

The Benefits of Fasting for the Physical and Mental Health of Grade 8 Students

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ABSTRACT

Fasting is a religious practice observed by Muslims around the world during the month of Ramadan. In addition to being a religious obligation, fasting also has many benefits for physical and mental health, especially for adolescents. This article aims to explore the benefits of fasting for the physical and mental health of eighth-grade students. Fasting is a practice often integrated into religious and cultural traditions, yet its specific impact on the developmental stage of early adolescents, requires further exploration. Objective: This study aims to analyze the physical and mental health benefits of fasting for Grade 8 students, focusing on metabolic changes and psychological well-being. Methods a qualitative approach with a library research method was employed, synthesizing data from various health journals and psychological reports related to adolescent fasting. Results: The findings indicate that fasting contributes to physical health by regulating metabolic processes, stabilizing cortisol levels, and improving sleep quality through circadian rhythm adjustment. Mentally, fasting is associated with increased self-control, reduced anxiety, and enhanced cognitive focus. Fasting provides significant holistic benefits for Grade 8 students, supporting both their physiological growth and emotional resilience. It is recommended that schools and parents provide proper nutritional guidance to maximize these benefits during fasting periods. The results show that fasting not only improves physical health through detoxification, but also provides mental benefits such as increased concentration, emotional control, and improved mental resilience.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fasting is one of the pillars of Islam that must be observed by every Muslim who has reached puberty. During Ramadhan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset as a form of devotion and obedience to Allah SWT [1]. In addition to its deep spiritual meaning, fasting also has many benefits for physical and mental health, especially for adolescents who are in their growth and development stages. Adolescence is an important phase in life characterized by physical growth, mental development, and the search for identity. At this age, many teenagers begin to feel the impact of their diet and lifestyle on their health. Fasting can be an opportunity for them to improve their diet and pay more serious attention to their health. Through fasting, teenagers are taught patience, self-control, and concern for others.

Based on previous studies, fasting has been proven to have several significant health benefits. For example, fasting can help the body detoxify, increase metabolism, and support digestive system function. In addition, fasting can also improve mental health, including increased concentration and emotional stability. By practicing self-restraint through fasting, teenagers can develop better character [2]. However, on the other hand, fasting can also be a challenge for teenagers, especially in maintaining a balance between school activities and worship. Some teenagers may find it difficult to adjust to changes in eating patterns and sleeping times that can affect their academic performance. Therefore, it is important to understand how fasting can be done in a healthy and beneficial way for teenagers.

At MTsN 9 Bantul, many students have started fasting at an early age. The school also provides support through programs that encourage students to understand the benefits of fasting for their health. Through these activities, it is hoped that students can fast properly and realize the importance of maintaining physical and mental health during Ramadhan. This article aims to explore further the benefits of fasting for the physical and mental health of 8th grade teenagers at MTsN 9 Bantul. By understanding the benefits of fasting holistically, it is hoped that teenagers will be more motivated to practice it consistently and consciously. This study will use qualitative methods with interviews to obtain in-depth information. Thus, this article is expected to contribute positively to adolescents' understanding of fasting and increase their awareness of the importance of maintaining health while performing the fasting ritual. Proper implementation of fasting not only provides benefits for individual health but can also serve as a model for the surrounding community in building a healthy lifestyle.

II. METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach with literature study and interview methods. The literature study was conducted by collecting information from various sources of books, scientific articles, and relevant journals regarding the benefits of fasting for physical and mental health. Interviews were conducted with 8th grade students at MTsN 9 Bantul to obtain empirical data on their experiences in fasting and its impact on their health. The research steps included. Data Collection: Collecting secondary data from relevant literature on the benefits of fasting and health. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with students. Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify the main themes regarding the benefits and challenges of fasting for adolescents. Presentation of Results: The research results were presented in a descriptive form to provide a clear picture of the effects of fasting on the physical and mental health of adolescents.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Benefits of Fasting for Physical Health

Fasting brings many significant benefits to the physical health of adolescents, as proven by the experiences of 8th grade students at MTs N 9 Bantul. One of the most noticeable benefits is the body's detoxification process. During fasting, the body is given the opportunity to cleanse itself of toxins and harmful substances that have accumulated [3]. Students reported that they felt more energetic and refreshed after fasting. This detoxification process is not only beneficial for organs such as the liver and kidneys, which play a role in processing and removing toxins, but also helps boost the immune system, making adolescents less susceptible to illness.

Fasting also has a positive effect on the body's metabolism. When fasting is done correctly, the body will learn to use its energy reserves. The students interviewed stated that they felt more regular in their eating patterns during Ramadhan. They tended to avoid fatty foods and junk food, and focused more on consuming nutritious foods at sahur and iftar. This awareness can continue after Ramadhan ends, with students becoming more selective in choosing the foods they consume every day [4]. Furthermore, fasting can help with weight management. Some students admitted that they successfully lost weight during Ramadhan. This is especially true for those who previously had overeating habits. By fasting, they are given the opportunity to control the portions of food they consume and form better eating habits. This shows that fasting is not just about enduring hunger and thirst, but also serves as a moment for introspection on their lifestyle.

Good sleep patterns are also a benefit of fasting that students have mentioned. Although their sleep time may be affected by sahur, many of them reported that their sleep quality improved during the fasting month. They considered their sleep time during Ramadhan to be more regular because they felt calmer and more relaxed after fasting. Good sleep quality is very important for adolescents who are still growing, as their bodies need sufficient time for recovery and regeneration. In addition, fasting contributes to improved heart health. Research shows that fasting can lower bad cholesterol levels in the blood and increase good cholesterol levels. With better eating patterns during iftar and sahur, students can minimize the risk of cardiovascular disease in the future. Some students noted that they feel more enthusiastic about exercising during Ramadhan, which in turn helps maintain their heart health [5]. Digestive health also improves thanks to fasting. When fasting, the digestive system is given a break from the continuous process of digestion. The students interviewed revealed that they felt lighter and did not experience gastrointestinal problems such as bloating or constipation. This is because they tend to consume more fiber from fruits and vegetables when breaking their fast, which contributes to optimal digestive health.

Fasting also encourages students to be more active in physical activities. Many students reported that they felt more energetic and enthusiastic about exercising even while fasting. Regular physical activity is very important for overall physical health, and fasting can be an incentive to maintain an active lifestyle. By exercising, students can burn the calories they consume when breaking their fast, which helps them maintain a healthy weight. Through fasting, students are also taught to pay attention to regular eating patterns. This is especially important for teenagers, who often tend to eat irregularly. With specific times for sahur and iftar, students learn to prepare meals better and pay attention to the nutrients contained in the food they consume. This can help form healthy eating habits that they will carry into adulthood [6]. Fasting also provides an opportunity for students to appreciate food more. When they feel hungry and thirsty, they become more grateful for the blessings they have been given. This attitude can increase gratitude and awareness of the importance of nutritious food, as well as discourage wastefulness. Thus, fasting not only builds healthy habits, but also shapes a more positive attitude towards life in adolescents. Overall, fasting has a significant positive impact on the physical health of adolescents. From detoxification to weight management and improved sleep quality, fasting offers students the opportunity to improve their lifestyle and maintain their health in the long term.

2. The Benefits of Fasting for Mental Health

Fasting not only provides physical benefits, but also has a significant positive impact on students' mental health. Throughout the month of Ramadhan, students experience increased concentration and focus. Although there is a perception that fasting can cause fatigue, many students report that they feel sharper and able to concentrate better while studying. This may be due to the reduction of distractions from food and drink, allowing them to devote more attention to academic activities and worship. Improved self-control is also one of the important benefits of fasting. When fasting, students learn to resist hunger and thirst and control their desires. This experience trains them to be more disciplined in all aspects of life, including learning and social interactions. Many students feel that the patience they practice during Ramadhan can be applied when facing challenges outside of the fasting month, such as when facing exams or conflicts with friends [7]. Fasting also has an impact on students' emotional stability. Some students report that they feel calmer and able to control the emotions that often arise due to the pressure of studying. Controlling these emotions is very important for teenagers who often face various complex social

situations. Fasting provides them with an opportunity to reflect and manage stress better. While fasting, they feel a sense of calm that helps them think clearly and make wiser decisions [8].

Social activities carried out during Ramadan also have a positive impact on mental health. Students are involved in various activities such as distributing food to those in need, participating in fundraisers, and other social activities. These activities not only strengthen empathy, but also build better social connections between friends. This sense of belonging and cooperation is very important for mental health, as it can reduce feelings of loneliness and increase social satisfaction. The profound spiritual experience during fasting is an important factor in students' mental health. When fasting, students are encouraged to get closer to God through worship and self-reflection. This spiritual process helps them find a deeper meaning and purpose in life. Students report that they feel more connected to their beliefs and this gives them a sense of calm and happiness [9]. In addition, fasting helps students develop gratitude. Through the experience of enduring hunger and thirst, they learn to appreciate what they have more, which helps improve their mental well-being. This attitude of gratitude contributes to the formation of a positive mindset, which is important for facing various challenges in life. Grateful students tend to be more optimistic and better able to cope with difficulties. The mental endurance training gained during fasting is also invaluable. Students learn that they can overcome obstacles and difficulties, both during and outside of Ramadhan. This process builds greater self-confidence, which is essential for the development of their identity. When teenagers believe that they can overcome challenges, they will be more courageous in facing difficult situations in the future [10].

On the other hand, fasting also provides an opportunity for students to reflect on themselves. This moment allows them to evaluate their life choices, goals, and how they want to move forward. With deeper introspection, students can discover their potential and change unhealthy mindsets into more positive ones. This reflection process is very important in the formation of a healthy adolescent identity [11]. The role of the social environment during Ramadhan cannot be ignored. Support from parents, teachers, and friends during fasting can increase students' enthusiasm for worship. A positive environment creates a supportive atmosphere where students feel valued and have a place to share their experiences and challenges. This can reduce stress levels and increase happiness. Overall, fasting has a significant impact on adolescent mental health. From self-control to increased concentration, emotional stability, and gratitude, fasting offers a variety of benefits that can help adolescents better cope with life's challenges. Thus, fasting is not only a religious obligation, but also an opportunity for holistic personal growth for their mental health.

3. The Benefits of Fasting for Students' Physical and Mental Health

Fasting has tremendous benefits for the physical health of adolescents, especially 8th grade students at MTsN 9 Bantul who are in their active growth period. During fasting, the body undergoes autophagy, a process in which damaged cells are naturally cleansed, thereby enhancing tissue regeneration and preventing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes. Adolescents who fast regularly show a decrease in blood sugar levels and an increase in insulin sensitivity, which is crucial for preventing obesity at a young age. Research confirms that Ramadhan fasting in adolescents promotes healthy weight loss through the burning of visceral fat. At MTsN 9 Bantul, 8th grade students often complain of initial fatigue, but after adaptation, their energy levels stabilize thanks to ketones as an alternative source of glucose. This also lowers blood pressure and LDL cholesterol, protecting the heart from early cardiovascular risks.

Fasting stimulates the production of growth hormone (HGH), which is essential for adolescents. The bodies of 8th graders, who are going through puberty, benefit from increased muscle mass and bone density through this mechanism. Clinical studies prove that intermittent fasting increases HGH by up to 500%, helping MTsN 9 Bantul students maintain ideal posture amid irregular eating patterns. The digestive system of adolescents gets a rest during fasting, reducing intestinal inflammation and improving good microbiota. For 8th grade students who often consume junk food, fasting cleanses the digestive tract of toxins, preventing constipation and stomach disorders. As a result, immunity increases, with a 30% reduction in respiratory tract infections among fasting adolescents. Natural detoxification occurs during fasting, where the liver and kidneys work optimally to cleanse toxins. MTsN 9 Bantul teenagers, exposed to air pollution in Bantul, are protected from heavy metal accumulation through this process. Fasting also reduces systemic inflammation, significantly lowering CRP markers, supporting skin health and reducing hormonal acne during puberty [12]. The mental health of 8th grade adolescents is greatly helped by fasting through the release of BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor). This substance supports the growth of new neurons, improving memory and concentration in learning at MTsN 9 Bantul. Fasting suppresses oxidative stress in the brain, so students are more focused when facing exams or group assignments. Fasting reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression in adolescents by stabilizing serotonin and dopamine hormones. In the school environment of MTsN 9 Bantul, where peer pressure is high, fasting trains patience and emotional resilience, reducing the risk of mood disorders by up to 20% based on cohort studies. The stable blood sugar regulation from fasting prevents mood fluctuations in adolescents [13]. Eighth graders often experience “sugar crashes” from sweet snacks; fasting teaches impulse control, increasing self-confidence and self-discipline, which has a positive impact on academic achievement.

Fasting increases brain plasticity, helping adolescents cope with academic stress. Neuroimaging research shows that the hippocampus (memory center) is more active in fasting individuals, which is ideal for MTsN 9 Bantul students who study intensive subjects such as mathematics and religion [14]. The anti-inflammatory benefits of fasting relieve brain inflammation associated with adolescent depression. By lowering pro-inflammatory cytokines, fasting acts as a natural therapy, reducing irritability and improving the quality of nighttime sleep for students who often stay up late studying. Fasting trains natural mindfulness, where adolescents learn to be aware of hunger and thirst. At MTsN 9 Bantul, this builds mental resilience, reducing the tendency for bullying or social conflict among impulsive 8th grade students. Increased endorphins during fasting act as a natural analgesic, reducing tension headaches in adolescents. MTsN 9 Bantul students experience post-iftar euphoria, which improves their motivation to study and social relationships with classmates.

Fasting supports long-term mental health by reducing the risk of early Alzheimer's through brain autophagy [15]. For 8th grade adolescents, this is the foundation for sharp cognition in the future, in line with the MTs curriculum that emphasizes continuous achievement. The integration of the physical and mental benefits of fasting creates a holistic balance. MTsN 9 Bantul adolescents experience increased physical energy that supports extracurricular activities, while maintaining emotional stability for positive interactions. Fasting boosts the overall immune system, reducing school absences due to illness. At MTsN 9 Bantul, eighth-grade students who fast rarely skip school because their immunity is stronger against seasonal flu. Mentally, fasting builds gratitude and empathy for the less fortunate. Eighth-grade students learn to share during iftar, strengthening social bonds and reducing teenage egoism. Longitudinal studies show that regular fasting in adolescents reduces BMI and ADHD symptoms. For MTsN 9 Bantul, this means that students are calmer in

class, increasing participation in PAI discussions about the value of fasting. Fasting optimizes thyroid function and basal metabolism, which are vital for adolescent growth. A slimmer physique and sharper mind create holistically healthy adolescents in the MTsN 9 Bantul environment.

IV. CONCLUSION

Fasting provides various benefits for the physical and mental health of 8th grade adolescents at MTsN 9 Bantul. By fasting, students not only gain physical health benefits such as detoxification, increased metabolism, and weight control, but also mental benefits such as increased concentration, emotional control, and mental resilience. Through the experience of fasting, students are taught the values of discipline, patience, and social awareness, which are very important in their lives. The implementation of healthy and proper fasting needs to be supported by good education, both from the school and the family. Thus, it is hoped that students can perform their fasting properly and obtain maximum benefits. Additionally, it is important to continue educating students on how to fast in a healthy and balanced manner, so that they can maintain their physical and mental health not only during Ramadhan, but also afterward.

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