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From generosity to gratitude

Hadie, Siti Nurma Hanim; Gasmalla, Hosam Eldeen Elsadig; Wadi, Majed M.; Zainul Abidin, Mohd Asri; Yusoff, Muhamad Saiful Bahri

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From Generosity to Gratitude: Exploring Islamic Views on Body Donation, **Human Dissection, and Honoring the Gift of Life**

Siti Nurma Hanim Hadie¹, Hosam Eldeen Elsadig Gasmalla², Majed M. Wadi³, Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin^{4,5}, Muhamad Saiful Bahri Yusoff^{6,7}

¹Department of Anatomy, School of Medical Sciences, Health Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kubang Kerian, 16150, Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia.

²Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom

³Medical Education Department, College of Medicine, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia

⁴Jabatan Mufti Negeri Perlis, Tingkat 1, Bangunan Dato Mahmud Mat, 01000 Kangar Perlis. School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800, Penang, Malaysia

⁶Department of Medical Education, School of Medical Sciences, Health Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kubang Kerian, 16150, Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia.

⁷Centre for the Development of Academic Excellence, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

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Correspondence to: Assoc. Prof. Dr Siti Nurma Hanim Hadie, Department of Anatomy, School of Medical Sciences, Health Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kubang Kerian, 16150, Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia. E-mail: snurma@usm.my

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ORCID ID:

Siti Nurma Hanim Hadie: orcid.org/0000-0001-9046-9379

Hosam Eldeen Elsadig Gasmalla: orcid.org/0000-0003-2590-8587
Majed M. Wadi: orcid.org/0000-0002-8117-770X
Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin: -
Muhamad Saiful Bahri Yusoff: orcid.org/0000-0002-4969-9217

ABSTRACT

Human dissection is an ancient pedagogical method that is still relevant in modern anatomy curricula. The body procurement process for dissection purposes has undergone significant evolution from the medieval era until now, whereby body donation has become the main source for **cadavers** **human bodies** in medical education. The appreciation ceremony for body donors is an excellent way to promote a body donation program, whereby both dissection and appreciation ceremonies are effective in inculcating professional behaviors and altruism among medical students. Despite the benefits of dissection and such ceremonies, conflicting ideas about the acceptability of these methods exist among Muslim scholars and students. Hence, this article provides a theological Islamic interpretation of **human** dissection, body donation, and appreciation ceremony from four sources of Islamic law—the Qur'an, Hadith, Idjmaa, and Qiyas—to justify Muslims' involvement in the aforementioned. It is important to note that the fundamental of Islam is submission to the will of the one and only God, Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala (SWT) and recognition of Prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him) as the last messenger of God. Therefore, the actions of a Muslim are strongly based on faith virtue.

Keywords: dissection, body donation, body donors, gratitude ceremony, Islamic perspective, Qur'an, Hadith

INTRODUCTION

Human dissection is one of the oldest pedagogical methods used in the anatomy discipline (1). The evolution of **human** dissection marks a notable point of change in the anatomy education system, whereby it influences how anatomy is taught in medical schools. The first **human** dissection was conducted by ancient Greek physicians in the third century BC to explore the structures and functions of human body. Since then, human dissection has remained an important tool for exploring human

body structures throughout the ancient period (2). However, during the middle-age period from the fifth to fifteenth century AD, the practice of human dissection was restricted by the teachings of the medieval Church in Europe, which emphasized the need for a person to be buried whole and intact for a complete afterlife. It was during this time that the Islamic world became powerful, and Islamic scholars were known as prominent scientists and physicians who explored various branches of medical knowledge, including human anatomy (3,4). Despite no direct statement describing human dissection in the Qur'an (the holy religious scripture in Islam) and Hadith or Sunnah (practices, teachings, and examples set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that were reflected by his actions, sayings, and approvals), any form of mutilation of a dead body is prohibited in Islam, even with prior consent from the deceased or his or her family members (5). Nevertheless, many Islamic scholars, such as Ibn Sina (known as Avicenna in the West), Al-Zahrawi (known as Albucasis in the West) and Ibn Zuhr (known as Avenzoar in the West), performed human and animal dissection, and made remarkable discoveries in medicine, which subsequently influenced and informed the practice of medicine in Medieval Europe (3,6)

The practice of body donation was triggered by an increased demand for human corpses for dissection from the fifteenth to nineteenth century. At the beginning of the Renaissance period, physicians and barber surgeons performed unauthorized dissections on executed criminals and were engaged with unethical means of body procurement, such as grave digging, body snatching, and anatomy murder (7,8). These problems were overcome by the establishment of Anatomy Act 1832, established in the United Kingdom, which legalized the use of unclaimed bodies of indigent persons, prisoners, those deceased from psychiatric or charitable hospitals, and bodies of voluntary body donors across the European countries (9). By allowing for the lawful donation of bodies for anatomical dissection, this legislation played a crucial role in regulating the supply of **cadavers** **human bodies** for medical education by. Indeed, the Act aimed to address the shortage of **cadavers** **body donors** available for medical schools and institutions by providing a legal framework for the procurement of bodies for anatomical study (9). These moves initiated the establishment of body donation programs worldwide, which supported anatomy teaching in many universities during the nineteenth and twentieth century

(2,10,11). Nevertheless, body donation was not well accepted among Muslim anatomy communities on the grounds that dissecting a Muslim's body, without strong justification is not permissible in Islam. Indeed, a Muslim body is protected by Shariah law—a religious law of Islam that is derived based on the Qur'an, Hadith, Idjmaa (decision that is achieved based on the consensus of a group of mujtahid—the Islamic jurists or scholars who are experts in Shariah law—after the death of Prophet Muhammad), and Qiyas (the shariah jurisprudence process of analogical reasoning when unprecedented case arise)

One of the methods that has proven effective in promoting body donation for medical education is holding a gratitude ceremony for body donors. This ceremony is a part of a structured body donation program that provides a platform for volunteers to pledge their body for medical education, and for students to appreciate their body donors before, during, and after performing dissection or clinical procedures on the donors' bodies. The first voluntary body donation program—the Silent Mentor program—was introduced in 1996 by Tzu Chi Medical University in Taiwan, which was inspired by an influential Buddhist leader known as Master Chen Yen (12). Through this unique self-willed body donation program, students get the opportunity to know the life of their Silent Mentors (the body donors), create bonding with the mentor's relatives, conduct dissection and surgical procedures on their mentors, and prepare their bodies for the sending-off ceremony after completion of the learning process (13). During the sending-off ceremony, students perform various rituals and funeral rites according to the religion and beliefs of the deceased. Regarding its effectiveness in inculcating professionalism and altruism, developing positive attitudes, reducing negative emotions toward death, and improving anatomy knowledge and procedural skills, the design of this program has been adapted by many universities worldwide; however, its implementation has been modified to suit the local context (14–17). Having said that, not many Muslim students in Islamic countries are involved in this form of ceremony, as it contradicts the teachings of Islam that do not permit Muslims to be involved in religious rituals of other faith (18). Furthermore, in Islam, several Islamic rituals exist in the management of the body of a dead Muslim, that need to be performed immediately after the death of a Muslim, and the burial should take place as soon as possible (19).

With these restrictions on body donation, human dissection, and gratitude rituals for body donors, it is expected that the involvement of Muslim scholars and students is limited in some ways when learning through dissection. Due to the positive learning values of dissection-based learning including gratitude ceremonies (15,20), theological interpretation of these aspects from an Islamic perspective requires detailed elaboration from the Islamic law, or shariah ruling, to ensure the appropriate involvement of Muslim students in these learning activities. For this purpose, it is vital to understand the concepts of birth, life, death, and afterlife in Islam, and explore the concept of ownership of the human body, as well as the Islamic rituals in the management of the corpse. This paper explores these elements in depth and attempts to provide some guidelines and suggestions for Muslim students and educators who are involved in anatomy education, especially regarding body donation, human dissection, and gratitude ceremony for body donors.

THE FIVE MAIN STAGES OF MANKIND'S JOURNEY FROM ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

The journey of an individual's existence encompasses five main stages: ensoulment and birth, temporary life (Hayat al-Duniya), death, barzakh (an intermediate realm of existence), and eternal afterlife (Hayat al-Akhirah) (21). Ensoulment is conceptualized as a pivotal stage in which a fetus is believed to acquire its soul or spirit, a phenomenon traditionally ascribed to occur specifically on the 120th day following conception. This understanding indicates that birth, which normally happens around 38 to 40 weeks of gestation, marks the beginning of physical existence and is viewed as a manifestation of Allah's divine will. According to a Hadith that was narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, the various stages of human development mentioned in the Qur'an were described based on the account of detailed discussion by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Abdallah Ibn Mas'ud narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Each one of you is constituted in the womb of the mother for forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then God sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his deeds, his livelihood, the

date of his death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched. Then the soul is breathed into him..."
(*Sahih al-Bukhari: 3208*).

In the Sura (chapter) entitled Al-Mu'minun (The Believers), the Qur'an mentions the stages of intra-uterine life:

"And indeed, We (Allah) created humankind from an extract of clay, then placed each 'human' as a sperm-drop in a secure place, then We developed the drop into a clinging clot, then developed the clot into a lump 'of flesh', then developed the lump into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, then We brought it into being as a new creation. So Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators (The Qur'an 23:12–14; translated by Mustafa Khattab).

Life (*Hayat al-Duniya*) is regarded as a temporary phase and a test, requiring Muslims to lead purposeful lives and adhere to the teachings of Islam while fulfilling their obligations to Allah and fellow human beings. The purpose of creating mankind is mentioned in the Sura Adh-Dharyat (The Dust-Scattering Winds) of the Qur'an:

"And I did not create the jinn and humans except to worship Me." (The Qur'an 51:56; translated by Mustafa Khattab).

Life is also perceived as a transient existence, a realm of transition, testing, and trials, wherein each individual is held accountable for their actions, as described in the Sura al-An'am (The Cattle) of the Qur'an:

"This worldly life is no more than play and amusement, but far better is the 'eternal' Home of the Hereafter for those mindful 'of Allah'. Will you not then understand?" (The Qur'an 6:32; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

Death, seen as a natural transition, represents the gateway to the afterlife and a reunion with the Creator, with each person having a predetermined time of death. In the Sura Al-Imran (The Family of Imran), the Qur'an mentions that every mankind will face death:

“Every self will taste death. And you will only receive your full reward on the Day of Judgement. Whoever is spared from the Fire and is admitted into the Paradise will indeed triumph, whereas the life of this world is no more than delusion of enjoyment.” (The Qur’an, 3:185; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

In Islamic beliefs, the stages that occur after death provide justification for the practice of conducting burials promptly (4). The process begins with the arrival of the Angels of Death, who gently extract the soul from the physical body with respect and care, as mentioned in the Sura As-Sajdah (The Adoration) of the Holy Qur’an:

“Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘Your soul will be taken by the Angel of Death, who is in charge of you. Then to your Lord you will ‘all’ be returned” (The Qur’an, 32:1; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

Nevertheless, the pain during death agony, which is known as ‘Sakaratul Maut’ was described by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as unendurable. The agonizing pain during this moment is experienced by every human being at varying degrees of suffering, depending on their deeds and sins. It is believed that suffering during the death agony is the process of reducing the rate of torment in the afterlife by having some amount of sins effaced (22). Hence, it is important for a Muslim to handle the body of the deceased with great care, considering that the deceased had undergone a very painful moment during the death agony. Hasan Al Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated that during a conversation about the death agony, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remarked:

“The pain of the Sakaratul Maut is the same as the thrusts of three hundred swords.” (Al Mughni ‘An Hamlil Asfar, 4380)

After the burial, the deceased person faces questioning and testing in the grave by two angels, Munkar, and Nakir (23). These angels inquire about the person’s faith and beliefs, providing comfort to the righteous and potential punishment to those who rejected the truth or were disobedient. Following this, the soul of the deceased enters the intermediate realm of Barzakh, where they wait for the Day of Resurrection. Barzakh is an Arabic word that describes a veil or a barrier that separates two things, thus preventing convergence (24). During this stage, the soul becomes detached from the

physical body and enters a distinct state of consciousness, where it is separated from worldly life but has not yet undergone the final judgment. In this realm, they undergo purification, engage in reflection, and prepare themselves spiritually for the events that lie ahead. The Holy Qur'an contains references to this concept as mentioned in the Sura Al-Mu'minun (The Believers), providing insight into the nature of Barzakh:

“When death approaches any of them, they cry, “My Lord! Let me go back, so I may do good in what I left behind.” Never! It is only a “useless” appeal they make. And there is a barrier (Barzakh) behind them until the Day they are resurrected. (The Qur’an, 23:99-100; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

Resurrection and Reckoning mark the Day of Judgment, where Allah resurrects all human beings, reuniting their souls with their bodies. On this decisive day, individuals are held accountable for their actions, and their faith, intentions, and deeds are examined to determine their ultimate fate in either Paradise (Jannah) or Hellfire (Jahannam). In the Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) and Al-A'raf (The Heights), the Qur'an mentions:

“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (The Qur’an, 2:62; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

“The weighing on that Day will be just. As for those whose scale will be heavy “with good deeds”, “only” they will be successful. But those whose scale is light, they have doomed themselves for wrongfully denying Our signs” (The Qur’an, 7:8–9; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

These five stages provide a comprehensive understanding of an individual's journey in Islamic teachings, highlighting the significance of leading a righteous life and preparing for the afterlife. Muslims believe in the temporary nature of earthly existence, the divine creation of human beings, the inevitability of death, the transitional state of Barzakh, and the ultimate judgment and accountability on the Day of Resurrection. By embracing these stages and living in accordance with Islamic principles, individuals strive to attain spiritual fulfillment and eternal salvation. From this notion, it is believed that the soul and body are gifts from Allah, and all human beings do not carry absolute

ownership of their own bodies; instead, they are given the responsibility to become good stewards of their own body (5). Based on these beliefs, Islam stresses the need for careful handling of the dead body without imposing any mutilation or physical damage, and swift burial of the deceased to ensure the deceased is given his or her final resting place and to allow the soul to progress through the stages of Barzakh in a timely manner. This practice reflects respect for the deceased, a recognition of the transient nature of life, and the importance of preparing for the Day of Resurrection.

DYING, DEATH, AND MANAGING THE DEAD BODY

In Islam, the approach to managing a dying person is grounded in core values that prioritize care, comfort, and support (25,26). Compassion and mercy are central to this approach, as believers are instructed to offer emotional support, kind words, and a respectful presence to the dying individual. Recognizing the vulnerability of the person at this stage, Muslims are reminded to treat them with the utmost dignity. In addition, prayer and supplication play a vital role in managing a dying person in Islam, as they serve as a source of spiritual comfort and support, offering reassurance to the person and their loved ones (25,26). The remembrance of Allah and recitation of the Qur'an hold significant importance as well, as softly reciting verses or playing recitations bring solace and tranquility to the dying person's soul. Muslims believe that the recitation of the Qur'an carries spiritual blessings and facilitates a smoother transition into the afterlife.

In Islam, it is considered an obligation to treat the dead body with care, as it is believed that the deceased should be treated with respect like a living person. An authentic Hadith narrated by Abu Dawood said:

Sayyidah Aishah (May Allah Most High be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'Breaking the bone of a deceased person is like breaking it while he is alive.' (Abu Dawood; 3207).

The Hadith refers to the sin of disrespecting or dishonored the deceased, as highlighted by Imam Ali al-Qari:

“It is referring to sin, as has been mentioned in (another) narration. (Imam) al-Tibi said it alludes to the fact that the deceased should not be dishonored, like the living should not be dishonored. (Imam) Ibn al-Malak said it alludes to the deceased feeling pain. (Imam) Ibn Hajar said this dictates that he feels pleasure like the living feel pleasure.” (Imam Ali al-Qari in Mirqaat al-Mafateeh).

Despite the differences in opinions among Muslim scholars, treating the dead body with respect and preventing physical harm to the body remains a moral obligation for all Muslims. Therefore, managing a corpse—the dead body of a Muslim—should be performed with utmost integrity and as gently as possible to ensure preservation of the deceased’s dignity and sanctity, which are similar to those of a living person. The management of a corpse encompasses various rituals, namely the Ghusl, Al-Kafn, Jenazah prayer, and burial, each serving a distinct purpose in honoring the deceased and facilitating their transition into the afterlife.

The Ghusl, which is the washing of the deceased body, is the first ritual in corpse management that reflects the purification process of the deceased. This process requires meticulous adherence to specific guidelines and ensuring utmost respect, dignity, and hygiene. The privacy and modesty of the deceased are ensured by covering their body and private parts during the washing process, which could be performed only by immediate family members (parents, husband, wife, or children) or community members of the same sex, who are knowledgeable about the Ghusl. For cases in which washing with water is not possible due to its unavailability or the fear of damaging the flesh, Tayammum (dry ablution) should be performed on the deceased. Similarly, if the deceased is a man with women who are not his wives, or a woman with men who are not her husband, Tayammum should be performed by wiping the face and hands in the appropriate manner behind a barrier. Throughout the process, supplications and prayers are recited for the forgiveness and mercy of the deceased. The process serves as a religious duty, emphasizing the importance of upholding ritualistic practices in Islam and promoting hygiene while preventing the spread of diseases is of utmost importance.

The second ritual is Al-Kafn, which is the shrouding of the deceased with clean, white pieces of cloth. This ritual signifies equality in death, as every individual, regardless of his or her worldly possession,

is enshrouded in a simple cloth. By detaching from material possessions and emphasizing modesty, Al-Kafn encourages humility and spiritual reflection. The shroud provides dignity and respect to the deceased person while reinforcing the impermanence of worldly attachments. Shrouding is a collective obligation (fard kifayah), and it is necessary that the garment covers the entire body, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, as narrated by Jabir:

“When any one of you shrouds his brother, let him do it well. ’ It is recommended for the shroud to be white, clean, new, or washed.” (Jami` at-Tirmidhi; 995)

It is recommended to shroud men in three layers and women in five garments: an izar (waist-wrapper), a khimar (headscarf), a qamees (shirt), and two additional wraps. A baby should be shrouded into one garment, but it is permissible to use three garments. A female baby should be shrouded in a qamees and two wraps. The wraps should be spread one over the other, and then they should be fumigated with incense or a similar substance. The deceased should be placed on them, lying straight, and covered. These wraps should be tied securely to prevent them from coming loose and remaining intact in the grave.

The funeral prayer (Salat al-Janazah) is a tribute to the deceased, who have submitted their souls to Allah, transitioning from the realm of action to the realm of accountability. Muslims beseech Allah to forgive, pardon, and bestow His grace and generosity upon the departed soul. This prayer serves as an intercession for Muslims and is an obligatory collective duty for Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) performed it and commanded others to do so. In a valid hadith by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Abu Hurairah reported:

“A black woman (or probably a young man) used to clean the mosque. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) missed her (or him) and asked about her (or him). He was told that she (or he) had died. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Why did you not inform me?" (It seemed as if) they (Companions) considered the matter insignificant. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Show me her (or his) grave." When it was shown to him, he offered Janazah prayer over it and said, "These

graves cover those in them with darkness, and Allah illumines them for the inmates as a result of my supplication for them" (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Muslim; 256).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not include the funeral prayer as part of his daily prayers. The prayer can be performed either individually or in a congregation, with no specific number required for the congregation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) conducted the prayer either in the mosque, outside the mosque, or at the grave, depending on the situation, with the presence of the corpse. When a Muslim dies in a place where there are no Muslims to pray for the deceased, or if the prayer is in a different state or country, it is permissible to conduct an absentee funeral prayer (Salat al-Gha'ib). In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) informed his followers about the death of An-Najashi—the ruler of the Kingdom of Aksum (Ethiopia) who converted from Christian to Islam before his death—on the same day he died, and led a funeral prayer for him in absentia, which is a rare honor and a sign of respect.

“Allah’s Messenger informed (the people) about the death of An-Najashi on the very day he died. He went toward the Musalla (praying place) and the people stood behind him in rows. He said four Takbirs (i.e., offered the Funeral prayer)” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim; 1245)

The final ritual is the burial process at a designated Muslim cemetery, which should be carried out as soon as possible after the death and completion of the three aforementioned rituals. Lowering the deceased person’s body into the grave and covering it with soil signifies the return of the physical body to the Earth. This act of burial upholds the belief in resurrection and reunification of body and soul in the afterlife, and it holds a deep historical significance. In the context of Islamic tradition, the act of burying the deceased is rooted in a pivotal event recorded in Surah Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread) of the Qur'an that emphasizes the importance of burying the dead to honor and preserve the dignity of the departed, illustrating the enduring significance of this practice in Islamic culture:

“Then Allah sent a crow searching in the ground to show him how to hide the disgrace of his brother. He said, ‘O woe to me! Have I failed to be like this crow and hide the body of my brother?’ And he became of the regretful.” (The Qur'an 5:31; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

Although the burial process is a communal duty of Muslims, men are preferred over women in performing this ritual, even if the deceased is a woman, given the fact that men are physically stronger. This was a customary practice during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and it has been followed by Muslims until today. With these funeral rituals, it is evident that the management of corpse should be performed diligently and immediately after the death of the deceased, according to the teachings of Islam. Although these rituals are communal duties of a Muslim, generic rules exist about who should perform the duties and how Muslim communities should uphold the virtues and etiquette of attending funerals. These funeral rituals might have contributed greatly to Muslims' acceptance of **human** dissection practices and gratitude ceremonies.

DOES ISLAM REALLY FORBID DISSECTION?

During the Islamic Golden Age, from the eighth to the thirteenth century AD, rich anatomy literature by Muslim scholars was gathered through dissection; however, no reference exists regarding which sources the bodies were obtained from (4). Anatomical details based on human dissection were provided by many Muslim scholars (e.g., Ibn Sina, Al-Zahrawi, Ibn Zuhr, Al-Razi, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Al-Nafis) during the medieval period, before Vesalius (4). Apart from human dissection, Muslim scholars performed animal dissection, autopsy, and experimentation to verify and improve their understanding of anatomy and physiology, whereby throughout the process, they corrected many errors and misconceptions of the ancient anatomy descriptions and provided accurate descriptions of anatomical structures and functions of the human body (4). For instance, the work by Ibn Sina, Ibn Zahrawi, and Mansur Ibn Ilyas were well-documented into comprehensive encyclopedias and Atlas—The Canon of Medicine by Ibn Sina, Al Tasreef by Ibn Zahrawi, and Mansur's anatomy by Mansur Ibn Ilyas—which discuss the various organs and systems of the human body, their functions, their interrelationships, and their clinical relevance (6) Ibn al-Nafis discovered the pulmonary circulation of blood, which contradicted the theory of blood circulation described by ancient anatomical text in Corpus Galenicum. Indeed, the work by Muslim scholars was instrumental in refining anatomical

knowledge, which had become authoritative references for medicine in both the Islamic world and Europe for centuries (27).

Additionally, many Medieval Islamic physicians and surgeons emphasized the importance of mastering the skills of human dissection when learning anatomy to prevent further injury to patients. Ibn Zahrawi who was regarded as the greatest Muslim surgeon during the Islamic Golden age, described surgery as the highest form of medicine, and should not be practiced without mastering the anatomy knowledge and skills (6). Ibn Zuhr emphasized the importance of understanding the human body through dissection and observation and provided detailed descriptions of various surgical procedures and medical treatments, as he described in his book entitled "Kitab al-Taisir fi al-Mudawat wal-Tadbeer" (The Book of Simplification Concerning Therapeutics and Diet):

“And in case you have mastered the science of dissection, then drain by the scalpel in the way that you will not come across a vein, artery, nerve, or anything whose injury will lead to an extra harm to the patient” (Avenzoar, 1093– 1162).

Moreover, understanding anatomy and practicing dissection were viewed as a platform to appreciate Allah SWT’s wisdom and omniscience, and strengthened the Taqwa (Piety) in oneself by many Islamic physicians during the Golden Age, namely, Ibn Jumay, Abd Al-Latif, Ibn Zuhr, and Ibn Rushd (28). Islamic scholars of this era believed that the pursuit of knowledge, including the study of anatomy and medicine, was a form of worship and a way to draw closer to Allah. They saw the natural world, including the human body, as a manifestation of God's divine wisdom. Through the study of anatomy and dissection, these scholars sought to uncover the intricate design and order in the human body, which they attributed to Allah's divine creation.

On the other hand, the practice of human dissection is debatable, as Islamic teaching emphasizes the need for a deceased body to undergo the funeral rituals and burial process as soon as possible after death, and no absolute statement exists in the Qur’an or Hadith that addresses the issue of dissection. Hence, the practice of human dissection among Muslims in the modern world needs to be based on Fatwa, a religious edict that is determined through Ijmaa’ and with reference to the Qur’an and

Hadith. In many Muslim-majority countries, the permissibility of body donation is subjected to the interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence by local religious scholars and authorities. For instance, In Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Fiqh Council of the Muslim World League in Makkah al-Mukarramah, quoting Fiqh al-Nawaazil by al-Jayzaani (4:208–209), emphasizes that when there is a necessity for dissection or autopsy of a Muslim's dead body that prevails over the concern of violating the sanctity of the deceased, human dissection, including autopsy, is allowed with some strict regulations. For instance, it is permissible to dissect or conduct an autopsy on a Muslim body to find causes of death in a criminal investigation, or when investigating an infectious disease that has caused death, which through dissection, cure for the disease could be sought, and eventually protects others from the disease. In these two conditions, performing dissection or autopsy serves public interests and protects society from infectious diseases. Hence, the violation of the deceased body is outweighed by many public interests. Therefore, it is permissible to perform human dissection or autopsy for these two reasons, either on Muslims' or non-Muslim's bodies (29).

Since Muslims' bodies are protected by Shari'ah law, dissection on Muslim's bodies is not permissible except in the context of dharurah (a necessity to go against the law in Islam). Likewise, the body of a woman donor should be dissected by female students or doctors, but in the context of dharurah, where dissection of the female body is required to explore certain unique conditions or when there are no female donors, it is permissible for male students or doctors to perform the dissection. In addition, dissection should be performed within the established aim of learning to avoid unnecessary physical damage to the body (29).

The same ruling applies in some Muslim-majority countries with predominantly Sunni populations, such as in Malaysia, Indonesia, Kuwait and Turkey. In these countries, dissection on Muslims' bodies for teaching, research, and medical education purposes is generally not permitted unless there are no other alternatives, as outlined in fatwas issued by the National Fatwa Committee of Malaysia, Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey (10,30,31). This decision is based on the perspective that the use of Muslim bodies for medical education in these countries has not yet reached the status of dharurah (32) However,

human dissection has been documented as one of the pedagogical methods in anatomy education in these countries, with unclaimed bodies being the primary source of **cadavers human bodies and specimens** (11). Similarly, some contemporary Shia jurists in countries with predominantly Shia Muslim populations, namely Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, do not permit dissection on Muslim bodies unless there are no other alternatives available. While there are conflicting views among Shia jurists, many of them believe that **human** dissections with charitable intentions and motives—such as saving the lives of other Muslims—do not violate the sanctity of the human body and are therefore, permissible, as long as they are not conducted solely for educational purposes (33).

Besides that, Islamic ethics provide clear guidelines for handling used and unused parts of dissected human bodies. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of showing respect and dignity to the deceased and their remains. Therefore, any unused parts or remains should be handled with care. If the dissected parts of a **body donor** are no longer needed for further study or have served their purpose, they should be disposed of in a manner that respects the dignity of the deceased (34). When dealing with Muslim human remains, they should be buried in accordance with Islamic burial customs. This practice aligns with the Islamic principle of giving the deceased a proper and respectful burial. For the handling of non-Muslim human remains, specific arrangements should be made in accordance with the deceased's religious beliefs, will, cultural traditions, and family wishes.

Additionally, in many countries, there are legal regulations and local customs governing the handling of deceased individuals, regardless of their religion or belief. These laws and regulations often mandate respectful treatment of the deceased, protect public health and safety, address environmental concerns related to the disposal of remains, and aim to strike a balance between cultural and religious sensitivities and public welfare.

BODY DONATION IN MUSLIM-MAJORITY COUNTRIES

Drawing on the fact that human dissection—within shariah condition—is permissible in Islam, it is vital to ensure that body donation programs could be successfully implemented even in Muslim-

majority countries. Currently, a spectrum of sources exists for obtaining human bodies for anatomy education and research, which mainly include unclaimed bodies and body donors (11). **Interestingly, unclaimed body represents the main source of bodies for anatomy education and research in Muslim-majority countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye. In certain Muslim countries like Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Senegal, and the United Arab Emirates, unclaimed bodies serve as the exclusive source for medical education and research (11).**

The dependence on unclaimed bodies for anatomy education purposes has raised ethical dilemmas, as this practice appears to contradict Islamic beliefs, which emphasize respecting the autonomy of the deceased and the lack of necessary consent for human dissection. However, there is not many fatwa issued regarding the use of unclaimed bodies for dissection purposes. The State of Perlis Fatwa Committee in Malaysia has issued a fatwa on the management of unclaimed bodies, stating that a body found in a Muslim-majority country should be regarded as a Muslim body and handled accordingly if there is no evidence to refute this presumption or no claims from others. Such a body cannot be used for dissection, as it is obligatory to perform the ritual washing (ghusl), shrouding (kafan), funeral prayer, and burial (35). The Federal Territory Mufti Office, Malaysia has also issued a fatwa stating that an unclaimed body found in a non-Muslim country should be handled according to the procedures for non-Muslim bodies (36).

The lack of body donation programme in Muslim-majority countries could probably be mistakenly referred to as being prohibited by Islamic laws, which is a misconception among Muslims (18,37). Since Islam does not prohibit body donation, the problem is far from religious. It seems other factors exist that explain the lagging of utilizing donated bodies as an exclusive source for human bodies in anatomy education and research in Muslim-majority countries. It is noteworthy that Muslim-majority countries cover a wide range of continents and cultures, from East Asia to the Middle East to Africa. This diversity requires consideration of factors such as ethnicity, local culture, and educational level (18). Furthermore, literature reporting on body donation from an Islamic perspective is scarce and thus limits the acceptability of such a program, despite relevant effort by scholars and experts in

Islamic laws who called for the promotion of body donation, such as the Islamic Medical Association of North America (38), as well as Muslim anatomy scholars in Türkiye (39) and Malaysia (40).

Despite the various concerns and misconceptions surrounding body donation for medical education among Muslims, the majority of Muslim-majority countries have established clear guidelines for organ donations. In general, organ donation is permissible in Islam, as it is viewed as a noble practice aimed at saving lives and enhancing the quality of life for those in need of a transplant. Although organ donation is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread), verse 32:

"And whoever saves one life - it is as if he had saved all of humanity." (The Qur'an 5:32; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

Likewise, there are authentic Hadiths narrating that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others." (Al-Mu`jam al-Awsat; 5937) and "None of you will have faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." (Sahih al-Bukhari; 13).

Numerous Fatwas have been issued by jurists from various countries regarding organ donations, and while they are diverse, they are not conclusive. Some Fatwas prohibit organ donation or consider it undesirable due to the belief that it involves the mutilation of the human body (41). However, many Fatwas permit organ donations among Muslim donors, whether from a brain-dead donor to a living patient or from a living donor to another living patient, but only in cases of genuine medical necessity or dharurah, where organ transplantation is the sole effective means of saving the patient's life (42,43). These Fatwas outline several prerequisite conditions for organ donation, including obtaining valid consent or a willing declaration from the donors to donate their organs, ensuring that the

donation process does not compromise the essential functions, health, dignity, and sanctity of the donor's body, and ensuring that the donation and transplant procedures are carried out for legitimate medical needs by qualified medical experts and not for unethical or financial purposes (44,45) (citation). Additionally, a Fatwa issued by the Perlis Mufti Department in Malaysia emphasizes the need to carefully weigh the benefits and risks of organ donations and transplants from a living donor to a living patient before undertaking the procedures. In cases if the transplant process is expected to fail and would adversely affect a previously healthy donor, organ donation is prohibited.

THE ISLAMIC VIEW OF APPRECIATION CEREMONY FOR BODY DONORS

In Islam, expressing gratitude and showing appreciation are virtuous acts, but it is crucial to ensure that such ceremonies or acts align with Islamic teachings and do not involve prohibited practices (7). Allah SWT says in Sura Al-Mumtahanah (The Woman who is Examined) of the Qur'an:

“Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes—from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.” (The Qur'an, 60:8; translated by Mustafa Khattab)

Generally, appreciation ceremonies that acknowledge and praise the good deeds or efforts of individuals are permissible in Islam as long as they adhere to principles of modesty, sincerity, and avoiding extravagance. The intention behind such ceremonies should be to genuinely recognize rather than seeking personal fame or showing off. In addition, it is important to steer clear of any practices that are forbidden in Islam (46), such as performing religious rituals of other faith, excessive displays of wealth, inappropriate mixing of genders, or any form of extravagance or wastefulness. Islam promotes humility, modesty, and moderation in all aspects of life, including acts of appreciation. It is advisable to consult knowledgeable scholars or religious authorities to ensure that the specific details of the ceremony align with Islamic teachings. Ultimately, the permissibility of an appreciation ceremony in Islam hinges on conducting it in a manner that upholds Islamic principles and values.

Acts of remembrance and supplication are considered more beneficial for the deceased than grandiose ceremonies (47). Moreover, in adherence to the teachings of Islam, introducing new practices or

ceremonies that are not supported by Islamic scripture or tradition is discouraged to avoid innovations (Bid'ah) in religion. While cultural variations may exist in how appreciation for the deceased is expressed within Muslim communities, the general emphasis remains on simplicity, humility, and individual acts of devotion. Muslims are encouraged to express their appreciation for the deceased in a way that upholds Islamic values and principles.

In Islam, there are several permissible ways to engage in an appreciation ceremony for the deceased and honor their memories. Muslims are encouraged to make sincere supplications (du'a) for the deceased, praying for their forgiveness, mercy, and peaceful afterlife (47,48). Visiting the graves of the deceased is another way to remember and honor the deceased (47,48). Engaging in acts of charity and good deeds on behalf of the deceased is also encouraged. This can include giving in charity, sponsoring meals for the poor, supporting beneficial causes, or performing acts of kindness. The intention is to seek rewards for the deceased and to benefit others in their names.

Muslims can gather to share stories, memories, and positive aspects of the life of the deceased, keeping their memories alive and providing comfort to the bereaved. However, it is important to ensure that these ceremonies and activities remain within the boundaries of Islamic teachings (47). Muslims should avoid excessive mourning, engaging in superstitious beliefs, or any acts of extravagance or wastefulness. In situations where the appreciation ceremony involves religious rituals of other faiths, Muslim students and scholars should not be involved in the rituals. Instead, they should stand still and keep quiet as a sign of respect to the deceased, family members, and their religion. The intention behind these appreciation ceremonies is to show some respect to the deceased as a human being. A hadith narrated by Qais ibn Sa'd describes:

"A funeral procession passed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and he stood up. It was said to him, 'It is a Jewish funeral.' He replied, 'Was he not a human being?'" (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim; 1311)

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the historical perspective that human dissection and body donation are important elements of anatomy that contributes to safe clinical practice. In addition, the practice of a gratitude ceremony for body donors, such as the Silent Mentor program, has successfully instilled professional behaviors among the students, which make them compassionate doctors. The practice of human dissection during the Islamic Golden Age by prominent Islamic physicians, who also studied the Qur'an and Hadith, indicate that dissection and body donation, with the shariah condition, are not forbidden in Islam when the benefits outweigh the human body violation. However, when deciding on such activities and tasks, it is important for Muslims to comply with Shariah guidance to ensure that the practice does not go against Islamic teachings. Likewise, appreciating body donors is permissible in Islam if the method of appreciation does not involve excessive displays of wealth, inappropriate mixing of genders, or any form of extravagance or wastefulness. It is important to note that every action of a Muslim is guided by the description of the Qur'an and Hadith, and any uncertainties are justified by the Shariah evidence. Indeed, Islam is a religion that embodies the code of life.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS:

SITI NURMA HANIM HADIE, M.D., MSc, Ph.D., is an associate professor and the Head of Anatomy Department, School of Medical Sciences, Health Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. She teaches undergraduate medical and postgraduate surgical-based students. Her research focusses on medical education and anatomy instructional design and competency-based education.

HOSAM ELDEEN ELSADIG GASMALLA, M.B.B.S., M.Sc., Pg. Dip., M.H.P.E., Ph.D., is an assistant professor of clinical anatomy at the University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom. In addition to teaching clinical anatomy to undergraduate and graduate medical

students, he teaches anatomical research methods to postgraduate anatomy students. He specializes in medical education and his research interest focuses on students' assessment and anatomy education.

MAJED M. WADI, M.B.Ch.B., M.Sc., Ph.D, is a senior lecturer in the Department of Medical Education, and executive secretary of the Assessment Unit and the Progress Test Committee at Qassim College of Medicine, Qassim University, Buraydah, Qassim, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He teaches principles of medical education and medical ethics to undergraduate medical students and his research focusses on students' assessment and mental wellbeing.

SAHIBUS SAMAHAH MOHD ASRI ZAINUL ABIDIN B.A (Hons.), M.A., Ph.D, (Al-Quran and Sunnah Studies), Fellowship (Islamic study, University of Oxford) is the Mufti of Perlis, Malaysia and is a Professor in Islamic Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He is also a prolific writer who has published many books on Islam and religious issues.

MUHAMAD SAIFUL BAHRI YUSOFF, M.D., M.Sc., Ph.D. (Med. Educ.), is an associate professor and Head of the Department of Medical Education, School of Medical Sciences, Health Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kubang Kerian, Kelantan, Malaysia. He teaches psychometric assessment, educational research methodology, and curriculum planning and development to postgraduate students and faculty members.

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