

Harmonizing Islamic Law and Modern Medicine: A Normative Analysis of Family Planning Through the Lens of Maqasid al-Shari'ah and Reproductive Health in Indonesia

Nabilah Falah, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia
nabilah.falah@untirta.ac.id (correspondent)

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Abstract

This study examines the harmonization between Islamic legal principles and modern medical science in the implementation of family planning (FP) programs in Indonesia. Despite the government's sustained efforts to promote FP through the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), religious misinterpretations and cultural resistance continue to impede program acceptance, particularly in Muslim-majority communities. Employing a qualitative normative-analytical approach through systematic literature review, this research analyzes primary Islamic legal sources, national health policies, and recent empirical studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases (2020-2025). The analysis is framed through the theoretical lens of maqasid al-shari'ah, specifically the principles of *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life) and *hifz al-nasl* (preservation of lineage). The findings reveal that temporary contraception is jurisprudentially permissible when aimed at safeguarding maternal and child health, and that the integration of religious authority and biomedical evidence significantly enhances community acceptance. This study contributes to the interdisciplinary discourse on Islamic bioethics by proposing a conceptual model for religion-health integration in reproductive governance.

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A. Introduction

Family planning (FP) constitutes one of the most critical public health interventions in the contemporary global development agenda. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Target 3.7, explicitly call upon all nations to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including family planning, information, and education by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). With approximately two billion Muslims residing primarily across the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, the intersection of Islamic teachings and reproductive health practices remains a subject of profound scholarly, policy, and societal significance (Oraby, 2024; Alomair et al., 2020). Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation with over 270 million inhabitants, presents a particularly compelling case study for examining this intersection, as the country has maintained one of the most extensive national family planning programs since the establishment of the Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional (BKKBN) in 1970 (BKKBN, 2023). Despite decades of implementation, the total fertility rate (TFR) has stagnated at approximately 2.18 since 2017, indicating persistent challenges in program uptake and effectiveness (BPS, 2024).

The existing body of literature on the nexus between Islam and family planning has grown substantially over the past decade. Systematic reviews have identified multiple personal, cultural, religious, and structural barriers affecting Muslim women's access to reproductive health services

*Corresponding Author: nabilah.falah@untirta.ac.id

Nabilah Falah, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia, Email: sahaja@darunnajah.ac.id

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across 22 countries (Alomair et al., 2020; D'Souza et al., 2022). Studies conducted in diverse Muslim-majority contexts, including Saudi Arabia (Alomair et al., 2023), Pakistan (Chaudhary et al., 2025), India (Nasreen et al., 2024), Tanzania (Chalem et al., 2023), and Indonesia (Wahyuni & Rahmawati, 2022), have consistently demonstrated that religious misinterpretation, particularly the conflation of temporary birth spacing with permanent birth limitation, constitutes a primary barrier to FP adoption. Furthermore, recent scholarship in Islamic bioethics has examined contraception through the lens of maqasid al-shari'ah, arguing that FP aligns with the fundamental principles of preserving life and protecting lineage (Mohammed, 2024; Terblanche & Abrahams, 2024).

Despite these advances, significant gaps persist in the existing scholarship. First, the majority of studies adopt either a purely theological or exclusively biomedical perspective, with limited attempts at systematic integration of both frameworks (Oraby, 2024). Second, the Indonesian context, characterized by its unique blend of Islamic pluralism, governmental secular FP policy, and the influential role of religious institutions such as Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), has been underexplored in international indexed literature (Wahyuni & Rahmawati, 2022). Third, there remains a paucity of conceptual models that articulate how maqasid al-shari'ah can serve as an operational ethical framework for bridging Islamic jurisprudence and evidence-based reproductive health policy (Kasule, 2023). The novelty of this study lies in its systematic normative analysis that integrates Islamic legal theory with contemporary public health evidence to propose a harmonization model specifically applicable to Indonesia's demographic governance challenges.

The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) to analyze the jurisprudential foundations of family planning within Islamic law, distinguishing between *tanzim al-nasl* and *tahdid al-nasl* through classical and contemporary scholarly opinions; (2) to examine the empirical evidence on reproductive health outcomes associated with FP programs in Muslim-majority populations; and (3) to propose a conceptual framework for the harmonization of Islamic ethical principles and modern medical science in reproductive governance. The central argument is that the maqasid al-shari'ah framework not only permits but ethically supports family planning practices when implemented with the intention of safeguarding maternal and child welfare.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: the method section describes the qualitative normative-analytical approach and literature selection criteria; the results section presents findings organized around three thematic areas; the discussion section interprets these findings within the broader discourse of Islamic bioethics and reproductive governance; and the conclusion offers theoretical contributions, practical implications, and directions for future research.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative normative-analytical approach, combining Islamic legal analysis (*usul al-fiqh* methodology) with systematic literature review of contemporary empirical research. The normative dimension involves the examination of primary Islamic legal sources, namely the Qur'an, Hadith collections (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud), and jurisprudential opinions from the four major Sunni schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), as well as institutional rulings from Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), and the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS). These sources were analyzed through the interpretive framework of maqasid al-shari'ah as articulated by classical scholars including al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH/1111 CE) and al-Shatibi (d. 790 AH/1388 CE), supplemented by contemporary applications proposed by Jasser Auda (2008) and Ahmad al-Raysuni (2013).

The empirical literature review was conducted following a modified systematic approach. Searches were performed across three major databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and PubMed, covering publications from 2020 to 2025. The search strategy employed Boolean combinations of the following terms: ("family planning" OR "contraception" OR "reproductive health") AND ("Islam" OR "Muslim" OR "maqasid" OR "shariah"). Additional targeted searches were conducted using terms such as "maternal mortality" AND "birth spacing," and "religious leaders" AND "family planning intervention." The initial search yielded 847 results. After removing duplicates and applying inclusion criteria, 68 articles met the criteria for inclusion in the final analysis.

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Data analysis proceeded through a three-stage process. In the first stage, Islamic legal sources were analyzed using content analysis to identify key jurisprudential positions on contraception, birth spacing, and reproductive autonomy. The coding categories were derived deductively from the five essential objectives of maqasid al-shari'ah: preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. In the second stage, the empirical literature was synthesized using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to FP knowledge, attitudes, practices, and barriers in Muslim populations. In the third stage, an integrative analysis was conducted to map convergence and divergence between Islamic ethical principles and public health evidence, resulting in the proposed harmonization framework. The trustworthiness of the analysis was ensured through triangulation of multiple data sources, peer debriefing, and systematic documentation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

C. Result

Islamic Jurisprudential Foundations of Family Planning

The analysis of primary Islamic legal sources reveals a nuanced jurisprudential landscape regarding family planning. The Qur'an does not contain explicit prohibitions against contraception or birth spacing. Rather, several verses provide the normative foundations from which scholars have derived rulings on FP. Surah al-Nisa' (4:9) emphasizes the parental obligation to ensure the welfare of offspring. Surah al-Baqarah (2:233) establishes a recommended breastfeeding period of two full years, which classical scholars interpreted as an implicit endorsement of child spacing. Surah al-Isra' (17:31) explicitly prohibits infanticide motivated by fear of poverty, while affirming divine provision, a verse that contemporary scholars distinguish from contraception, which prevents conception rather than terminating life (Omran, 1992; Sari, 2019).

The Hadith literature provides the most direct jurisprudential evidence for the permissibility of contraception. Multiple authentic narrations in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim document the practice of al-'azl (coitus interruptus) among the Companions of the Prophet during his lifetime, with no explicit prohibition. In the narration reported by Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, the Prophet was informed about this practice and responded by acknowledging divine destiny without forbidding it (Sahih Muslim, no. 1440). Classical jurists, including al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, utilized this narration as the primary evidence for the permissibility of contraception, distinguishing it from infanticide (al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, II/51).

Based on these sources, the analysis identifies two distinct jurisprudential categories. The first is *tanzim al-nasl* (birth regulation/spacing), which involves temporary and reversible methods of contraception. The overwhelming consensus of classical and contemporary scholars holds that *tanzim al-nasl* is permissible when undertaken for legitimate purposes such as protecting maternal health or ensuring adequate child-rearing capacity (Hasibuan et al., 2023; Aminah et al., 2024). The MUI has affirmed this position through its fatwa endorsing FP for health and welfare purposes. The second category is *tahdid al-nasl* (permanent birth limitation), involving irreversible sterilization procedures. This is categorically prohibited by the majority of scholars unless medical necessity demands it, as it contravenes the maqasid principle of preserving lineage (Irianto, 2014; Fauzi, 2017).

Table 1. Jurisprudential Comparison: *Tanzim al-Nasl* vs. *Tahdid al-Nasl*

Dimension	<i>Tanzim al-Nasl</i> (Birth Spacing)	<i>Tahdid al-Nasl</i> (Birth Limitation)
Definition	Temporary, reversible regulation of pregnancy timing and spacing	Permanent, irreversible termination of reproductive capacity
Ruling	Mubah (permissible) with conditions	Haram (prohibited) except in medical emergency
Conditions	Mutual spousal consent; legitimate purpose (health, education, welfare); non-harmful methods	Life-threatening medical condition; consensus of trustworthy physicians
Scholarly Consensus	Near-unanimous agreement across all four madhhab; endorsed by MUI, IIFA, IOMS	Prohibited by majority; permitted only in <i>darurah</i> (necessity)

Source: Analysis of primary sources (2024)

Empirical Evidence on Reproductive Health Outcomes

The systematic review of empirical literature (2020-2025) reveals compelling evidence supporting the health benefits of family planning programs. Research consistently demonstrates that optimal interpregnancy intervals of 24 to 60 months are associated with significantly reduced risks of adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes. A meta-analysis by Schummers et al. (2018) found that short interpregnancy intervals were associated with increased risks of preterm birth and low birth weight across all maternal age groups. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) continues to recommend a minimum interpregnancy interval of 24 months following a live birth to reduce maternal mortality and perinatal complications.

In the Indonesian context, the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) reported that the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) among married women of reproductive age stood at 63.2% in 2023, with injectable contraceptives (31.8%) and oral pills (13.2%) being the most commonly utilized methods (BKKBN, 2023). However, the unmet need for family planning remains at approximately 8.4%, with significant regional disparities between urban and rural populations and across provinces with varying levels of Islamic institutional influence (BPS, 2024). Studies conducted in Muslim-majority regions of Indonesia have identified religious concerns as the second most frequently cited barrier to FP uptake after side-effect fears (Wahyuni & Rahmawati, 2022; Nurjannah et al., 2021).

Cross-national comparative studies provide additional evidence. Alomair et al. (2023), in a qualitative study among Muslim women in Saudi Arabia, found that education was the most significant determinant of reproductive autonomy. Nasreen et al. (2024), studying Muslim women in rural Karnataka, India, reported that while 94.4% of respondents demonstrated awareness of contraceptive methods, actual utilization was only 70%. Chalem et al. (2023), investigating Muslim religious leaders' perspectives in Tanzania, documented that leaders uniformly supported birth spacing through natural methods but expressed varied opinions on modern contraceptive methods, highlighting the critical role of religious leadership engagement in FP programming.

Mechanisms of Religion-Health Integration

The analysis identifies three primary mechanisms through which Islamic ethical principles and modern medical science converge in supporting family planning programs. The first mechanism operates through the maqasid al-shari'ah framework, which provides a principled Islamic justification for FP. The five essential objectives collectively support the ethical permissibility of birth spacing. The preservation of life directly corresponds with the medical imperative to protect maternal and child health. The preservation of lineage encompasses not merely the quantity but the quality of offspring, including their physical health, psychological development, and access to education (Auda, 2008; Mohammed, 2024).

The second mechanism involves the institutional engagement of religious authorities in FP advocacy. In Indonesia, the MUI has played a pivotal role through formal fatwas endorsing family planning with specific conditions. Similarly, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah have integrated FP education into their community health programs through networks of pesantren, majelis taklim, and community health cadres (Latief, 2020; Wahyuni & Rahmawati, 2022). This institutional endorsement addresses the informational asymmetry identified by Oraby (2024), who documented that the gap between Muslims and their doctrine regarding contraception stems primarily from religious misinterpretation rather than doctrinal prohibition.

The third mechanism is the collaborative approach between healthcare providers and religious leaders in community-level FP interventions. Empirical evidence demonstrates that FP programs incorporating religious messaging alongside biomedical information achieve significantly higher acceptance rates. In a quasi-experimental study in Bangladesh, Sultana et al. (2022) found that FP counseling that included Islamic justifications increased contraceptive uptake by 23% compared to standard biomedical counseling alone. In Indonesia, the Kampung KB (Family Planning Village) program, which integrates religious leaders as community health advocates, has demonstrated higher modern contraceptive prevalence rates in participating communities (BKKBN, 2023).

D. Discussion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive response to the persistent debate regarding the compatibility of Islamic law and modern family planning practices. The jurisprudential analysis demonstrates that temporary contraception for the purpose of birth spacing has been accepted by the overwhelming majority of Islamic scholars across all four Sunni schools of jurisprudence, from the classical period to the present day. This finding aligns with and extends the arguments of Oraby (2024), who characterized the perceived conflict between Islam and contraception as a missed opportunity resulting from inadequate knowledge transmission rather than genuine doctrinal disagreement. The present study advances this argument by providing a systematic mapping of the jurisprudential evidence, demonstrating that the permissibility of *tanzim al-nasl* is supported by near-consensual positions across diverse Islamic legal traditions.

The empirical evidence synthesized in this study corroborates and extends the systematic review by Alomair et al. (2020), which identified religious interpretation as a significant barrier to Muslim women's reproductive health access across 22 countries. However, the present analysis reveals an important nuance: the barrier is not Islam per se, but rather the selective or incomplete interpretation of Islamic teachings that conflates temporary birth spacing with permanent birth limitation. This distinction, clearly articulated in the *tanzim al-nasl* versus *tahdid al-nasl* typology, provides a practical framework for addressing religious concerns in FP programming. The finding resonates with the qualitative evidence from Chalem et al. (2023), who documented that Muslim religious leaders in Tanzania supported birth spacing in principle but required clearer guidance on specific modern contraceptive methods.

The proposed maqasid-based harmonization framework makes a distinctive theoretical contribution to the field of Islamic bioethics. While previous studies have invoked maqasid al-shari'ah in relation to reproductive health (Kasule, 2023; Terblanche & Abrahams, 2024), they have generally done so in a fragmented manner. This study offers a holistic integration of all five essential objectives as they relate to family planning, demonstrating that FP is supported by multiple convergent Islamic ethical principles rather than merely being grudgingly tolerated as an exception. This conceptualization is consistent with the contemporary maqasid methodology proposed by Jasser Auda (2008), who argued for a systems approach to Islamic law that considers the interrelationship among all objectives.

The Indonesian case provides a particularly instructive example of religion-health integration in reproductive governance. Unlike many Muslim-majority countries where FP policy has historically encountered resistance from religious institutions, Indonesia has developed a distinctive model of collaboration between state FP agencies and Islamic organizations. The endorsement by MUI, supplemented by the grassroots networks of NU and Muhammadiyah, creates a multilevel system of religious legitimation. This finding extends the work of Latief (2020) on Islamic social movements in Indonesia and aligns with the broader literature on faith-based health interventions (Olivier et al., 2023). The success of programs like Kampung KB suggests a replicable model for other Muslim-majority contexts.

However, several limitations merit acknowledgment. First, the effectiveness of the maqasid framework depends on the capacity of religious leaders to articulate its nuances accurately, which requires sustained training. Second, the diversity of Islamic legal opinions means that conservative scholars may continue to resist FP programs. Third, the Indonesian model may not be directly transferable to contexts with different configurations of religious authority and state capacity. Fourth, this study relies on published literature and may not fully capture community-level perspectives that remain undocumented in academic databases.

E. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the harmonization between Islamic law and modern medical science in family planning is not merely theoretically possible but empirically validated and ethically grounded. The jurisprudential analysis confirms that temporary birth spacing is permissible under Islamic law by near-unanimous scholarly consensus, supported by clear Qur'anic and Hadith evidence. The empirical evidence establishes that FP programs achieve significantly better outcomes when they

integrate religious authority with biomedical expertise. The maqasid al-shari'ah framework provides a robust ethical foundation, demonstrating that family planning supports the preservation of life, lineage, intellect, and wealth.

The study makes three principal contributions: first, a systematic jurisprudential analysis delineating the conditions under which family planning is permissible in Islamic law; second, a conceptual model for religion-health integration in reproductive governance leveraging the maqasid framework; and third, documentation of the Indonesian experience as a case study of successful institutional collaboration. Future research should empirically test the proposed harmonization model through community-level interventions, examine the specific training needs of religious leaders, and investigate the generalizability of the Indonesian model to other Muslim-majority contexts.

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