

**Review article:**

**The COVID-19 pandemic and positive reflections on *Ramadhan***

*Ahmad Faidhi Mohd Zaini*<sup>1,2</sup>, *Aneesa Abdul Rashid*<sup>1,3</sup>

**Abstract**

This year the *Ramadhan* holy month of the Muslim calendar fell amidst a pandemic. *Ramadhan* is a month of worship, where many of the normal practices involve among other things; social gathering. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many practices could not be done. This article looks into the positive reflections of *Ramadhan* during a pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, pandemic, *Ramadhan*

*International Journal of Human and Health Sciences Vol. 05 No. 02 April'21 Page : 191-193*  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31344/ijhhs.v5i2.258>

**Introduction**

*Ramadhan* is the most anticipated season in the Muslim calendar year. It is known as the holy month for worship (*Ibadah*), and reflections. It is also a month of festive celebrations in the majority of Muslim countries. Muslims will congregate for breaking of fast (*Iftar*), *Ramadhan* Bazaar and the *sunna* congregational prayer (*taraawih*).

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world hard, and many were mostly unprepared.<sup>1</sup>

There were many restrictions the Muslims had to abide to during the Ramadan during the COVID-19 pandemic. The congregational prayers that are highly encouraged during this holy month, could not be done.<sup>2</sup> Many missed breaking their fast together with family and friends, a common tradition in *Ramadhan*. However, this new-norm can be said to have its positive outcomes.

While many Muslims could no longer congregate for the said activities due to the movement restrictions or lockdowns, it has provided a unique opportunity for *Ramadhan* to be celebrated in a more humbling experience with much self-retrospection.

**Fasting to Attain *Taqwa***

*“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you*

*that you may become righteous”*  
*-al-Baqarah 2:183.*

Fasting is a way to attain *Taqwa*, which means a sense of God consciousness and righteousness in one's everyday life.<sup>3,4</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic should play as a reminder (*tazkirah*) from *Allah* that humans are fragile and can succumb to death at any time as a result from this pandemic. COVID-19 serves as message for us remember our death (*zikrul maut*). Hence, the pandemic and *Ramadhan* should act as a medium to bring one closer to God.

**A Healthy Diet During Ramadan**

Due to the movement restriction order in many Muslim countries, less are lured to buy food from the many *Ramadhan* Bazaars. The bazaars usually encourages the act of buying much more than required; causing much wastage of food, something that Islam frowns upon. Cooking simple, fresh and a balanced meals at home not only increases family bonding, but also may serves as a step towards a much healthier lifestyle. Modest cooking and meal preparations at home without excessive additive or preservatives is also another benefit. The period of pandemic which limits access to outside food is helpful for patients that are diabetic, hypertensive and or

1. Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia, B-G-39 Sri Penara Apartment, Jalan Sri Permaisuri 1, Bandar Sri Permaisuri, 56000 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2. Department of Anaesthesiology, Tuanku Mizan Military Hospital, Seksyen 2, Wangsa Maju, 53300 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
3. Department of Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Malaysia

**Correspondence to:** Aneesa Abdul Rashid, Lecturer, Dept. of Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, E-mail: [aneesa@upm.edu.my](mailto:aneesa@upm.edu.my)

with dyslipidaemia. Preparing food at home, will reduce the chances from indulging sugary desserts and drinks that is the common norm.

Studies have also shown that Ramadhan brings many benefits in terms of health including weight reduction, better lipid levels and immune system.<sup>3-5</sup>

### The Month of al-Quran

*“Verily, We have sent it (this Qur’an) down in the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree).”*

*[al-Qadr 97:1]*

*“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’aan, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must observe Sawm (fasts) that month...”*

*[al-Baqarah 2:185]*

Ramadhan is synonymous with *al-Quran* (the holy book of the Muslims) as it was sent down from God to the prophet during this holy month. The lockdown gives ample opportunity to recite and study the *Quran*. This may not be possible during previous times, due to heavy workload and tight schedule.

### Nights of Prayer

From Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*“Whoever spends the nights of Ramadhan in prayer out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.”*

*-al-Bukhaari (2008) and Muslim (174)*

The *seerah* narrated that *tarawih*, which is the Muslim congregational prayers done uniquely in Ramadhan was initially performed at home by the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. He did not make a big congregation of *tarawih* prayer in the mosque. This is so that the prayers will not to be perceived by the *Sahabah* (close friends of the prophet) as compulsory (*wajib*). Praying at home with the family, as most have experiences, brings more sense of togetherness and love. Ramadhan is seen by Muslims as a means bring one closer and rekindle family relationships.<sup>6</sup>

### Front-liners in Ramadhan

Those that are sick and affected with COVID-19 has special provisions to break their fast as verily illustrated in the same *Ayat* (verse) that commands fasting.

*“So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and [wants] for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful.”*

*[al-Baqarah, 185]*

Front liners (health and security personnel) work under challenging conditions wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) during this pandemic.<sup>7</sup> Hence, looking after their wellbeing is paramount.<sup>4,7</sup> It is allowed for them to break their fast during Ramadhan while replacing the fast at a later date. The duty to treat and manage patients is a *Fardhu Kifayah* (paramount obligation). This is due to the expertise of the front-liners that can only be fulfilled by those trained in the field.

### Conclusion

Ramadhan is regarded as a month of self-training to develop positive and healthy habits. It is the perfect opportunity to stop smoking.<sup>3</sup> It is the perfect time to embrace healthy eating. It is the perfect time to nurture and rekindle family relationships. Hence, the COVID-19 Ramadhan, with all its challenges has come this year with many of its *Hikmah* (positive reflections).

*“The five daily prayers, from one Jumu’ah to the next and from one Ramadhan to the next are expiation for (sins committed) in between, so long as you avoid major sins.”*

*-Sahih Muslim (233)*

### Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank FIMA for the suggestion of this topic

### Financial support

none.

### Declaration of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

**References:**

1. Akhter, M. W. Coronavirus - The ignored warning from history. *Int. J. Hum. Health Sci. IJHHS* **4**, 322 (2020).
  2. Al-Jazeera. Tarawih amid coronavirus: Scholars call for home Ramadan prayers. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/tarawih-coronavirus-scholars-call-home-ramadan-prayers-200422110654018.html> (2020).
  3. Abolaban, H. & Al-Moujahed, A. Muslim patients in Ramadan: A review for primary care physicians. *Avicenna J. Med.* **7**, 81–87 (2017).
  4. Mughal, F. Ramadan: what it means for general practice. *Br. J. Gen. Pract.* **64**, 356–356 (2014).
  5. Rouhani, M. H. & Azadbakht, L. Is Ramadan fasting related to health outcomes? A review on the related evidence. *J. Res. Med. Sci. Off. J. Isfahan Univ. Med. Sci.* **19**, 987–992 (2014).
  6. Alghaffi, Z. *et al.* A Qualitative Study of Ramadan: A Month of Fasting, Family, and Faith. *Religions* **10**, 123 (2019).
  7. Moothadeth, A. *et al.* Fasting during Ramadan and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Occup. Med.* doi:10.1093/occmed/kqaa103.
-