

# **SPIRITUAL ENHANCEMENT THROUGH PRENATAL GENTLE YOGA WITHIN ISLAMIC CULTURAL CONTEXTS**

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Article received August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024; Article revised October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024; Article approved October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

## **Abstract**

*Prenatal education is a vital component in the holistic preparation of pregnant women for pregnancy and childbirth. This study explores the integration of gentle yoga with Islamic spiritual values as a framework for Islamic prenatal education. Gentle yoga, which emphasizes gentle physical exercises, breathing techniques, meditation, and relaxation, provides significant benefits for the physical and emotional well-being of pregnant women. Meanwhile, Islamic spiritual values highlight the importance of maintaining both physical and mental health, while encouraging a closer connection with Allah SWT. This research adopts a qualitative methodology, utilizing a literature review and in-depth interviews with pregnant women and Islamic scholars. The data were analyzed to obtain insights into perspectives and practices concerning the integration of gentle yoga and spiritual education during pregnancy. The findings reveal that combining gentle yoga with Islamic spiritual values can significantly enhance the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of pregnant women. This integrated approach promotes calmness, patience, and a sense of closeness to Allah SWT, while also fostering gratitude and inner peace. The study concludes that Islamic prenatal education, which merges gentle yoga with Islamic spiritual values, offers an effective holistic approach to preparing pregnant women. Implementing such prenatal education can provide comprehensive support, addressing the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of expectant mothers. This research makes a valuable contribution to the development of prenatal education models that align with Islamic teachings and promote the overall health of pregnant women.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Cultural Values, Pregnant Women, Spiritual Enhancement*

## INTRODUCTION

Prenatal education is an essential component of preparing pregnant women physically, mentally, and spiritually for the processes of pregnancy and childbirth (Lestari et al., 2023). In the modern era, various methods and techniques have been developed to support the health and well-being of pregnant women, one of which is prenatal yoga. Prenatal gentle yoga has gained popularity due to its numerous benefits, including enhanced flexibility, stress reduction, and physical preparation for labor.

Pregnancy is a significant and sacred period in a mother's life as she prepares to bring a new generation into the world, typically lasting between 28 to 40 weeks (Ewijk, 2009). Given that childbirth and the postpartum period can be challenging, it is crucial for pregnant women to engage in various forms of preparation during this time. These preparations include gaining knowledge about child care and education (pedagogical preparation), mental readiness (psychological preparation), and physical preparation (Rahman et al., 2023).

Pedagogical preparation is essential for mothers or expectant mothers to acquire knowledge on children's education, covering both religious and general aspects (Iswati, 2019). Understanding pediatrics, child development, and their implications for postnatal growth is vital, as fetal development significantly affects a child's future. Psychological preparation is equally crucial, as many mothers experience anxiety related to childbirth, often exacerbated by hearing traumatic experiences from others (Sandström et al., 2023). Physical preparation is also fundamental, encompassing plans for childbirth, breastfeeding, child care, and adjustments to lifestyle and economic changes. The physical transformations, hormonal fluctuations, and new maternal roles can profoundly affect a mother's mental health (Benza et al., 2014). Postpartum mental health challenges are classified into three categories: postpartum blues, postpartum depression, and postpartum psychosis (Maharani et al., 2019).

Given the potential challenges that can arise after childbirth, engaging in spiritual practices becomes essential. Prenatal gentle yoga and traditional practices, such as seven-month rituals, are examples of spiritually

enriching activities for pregnant women. Modern individuals often turn to spirituality due to a sense of emptiness brought about by a society that prioritizes material pleasures through technological advancement, leading to a disconnection from one's inner self (Muthohar, 2016).

Prenatal gentle yoga combines physical postures, relaxation, and breathing techniques, making it a highly recommended form of physical activity for pregnant women (Adnyani, 2021). This practice is increasingly embraced by pregnant women, including those from Muslim communities (Pankrasia et al., 2022). Although yoga has its origins in Buddhist traditions, its benefits continue to be promoted across diverse cultural and religious groups (Mcgrath, 2017).

Many pregnant women report significant benefits from practicing prenatal gentle yoga, including enhanced physical and mental well-being during pregnancy. This practice not only alleviates physical discomfort, such as back pain and swelling, but also provides essential calm and relaxation, which are crucial for managing hormonal changes and emotional stress during pregnancy (Yuniza and Ginanjar, 2021). Additionally, the breathing techniques taught in prenatal yoga equip pregnant women with effective tools to manage pain and anxiety during labor.

Despite its Buddhist origins, modern adaptations of prenatal gentle yoga have been widely accepted across different cultural and religious backgrounds, including within the Muslim community. This reflects the universal benefits of yoga, which focuses on harmonizing the body and mind, and indicates that such practices can be adapted to align with various belief systems, thereby supporting the overall health and well-being of pregnant women.

In the Islamic context, prenatal education encompasses not only physical preparation but also the cultivation of deep spiritual values. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy body and soul, advocating for the integration of strong spiritual principles at every life stage, including pregnancy (Rika, 2019). Consequently, combining prenatal gentle yoga with Islamic spiritual education offers a holistic approach that provides comprehensive benefits for pregnant women.

Prenatal gentle yoga emphasizes gentle physical exercise, alongside breathing, meditation, and relaxation techniques that enhance emotional and spiritual well-being (Lestari et al., 2022). This approach allows pregnant women to cultivate calmness, patience, and readiness to navigate the changes and challenges of pregnancy. Moreover, integrating yoga practice with Islamic values can help pregnant women feel closer to Allah SWT, fostering a sense of gratitude and inner peace.

However, due to yoga's origins in non-Islamic spiritual traditions (Prastiwi, 2019). The practice of prenatal gentle yoga within Muslim communities remains subject to ongoing debate. Additionally, there is limited research exploring prenatal gentle yoga from an Islamic perspective.

## Literature Review

Several previous studies have explored the spiritual and educational aspects related to pregnancy. Among the most relevant is a study conducted by Widayat Mintarsih on the assistance provided to pregnant women through Islamic guidance and counseling services to alleviate anxiety during childbirth. This research highlights how an Islamic-based approach can help pregnant women manage pre-childbirth anxiety by integrating psychological and spiritual dimensions.

Counseling that incorporates practices such as prayer, dhikr, and *tawakkal* fosters a sense of peace and mental preparedness, ultimately enhancing the feelings of safety among pregnant women. The advantage of this study lies in its integration of spirituality into counseling services, which offers additional benefits, particularly for Muslim pregnant women. However, it also has limitations, such as its limited applicability to non-Muslim individuals and the need for comparisons with non-religious counseling methods. Furthermore, the study does not address the physiological or long-term impacts of anxiety reduction on maternal and infant health post-childbirth (Mintarsih, 2017).

The second study, conducted by Kadek Dwitya Widi Adnyani, investigates the effects of prenatal yoga on the health conditions of pregnant women. This research examines the positive impacts of prenatal yoga on both physical and mental health, including increased flexibility, reduced muscle tension,

and improved management of anxiety and stress during pregnancy. Tailored exercises in prenatal yoga can alleviate pain, prepare the body for labor, and improve posture affected by physical changes during pregnancy. Adnyani's findings indicate that prenatal yoga enhances physical health and contributes to the mental and emotional well-being of pregnant women.

The breathing and meditation exercises incorporated in yoga sessions help to calm the mind, thereby reducing stress and fostering a sense of well-being. This study underscores the significance of yoga as a gentle yet effective form of exercise that addresses the unique needs of pregnant women without imposing excessive risks (Adnyani, 2021).

A third relevant study conducted by Ashriady et al. focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of pregnancy care. This research reveals how local social values, beliefs, and customs shape community perspectives on maternal health and care during pregnancy. One strength of this study is its exploration of how socio-cultural factors influence healthcare decisions. For instance, beliefs in traditional midwives, the use of herbal remedies, and specific rituals aimed at ensuring the safety of both mother and fetus are highlighted.

The study also addresses the limited access to modern healthcare facilities and the influence of patriarchal culture on pregnancy care decisions, demonstrating that women often depend on community and family support. However, from a critical perspective, this study may be overly focused on local culture without adequately addressing the broader health implications of these practices. Some traditional customs might contradict modern medical standards or even pose risks to the health of mothers and fetuses, a point that is not thoroughly explored. Additionally, while emphasizing local culture is essential, the study lacks an examination of how to integrate traditional practices with modern healthcare services to create a more holistic and safe approach to maternal care. This research highlights the persistence of traditional practices during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum care despite the availability of modern medical interventions (Ashriady et al., 2022).

## Conceptual Framework

This study explores the interaction between yoga practices, Islamic spirituality, and their impact on maternal well-being within the context of Indonesian culture. Islamic spirituality, typically expressed through dhikr, prayer, and *tawakkal*, plays a vital role in fostering inner peace and reducing anxiety among pregnant women. The belief that the birth process is under Allah's control instills a sense of tranquility and spiritually prepares pregnant women for childbirth. This form of worship also contributes positively to mental and physical health.

In this context, gentle prenatal yoga serves as a safe physical exercise specifically designed for pregnant women. The exercises, which include stretching, breathing, and yoga postures, help alleviate both physical and mental tension. Additionally, the meditation and reflection components of yoga can be adapted into spiritual reflections aligned with Islamic teachings, making them culturally relevant for Muslim communities. The influence of Islamic culture on pregnancy practices is notably strong in Indonesian society, emphasizing the significance of spiritual preparation as part of the journey toward childbirth. By integrating yoga with Islamic values, this approach fosters inner peace and a sense of trust in Allah's will, thereby aiding pregnant women in managing anxiety and fear prior to delivery.

The spiritual enhancement provided by gentle prenatal yoga positively impacts the mental and physical well-being of pregnant women. Reducing stress and anxiety through this approach is crucial, as lower anxiety levels can enhance the labor experience and strengthen the mother-baby bond postpartum. Physically, prenatal yoga aids in maintaining proper posture, alleviating pain, and preparing the body for labor. Ultimately, the integration of prenatal yoga grounded in Islamic spirituality is expected to equip pregnant women with the necessary tools, both physically and mentally, to approach labor with calmness and confidence. A strong spiritual foundation instills the belief that labor is part of Allah's will, which, in turn, diminishes worries about potential complications and uncertainties.

While prenatal gentle yoga has garnered attention for its health benefits, its practice within an Islamic framework requires further

investigation to ensure alignment with Islamic values and beliefs. Although existing studies provide preliminary insights into the potential advantages of integrating spiritual education and prenatal activities, more research is necessary to deepen the integration of prenatal gentle yoga into an Islamic perspective.

This study aims to examine how the integration of prenatal gentle yoga and Islamic spiritual values can offer comprehensive benefits for pregnant women. It will also explore the perspectives of Islamic scholars and health experts regarding the practice of prenatal gentle yoga, as well as effective implementation strategies for Islamic prenatal education. This research is significant as it enriches the literature on how modern health practices, such as prenatal yoga, can be harmoniously integrated with Islamic values, paving the way for more inclusive practices tailored to the needs of Muslim mothers. Additionally, this study will investigate the impact of yoga practices during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the subjective experiences and spiritual perceptions of pregnant women who practice prenatal yoga within an Islamic cultural context (Brew et al., 2017). It also examines the attitudes and views of pregnant women and the broader Muslim community regarding the compatibility of prenatal yoga with Islamic values. A case study methodology was utilized, focusing on four Muslim pregnant women: two who practice yoga and two who do not engage in yoga.

The research aims to investigate how these practices influence spiritual development and overall well-being, particularly in relation to Islamic faith and cultural background. The selection of the four informants, based on their differing approaches to childbirth preparation, enables a deeper understanding of the motivations behind these varied practices and their outcomes post-delivery. Data were analyzed thematically and presented in a descriptive narrative format. Data collection methods included observations, interviews with the pregnant women, and documentation review. To ensure validity and reliability, findings from interviews, observations, and documentation were cross-referenced and compared for consistency.

## DISCUSSION

### Spiritualism and its Forms

The term "spiritual" is derived from the Latin word *spiritus*, meaning breath, and is akin to the Latin *anima*, the Greek *psyche*, and the Sanskrit *athman*. The similarity among these terms across various traditions, both Western and Eastern, is often interpreted as representing the breath of life. According to Aburdene, as cited in Muthohar, spirit is considered a divine aspect bestowed by God upon humans, embodying the greater self as the source of life and the aspect of each individual that is most akin to the Divine. Spirituality does not solely pertain to religion; rather, it encompasses the energy and values that serve as the foundation for the soul. However, discussions of spirituality are frequently associated with religious contexts (Muthohar, 2016).

Forms of human spirituality include:

#### a. Psychology-based spiritualism (behavior)

This model of spiritualism is understood as an aspect of human potential with psychological underpinnings. It can be explored using psychological principles, particularly those related to the subconscious, as developed by Sigmund Freud. Spiritualism is primarily utilized for treating individuals with psychological disorders. The ultimate aim of this spiritual model is to cultivate individuals who remain whole and at peace with themselves, regardless of the circumstances they face. This approach posits that true solutions to personal challenges are most effective when they originate from within, through self-exploration. Techniques such as hypnosis, hypnotherapy, and transpersonal psychology exemplify this model.

In the context of pregnancy and childbirth, Lanny introduced a method known as hypnobirthing. According to him, hypnobirthing is a form of autohypnosis, involving the natural process of instilling positive intentions or suggestions into the subconscious mind during pregnancy and preparation for childbirth (Kuswandi, 2014). This technique allows pregnant women to appreciate the beauty of pregnancy and facilitates a smoother delivery process.

The author has personally practiced this approach since receiving her positive pregnancy test. She engages in self-talk,

affirming to herself and the fetus that she will maintain good health throughout the pregnancy and will not experience cravings. This affirmation has proven effective, working 90% of the time, despite her previous history of frequent illnesses that often necessitated emergency care due to her weakened health condition.

#### b. Nature-based spiritualism (natural)

Nature-based spirituality is a belief system that recognizes humans as integral parts of nature, guided by natural principles (Naor and Mayseless, 2019). This model of spiritualism aims to awaken the inherent natural powers within individuals, enabling them to harmonize their inner energies and achieve balance. Individuals who are happy, strong, and healthy are those who successfully create equilibrium within themselves; conversely, those who lack balance may experience sadness, weakness, and illness.

The fetus is another human being that exists within the mother's body, and the mother plays a crucial role in determining the balance of life for the fetus. The mother's nutrition directly influences the fetus's growth and development, while her emotional state—whether joyful or sorrowful—affects the psychological well-being of the fetus. Therefore, it is essential for mothers to maintain their physical and mental health.

Examples of nature-based spiritual practices include prana flow from India, chi or Qi from China, Ki from Japan, and Energy Spirituality from the Indonesian archipelago others (Muthohar, 2016). In this context, the focus of this discussion will be on prenatal yoga.

#### c. Religion-based spiritualism. (religion).

This model of spiritualism is founded on the belief that the universe, including humanity, is a creation of God, realized through submission to divine rules. Naturally, humans are part of God's creation; when they forget Him, it leads to an internal imbalance and disconnection from the universe and its Creator. This disconnection can result in confusion, emptiness, increased stress, and disappointment. For instance, Akhlaqi Sufism revitalizes the spirit of worship and imbues religious commands and prohibitions with deeper meaning (Yasin and Sutiah, 2020).

Religious knowledge and worship are equally important for pregnant women, serving

as a "pathway to heaven" to facilitate the desired experiences during pregnancy and childbirth (Suhra and Rosita, 2020). During the approximately ten months of pregnancy, women have the opportunity to deepen their connection with God through their experiences.

### **Yoga and Prenatal Yoga**

Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit term *yuj*, which means to merge or unite. It encompasses a mind and body practice that integrates a system of stretching and posture exercises (*asanas*) with deep breathing techniques (*pranayama*) and meditation. This practice requires the thoughtful coordination of body movements and breathing, emphasizing self-awareness (Santra, 2022). Scientific literature has validated the numerous benefits of yoga, demonstrating its capacity to improve health and provide therapeutic effects for conditions such as illness, depression, stress, and anxiety (Merlin, et al., 2019) Yoga has deep historical roots in India, closely linked to Hinduism, which derives its life guidance from the Vedas, composed around 5000 BCE.

However, the practice of yoga predates these scriptures, emerging from human awareness of the importance of connecting with the Creator. It emphasizes recognizing one's shortcomings and understanding that the atman, or inner self, is akin to the Creator. The impurities associated with the atman must be cleansed to achieve a perfect integration with its origin through the practice of yoga. This practice is inclusive, available to all who seek to draw closer to the Divine, akin to how anyone can bask in the sun's warmth (Tristanigrat, 2020).

For thousands of years, yoga has been practiced to enhance emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Common yoga practices aimed at improving health and managing disease include *asanas* (physical postures), *pranayama* (regulated breathing), and meditation, which are effective in stress relief (Jayawardena, 2016).

According to Chuntharapat as cited in Reis et al., yoga is a popular activity reported to improve health and fitness during pregnancy, contributing to prenatal comfort and support during labor in various ways. Gentle stretches involved in yoga positions help alleviate musculoskeletal discomfort

associated with pregnancy and prepare the pelvic muscles and lower extremities for childbirth (Reis et al., 2014).

The benefits of yoga extend beyond pregnant women; it is accessible to individuals of all ages and conditions. Yoga positively impacts both physical and psychological well-being, with numerous physiological benefits. These include reductions in perceived stress, anxiety, depression, chronic back pain, and migraines, as well as potential advantages for conditions such as hypertension and diabetes (Satyapriya et al., 2013). Prenatal yoga specifically has been shown to significantly reduce stress in pregnant women and enhance their immune function. Researchers advocate for further investigation into the mechanisms of yoga and its effects on pregnant women, as these findings may guide healthcare providers in helping pregnant women manage stress and improve immune responses function (Chen et al., 2017).

For pregnant women, yoga is generally recommended once the fetus is securely established, typically starting around 20 weeks of gestation. This practice provides numerous physical, mental, and spiritual benefits that are specifically tailored to the needs of expectant mothers (Fuerst and Adamczewska, 2017).

Enhances overall fitness:

- a) Promotes relaxation.
- b) Improves self-confidence and body image.
- c) Corrects and improves body posture.
- d) Helps maintain balance in the body.
- e) Enhances maternal breathing patterns.
- f) Reduces and alleviates common pregnancy discomforts.
- g) Facilitates better oxygen circulation throughout the body.
- h) Prepares the body for childbirth.
- i) Strengthens back and pelvic floor muscles.
- j) Improves sleep quality.

Mental Benefits:

- a) Utilizes breathing techniques to alleviate anxiety, fear, and mental distractions.
- b) Employs yogic breathing for rest and energy conservation during pauses between contractions.
- c) Encourages relaxation techniques to induce comfort throughout pregnancy

and childbirth, keeping muscles relaxed during labor.

- d) Reduces stress, which is particularly beneficial for first-time mothers experiencing anxiety, self-doubt, or other negative emotions.

**Spiritual benefits:**

- a) Incorporates meditation techniques to enhance maternal-child bonding and communication.
- b) Increases calmness and inner peace during pregnancy.
- c) Encourages clarity and acceptance, particularly when facing fear.
- d) Fosters inner peace, self-acceptance, and resilience through the challenges of pregnancy and birth.
- e) Enhances the ability to experience happiness.

Beyond prenatal care, yoga also offers therapeutic benefits for various health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and diabetes mellitus. Research indicates that yoga can significantly improve quality of life and respiratory function in patients with COPD (Cramer et al., 2019). In individuals with diabetes, studies have demonstrated that yoga can improve numerous health parameters, including blood glucose levels, cholesterol, oxidative stress, blood pressure, body weight,

waist-to-hip ratio, heart rate, sympathetic activity, coagulation profile, and lung function. These findings underscore the broad potential of yoga as a complementary therapeutic practice for both pregnancy and general health (Jayawardena, 2018).

**Prenatal Yoga and Customs in Pregnancy**

The authors conducted interviews and observations with four pregnant women. The first and second participants (DSR and AM) focused on preparing for childbirth through yoga, while the third participant (WS) engaged in a series of traditional Sundanese rituals, including the avoidance of various *pamali* (taboos). The fourth participant (NR) did not follow either approach. The results of the interview are presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

At the time of delivery, WS was advised to undergo a caesarean section because there was no cervical dilation despite induction (administration of medication to stimulate dilation). Nevertheless, both the mother and child were healthy and safe.

Recent research on NR, who did not engage in traditional rituals or participate in physical activities such as yoga or other specialized exercises, whether individually or in groups, indicates a different approach to pregnancy preparation.

**Table 1.** Interview Findings from DSR and AM, Who Utilized Yoga as Part of Their Childbirth Preparation

Information	DSR	A.M
Participation in prenatal yoga classes (gestational period)	20 weeks	28 weeks
Motivation to join prenatal yoga classes	Information was obtained from social media platforms of the Harapan Keluarga Bandung Maternity Clinic	Information was obtained from the Professional Mothers Institute community
Reason for participation	Sought physical and mental well-being and aimed for a natural childbirth experience	Desired relaxation and aimed to dispel myths prevalent in the home environment, wishing for a comfortable, minimally traumatic childbirth
Exercise frequency	Once a week	Once a week
Practice and knowledge acquired	Engaged in physical exercises, positive affirmations for the mother and fetus, and learned to recognize contractions	Gained similar physical benefits and positive affirmations, with additional exercises on regulating breathing and pushing during labor
Immediate impact	Reported positive mental states, reduced pregnancy-related pain, and noticed greater attentiveness from her husband	Experienced mental relaxation and positive thoughts, with her husband actively providing affirmations to the fetus
Childbirth process	Underwent vaginal delivery assisted by vacuum, experienced intense contractions for 12 hours, and had a	Had a vaginal delivery, with intense contractions for 3 hours, and membrane rupture occurred at 6 cm

Information	DSR	A.M
Childbirth trauma	membrane rupture at 4 cm dilation Reported experiencing trauma	dilation Did not experience any childbirth-related trauma
Satisfaction with prenatal yoga class participation	Was not disappointed, attributing outcomes to the will of Allah, emphasizing the importance of making an effort	Expressed satisfaction, as the expected outcomes were achieved
Recommendation to others	would recommend prenatal yoga classes to family and friends	Would recommend prenatal yoga classes to family and friends

Source: Research Interview Data

**Table 2.** Interview Findings from WS, Who Prepared for Childbirth Exclusively Through Yoga

Information	Activities
Efforts Undertaken	Prayers, morning walks around the neighborhood, and pilgrimages to the graves of pious individuals.
Childbirth Process Childbirth trauma	Vaginal delivery, with induction due to stalled dilation at 5 cm Significant perineal tearing

Source: Research Interview Data

**Table 3.** Interview Findings from NR, Who Did Not Engage in Either Yoga or Traditional Preparations for Childbirth

Rituals to Perform/ <i>Pamali</i> to Avoid	Activities	Meanings
4 months	Study	Belief that at four months, Allah breathes the soul into the fetus, prompting prayers for the fetus's well-being
	Read Surah Yusuf	To inspire beauty in a baby boy, akin to the Prophet Yusuf
	Read Surah Maryam	To foster piety in a baby girl, like Maryam, the mother of Isa AS
7 months	Shower with seven types of flowers	Symbolizing a pleasant fragrance for the baby, both physically and in name
	Using seven sarong motifs alternately	To encourage adaptability and beauty in the child
	Water stored with seven eels	Believed to promote a smooth birth, likened to the smoothness of an eel's skin
	Saw toy coins from roof tiles and buy food	The baby's father acts as a food seller, symbolizing generosity and service to the community
Avoid eating with large plates and spoons	Giving souvenirs of beauty tools (comb, powder, mirror, soap)	Represents diligence in self-care for the newborn
		To prevent the child from developing greediness
Do not remain idle		Fear that the baby will have physical abnormalities in the legs
When leaving the house at night, place garlic in underwear		To ward off disturbances from jinn for the fetus
Do not clean fish scales		To ensure that the child is born without any skin issues

Source: Research Interview Data

### Yoga In The View Of Islamic Religion

Since yoga is a practice for balancing the body and soul that originates from non-Islamic religions, it is important to understand how Islam views this ritual. During a

conference, Zakir Naik was asked by an audience member about the fatwa issued by Malaysian clerics declaring yoga to be haram. Naik affirmed this stance, explaining that yoga often incorporates mantras traditionally used



in Hinduism, such as the word *Om*. In Islam, it is prohibited to invoke or refer to Allah in ways that are not aligned with Islamic teachings, as this is considered *shirk*—associating partners with God. *Shirk* is regarded as a sin that is not forgiven by Allah SWT (Naik, 2015).

Fundamentally, yoga encompasses two primary components: physical exercise and meditation aimed at achieving inner peace. If either of these components is omitted, the practice cannot be accurately referred to as yoga. Typically, yoga is practiced at specific times, such as during sunrise and just before sunset. Consequently, yoga is deemed haram for several reasons:

1. The act of associating partners with Allah refers to seeking inner peace from sources other than Allah and adopting concepts that suggest a union between God and His creation. This reflects a misinterpretation of the relationship between the Divine and humans, as it contradicts the fundamental Islamic belief in *tawhid* (the oneness of God).
2. This ritual follows the activity of the sun. This resembles the worship carried out by the Shinto religion.

وَلَا تَحْيَئُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ طُلُوعَ الشَّمْسِ وَلَا غُرُوبَهُ ، فَإِنَّهَا تَطَّلِعُ بَيْنَ قَرْنَيْ شَيْطَانٍ

*Do not deliberately choose prayer times when the sun rises or sets, because it rises between the two horns of Satan* (HR. Bukhari 3099)

3. This activity imitates other religions

The Malaysian National Fatwa states that yoga is neither wholly haram nor halal. It is considered haram to engage in the mantras associated with yoga, as this can disturb one's *aqeedah* (faith). However, if yoga is practiced solely for fitness purposes, it is deemed halal. Nonetheless, it is recommended to avoid yoga altogether due to concerns that it may lead to the incorporation of practices from other religious rituals (Indonesia, 2008).

This aligns with the findings of Indonesian ulama, who concluded that yoga is fundamentally haram because it imitates the rituals of other religions and may disrupt one's faith through the recitation of foreign mantras. Yet, if yoga is strictly for physical fitness, it may be permissible (Kompas, 2009).

From these perspectives, it can be concluded that Islam forbids yoga when it is practiced with the intention of seeking inner

peace from sources other than Allah. Yoga is often perceived as a "union" between God and humans, characterized by sun-salutation activities and mantras commonly associated with other faiths.

In her experience, the author participated in yoga sessions solely to address the physical changes she experienced during pregnancy. No mantras were recited during these yoga movements; instead, the focus was on positive affirmations from the instructor, which served as prayers and hopes for navigating pregnancy and childbirth. This experience may have been influenced by the setting of the yoga classes, which took place at an Islamic-based maternity clinic.

### Prenatal Preparation For Muslims

Another form of spirituality that Muslims can embrace to prepare for childbirth is through religious practice. Pregnant women can enhance their worship by praying to Allah and seeking

**Table 4.** Similar Movements Between *Salat* (Islamic Prayer) and Yoga

Movement	<i>Salat</i>	Yoga
Stand up straight	<i>Qiyam</i>	<i>Namaste</i>
Half kneeling (bow)	<i>Ruku'</i>	<i>Ardha Uttanasana</i>
Sitting	<i>Tashahud</i>	<i>Vajrasana</i>
Kneeling (prostrate)	<i>Sujud</i>	<i>Reply</i>

**Source:** Yoga and Salaah: Some theoretical comparisons (Hasan and Halder, 2018)

His guidance for themselves and the fetus they are carrying. Upon closer examination, it is evident that some yoga movements resemble prayer postures as presented in Table 4; the primary differences lie in the names and associated recitations (Nazish and Kalra, 2018). In addition, yoga involves synchronizing each movement with controlled breathing (inhale-exhale), a practice not present in prayer.

Several studies have proven that religion also helps prepare for childbirth. Khasanah mentions that prenatal education and preparation are carried out in three phases:

- 1) The Preparation Phase.

It starts with selecting a partner before marriage. Individuals must be careful when choosing a partner, especially with respect to their religion. Allah forbids Muslim men from

marrying polytheist women, even if they are remarkable, and vice versa. This is supported by the hadith of Rasulullah SAW, which advises prioritizing a partner's religious knowledge when choosing a spouse.

## 2) The Conception Phase

Islam provides guidance on etiquette in all aspects of life, including sexual relations between husband and wife. Couples are advised to recite prayers before and after intercourse so that it becomes an act of worship approved by Allah SWT.

## 3) The Embryo Phase.

The mother's role is paramount in this phase. A mother can instill the belief in monotheism in her fetus by engaging in acts of worship, such as prayer, reading the Qur'an, and performing other righteous deeds during pregnancy (Khasanah, 2016).

Bahri shares similar views with Khasanah on prenatal preparation for Muslim mothers. However, Bahri's research adds insights based on his study of several pregnant women, emphasizing their role as the first educators for the fetus they carry (Bahri, 2015). The findings are as follows:

- a. First trimester: mothers are encouraged to consume halal, nutritious food. They also strive to maintain a positive mindset and minimize stress
- b. Second trimester: many mothers engage in activities that provide auditory stimulation for the fetus, such as reading the Holy Qur'an aloud or playing Islamic songs and prayers of the Prophet.
- c. Third trimester: pregnant women are advised to foster increased optimism while ensuring that their behaviors remain consistent with religious principles.

Suciati's research indicates that listening to the Holy Qur'an during pregnancy significantly enhances the peace and well-being of the fetus, with over 90% of observed cases showing positive effects. This practice can begin as early as the first trimester, as the development of the fetal auditory system starts in the third week of gestation, with the ear being the first sensory organ to function. The fetus is capable of perceiving both internal sounds, such as the mother's heartbeat and blood flow, and external sounds, including the mother's voice, music, and recitations of the

Holy Qur'an, whether played through earphones or recited live.

The author suggests that prenatal yoga is particularly beneficial throughout pregnancy and into the postpartum period. In addition to its physical and psychological advantages, it acts as a spiritual medium for expectant mothers. The practices of informants in this study illustrate that they not only engage in religious worship through physical movements but also complement these practices with regular physical exercise. Prenatal yoga effectively reduces stress and anxiety, which are prevalent during and after pregnancy. The integration of prenatal yoga with Islamic practices and cultural traditions, as demonstrated in the four case studies, adds a unique dimension to the mental well-being of pregnant women.

These findings serve as a foundation for developing prenatal programs in Indonesia that focus on managing pregnancy-related stress while remaining culturally resonant. Methods that reduce anxiety and align with religious beliefs help pregnant women feel safer and more at peace during childbirth, resulting in improved health outcomes. This research supports the establishment of prenatal yoga classes that emphasize spiritual growth within Muslim communities across Indonesia. Such programs could be facilitated by midwives, yoga instructors, and pregnancy counselors who are trained to integrate yoga techniques with Islamic principles, including prayer and spiritual reflection. This approach not only appeals to Muslim women but also provides a deeper, more meaningful experience throughout pregnancy.

## CLOSING

Based on the results and discussion, several conclusions can be drawn. First, integrating prenatal yoga with Islamic practices has been shown to have positive effects on pregnant women. The four informants in this study indicated that this approach helps minimize perineal tearing and reduces anxiety and stress during the postpartum period (Suciati, 2015). Second, despite ongoing debates surrounding prenatal yoga, it remains widely utilized by pregnant women as part of their preparation for childbirth. Third, the practice of prenatal yoga has been adapted to suit the needs of Muslim

women, either through community-based sessions with mentors or via online tutorials.

In supporting these practices, the government, particularly the Ministry of Health, could develop policies that promote the integration of spiritual approaches into maternal health services. This may include the provision of guidelines and standards for healthcare providers to encourage Islamic-based prenatal yoga at community health centers, maternity hospitals, and clinics. Additionally, health education institutions, such as midwifery and nursing academies, could incorporate Islamic-based prenatal yoga into their curricula, adapted to the cultural contexts of different regions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our sincere gratitude to the informants who generously provided valuable data for this research. To the expectant mothers, we offer our best wishes for a smooth and healthy journey through the prenatal and postpartum periods. Our heartfelt thanks also go to our university lecturers for their unwavering dedication, guidance, feedback, and continuous support, which were instrumental in the successful completion of this research.

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