



An Analysis of Gender and Health in Islam

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Abstract

Background: The history of women's health has been widely debated in jurisprudence and hadith and in general in religious thought, and the great jurists of Islam have addressed it in their practical treatises of the past; thus, attention has been paid to these topics in their books on health and Islam.

Objectives: This study was conducted to show the subject of the body and its health, especially that of the female body, based on religious verses and traditions, and to emphasize its importance as a religious duty.

Methods: This research has been done by using religious techniques, the Holy Quran, and the narrations of the infallible and their interpretation and explanation. It has also been used in social medicine and medical history of philosophy. Books on women's psychology have also been taken into consideration.

Results: Our results revealed that the Holy Quran and Islamic traditions have special respect and status for women. Female sex personality is taken into note. It is highly recommended for men to observe women and their gender on various occasions.

Conclusions: In this study, the philosophy of baths, especially women's baths, men's and women's cleansing, women's special health, women's menstruation, women's menopause, pregnancy, and childbirth were examined from the perspective of the Quran and Islamic traditions. Overall, studies have shown that Islam has paid particular attention to these issues.

Keywords: Islam, Gender, Women's Health

1. Background

The history of women's health is found in jurisprudence and hadith, as well as in religious thought in general, and the great jurists of Islam have dealt with it in their practical treatises of the past. These topics have also been considered by physicians in the last century. They have expressed such a tendency in their books as Health and Islam (1, 2). In the field of women's psychology, Hyde has a background in the field and has taken good care of it in women's psychology (3). But before all of these, attention to the female body as medical thought returns to Greek medicine and philosophy (3). According to the theories put forth by Galen, Muslim doctors also distinguished between men and women and considered the faculties of the body to be obedient (3). Finally, by the end of the twentieth century, the body became one of the most important areas of social and cultural-political challenge (4). Since the Safave Era, the medical aspects of women have been considered in Iranian literature (4).

2. Objectives

Therefore, the subject of the body, the body of women, and the health of the body are subjects that have been of interest to scholars in both religious and philosophical thought and medicine.

3. Methods

This research has been done by using religious techniques, the Holy Quran, and the narrations of the infallible and their interpretation and explanation. It has also been used in the history of social medicine and medical philosophy. Books on women's psychology have also been taken into consideration. This is a library study, and the verses and hadiths and related scientific books have been used

4. Results and Discussion

According to Islam, it is an obligation for every man and woman to have a bath after sexual intercourse, as well

as on women, after childbirth, menstruation, and pregnancy, as well as on the basis of the obligatory baths. In addition, it is an obligation for both men and women when having contact with the dead body, as well as for a corpse. The basic wisdom of the baths, whether necessary or desirable, is the cleansing of the body, which has a physical and psychological effect on the person, saying that “there are holes in the skin of the body that constantly exchange gas between the skin and the surrounding air” (5).

In addition to physical health, spiritual health in Islam is also of particular importance. The Quran uses gentle words about this type of health. For example, the verse “It is permissible for you to fast and have intercourse with your wives” is one of the verses that deal with the subject of sexual intercourse during the nights of Ramadan. The particular term “Rafath” refers to sexual practices, which are only true and acceptable in the context of marriage, and is disgusting elsewhere. In the following verse, it is said that «they are dresses for you, and you are dressing for them».

Verse 43 of Nisaa and Verse 6 of Ma'da are the verses of the three purifications: Ghusl, Wudhu, and Tayammum. These three types of purity are not specific to sex and are both for men and women. According to these verses, every man and woman must perform ablution and perform prayer in order to perform prayer. Wudhu means washing the hands and face and anointing of some members. The word “ghasl” means to pass water on the body and is often used to remove contaminants from the body (Holy Quran). One of the important points raised in the discussion of the purity in these verses is that in the case of sexual intercourse, every person - whether male or female - must cleanse himself by bathing.

From a religious point of view, there are different views on the monthly women's cycle. The Jewish Religion has strict rules in this regard; for example, women have to be away from food and water even in their home and bed. The Torah also contains strict sentences about women in the menstrual period and sexual intercourse with them, but there is no commandment about abstinence from women in Christianity. Islam has adopted a middle ground on this issue and has said that men should avoid sex when they are used to women (6). According to the Quran, sexual intercourse between men and women is permitted only when women are cleansed of their monthly bloodshed: “Until they are purified from menstruation”. This term indicates that much attention has been paid to sexual health in Islam. Islam has taken both physical and spiritual purity and uncleanness into account and has spread it to teachings

and laws (6).

The rate of depression among women is almost twice that of men (7). Women like to take on the role of men in social affairs, but their inability to accept or disapprove of men's roles in society causes frustration for women. In addition, menopause is a special time in women's lives. Going through this period brings tensions and anxieties for women, which leads to a decrease in their efficiency (3).

In western countries, women are more likely to see a doctor and receive psychiatric care than men. AIDS is more prevalent among men. Alzheimer's is one of the same diseases in men and women. American men are three times more likely to commit suicide than American women, and their alcohol consumption is six times that of women. Mortality rates among men are higher than women due to the gender roles they occupy in society. According to global statistics, life expectancy in women is higher than men. Some gynecological diseases, although seemingly disease-free, have a therapeutic function (8). Women are more likely to have some physical ailments than men, such as eating disorders and malnutrition, which are ten times more common in women, especially young women. Certainly, cultural and social factors have a great impact on the disease and its increase. Weight loss is one of them in some societies.

Occasionally, in some cases, the incidence of the disease is more common among men, such as men with AIDS, which in most countries affects men more. Alzheimer's disease is one of those diseases that are almost equal to men and women. We also see gender differences in mental illness. According to some statistics, seven percent of women experience depression versus 2.6 percent of men in America. This is due to the physical conditions that are commonly found among women biologically, such as menstruation, menopause, pregnancy and childbirth. Islam reminds and recommends women to men, such as the following hadith which is quoted from the Prophet of Islam: “Gabriel informed me and always advised me to respect women until it seemed to me that it was not permissible for her husband to address her with a disrespectful word like off (The word in Arabic which is a little disrespectful). Gabriel said, O Muhammad! Worship women and fear God, for they are half of you (9). This is why Allameh Tabataba'i, the great Quran commentator, says: In the Holy Qur'an, no recommendation has been given as much as a ruling on women (6).

Footnotes

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