) *Al-Mu'tadah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah dhākirah li 'ādatiha qadran la waqtan* refers to a woman who has experienced menstruation but cannot distinguish the nature of her blood. However, she still remembers her customary practice regarding the duration (number of days) of menstruation before the occurrence of abnormal bleeding, but she forgets the exact timing of the onset of menstruation. The ruling for this woman is that she should follow the ruling of menstruation and purity at the times she believes she is menstruating and pure. When there are two possibilities, either menstruation or purity, she should follow the ruling of an *al-mutahayyirah al-muṭlaqah* woman.

(g) *Al-Mu'tadah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah dhākirah li 'ādatiha waqtan la qadran* refers to a woman who has experienced menstruation but cannot distinguish the nature of her blood. However, she still remembers the timing (start time or day) of her previous menstruation, but she has forgotten the duration (number of days). The ruling for this woman is that she should follow the ruling of menstruation and purity at the times she believes she is menstruating and pure. When there are two possibilities, either menstruation or purity, she should follow the ruling of an *al-mutahayyirah al-muṭlaqah* woman.

3. Excessive and Prolonged Vaginal Bleeding

There are important considerations for women experiencing excessive and prolonged vaginal bleeding. These include keeping track of the days of bleeding, noting the characteristics of the blood, and any changes in its nature. If a woman finds that the bleeding exceeds the maximum duration of menstruation, which is fifteen days and nights, she falls into the category of "*mustahādah*" (Al-Bayjūri, 2007). *Mustahādah* refers to a woman whose blood is mixed with menstrual blood (*hayd*) and irregular bleeding (*istihādah*) (Al-Shirbini, n.d). This woman needs to identify and determine her specific category of *mustahādah*.

Looking at the trend of modern contraceptive users, it is mainly women who have previously experienced menstrual bleeding. Therefore, the following sequence of categories can serve as a guide for modern contraceptive users experiencing vaginal bleeding lasting more than fifteen days and nights:

1. If this woman is able to distinguish the characteristics of blood, then the category of this woman is *al-Mu'tādah al-Mumaiyyizah*.

2. If the woman is unable to distinguish the characteristics of blood because the blood that comes is only one characteristic, but she remembers the rate and timing of her previous

menstrual cycle, then this woman is classified in the category of *al-Mu'tādah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah dhākīrah li 'ādatiha qadran wa waqtan*.

3. If the woman is unable to distinguish the characteristics of blood because the blood that comes is only one characteristic, but she only remembers the rate without remembering the timing of her previous menstrual cycle, then this woman is considered a woman whose category is *al-Mu'tādah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah dhākīrah li 'ādatiha qadran la waqtan*.

However, if the woman is unable to distinguish the characteristics of the blood due to it only has one characteristic, but she remembers the timing without considering her previous menstrual cycle, then this woman is classified as *al-Mu'tadah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah dhakīrah li 'adatiha waqtan la qadran*.

4. If the woman cannot distinguish the nature of the blood due to it only has one characteristic, and she forgets the timing and regularity of her previous menstrual cycle, then she is categorized as a woman known as *al-Mu'tadah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah nasiyah li 'adatiha qadran wa waqtan*.

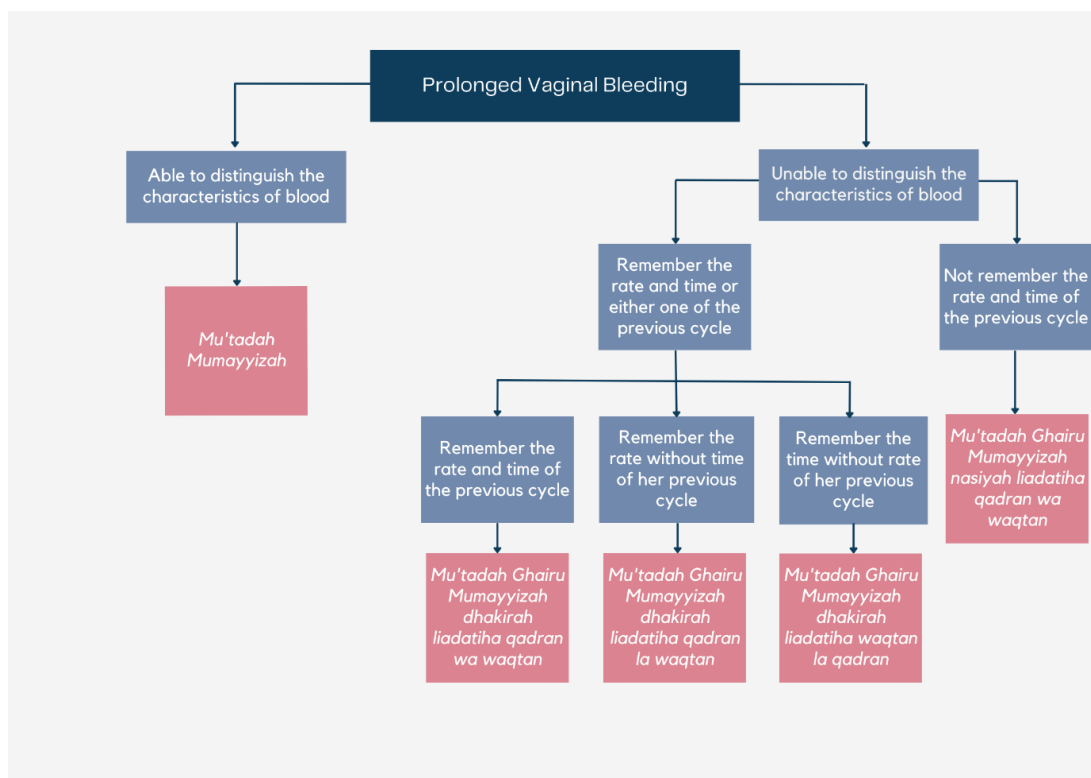


Figure 1: Sequence of categories can serve as a guide for modern contraceptive users experiencing vaginal bleeding lasting more than fifteen days and nights.

The third and fourth matters can be avoided by a woman who intends to use contraceptive methods by keeping track of her menstrual cycle period in the month before she starts using this modern contraceptive method.

4. Women who experience decreased vaginal bleeding along with a shorter duration of days, intermittent vaginal bleeding, and spotty vaginal bleeding

All of these situations require certain considerations before determining whether the blood is menstrual blood or *istihādḥah* (non-menstrual bleeding). To classify the blood as menstrual blood, the woman needs to ensure that the bleeding meets the minimum duration for menstruation.

The minimum duration of menstruation for a woman is one full day or twenty-four hours. The term "minimum duration of menstruation" refers to whether the blood flows continuously for a full day or intermittently over a period of 15 days and nights, reaching a total of 24 hours (Bāqishayr, 1990).

To facilitate the management of worship for women experiencing the situation as described by Baqishayr, they need to keep track of the days of bleeding and the duration of each instance of bleeding. Subsequently, the woman needs to calculate the total duration of the bleeding to determine if it meets the minimum duration for menstruation or not.

5. Bleeding that occurs between two menstrual periods but the characteristics of the blood different with menstrual blood.

According to the user guide book of the NuvaRing vaginal ring brand released by Organon Global Inc (2021), during the first few months of using this vaginal ring, some women may experience bleeding between two menstrual periods, in which the flow rate may be concurrent with menstrual blood but the nature of the blood is lighter compared to menstrual blood. Therefore, women who experience such condition are considered capable of distinguishing between menstrual blood and irregular bleeding (*istihādḥah*) blood.

6. Experiencing amenorrhea, which is the absence of menstruation.

Some women who use modern contraceptives may experience a condition where menstruation does not occur. This is likely due to the response of the modern contraceptive, which thins the uterine lining (Hazlina, 2015). This situation can sometimes be distressing for the users of modern contraceptives.

From a fiqh perspective, a woman who does not have any blood flow means she is not experiencing menstruation, and she remains in a state of purity. This does not pose a problem because the jurists unanimously agree that the maximum period of purity has no limit.

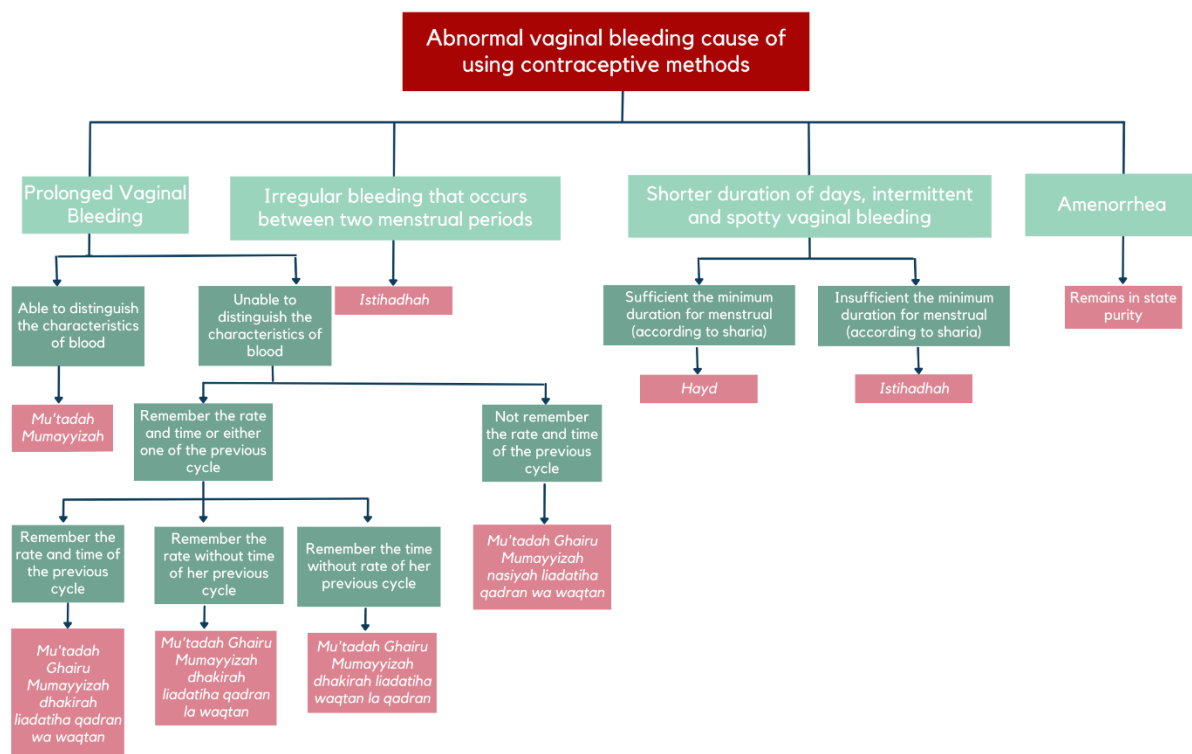


Figure 2: Sequence solution that can be a guide for modern contraceptive users experiencing abnormal vaginal bleeding.

Conclusion of The Study Findings

The study has identified several findings that can be summarized along with some suggestions, as follows

Summary

1. The use of modern contraceptives is recommended by the KKM for health purposes.
2. The law regarding the use of modern contraceptives is required for the purpose of family planning for health, education, and family happiness. It is not intended to cause infertility or limit the number of children.
3. There are several modern contraceptive methods that can disrupt the menstrual cycle, such as the use of devices and hormones, including estrogen and progesterone hormone intake.
4. For women experiencing abnormal vaginal bleeding, the reference indicator for the effects of using modern contraceptives is by adapting the laws of women with *istihādah* (abnormal bleeding).
5. The need to record monthly menstrual cycles is because it can be used as a reference when experiencing abnormal bleeding.
6. The rule for a woman who experiencing abnormal bleeding is as follows:
 - (a) Excessive and prolonged vaginal bleeding (beyond the maximum duration of menstruation, which is 15 days and nights).

This woman is considered *mustahādah*, and she needs to apply the appropriate rule for *mustahādah* according to her situation:

If the woman can distinguish the nature of the blood, she should follow the rule of a woman with specific distinguishing characteristics (*al-Mu'tādah al-Mumaiyyizah*). However, if she cannot distinguish the nature of the blood but remembers the regular duration and timing of her previous menstrual cycles, she should follow the rule of a woman without specific distinguishing characteristics (*al-Mu'tādah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah*) by considering the duration and timing of her customary menstrual cycle.

However, if the woman cannot distinguish the nature of the blood but only remembers the timing without the specific duration of her previous menstrual cycles, she should follow the rule of a woman without specific distinguishing characteristics (*al-Mu'tādah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah*) by considering the timing without the duration.

If the woman is unable to distinguish the nature of the blood and also forgets both the timing and duration of her previous menstrual cycles, she should follow the rule of a woman without specific distinguishing characteristics (*al-Mu'tādah ghairu al-Mumaiyyizah*) according to her customary menstrual cycle without considering the timing or duration.

(b) Reduced vaginal bleeding along with a shorter duration of days, intermittent vaginal bleeding, and spotted vaginal bleeding.

This woman needs to record the duration of blood flow for a period of 15 days and nights starting from the first day of bleeding. Then, she needs to add up the duration of that period to determine the rule of the blood.

If the total duration reaches the minimum duration of menstruation, which is 24 hours or more, then the blood is considered as menstrual blood. However, if the opposite occurs, the blood is considered *istihādah* blood.

(c) Bleeding that occurs between two menstrual cycles and can be distinguished by its characteristics.

This woman needs to follow the rule of *al-Mu'tādah al-Mumaiyyizah* woman because she is capable of distinguishing the characteristics of the blood.

Proposal

1- Every Muslim woman who decides to use modern contraception should keep track of her menstrual cycle in the month before taking the modern contraception. After using modern contraception, she should also record the days of bleeding along with its characteristics and changes in the blood.

2- For women who experiencing very light and intermittent vaginal bleeding, they should keep track of the duration of the blood flow.

3- The study suggests the development of guidelines approved by fiqh experts for the reference of medical practitioners in the Obstetrics and Gynecology (O&G) department, maternal and child health clinics, as well as Muslim women who will be using this method.

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