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Intermittent Fasting as a Halal Lifestyle: A Content Analysis

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Abstract: The pandemic is gradually overcoming but this should not make us neglectful of health. There are several things that are a problem for people in Indonesia, namely obesity. This is not only due to the mindset of the people who think that fat is healthy, but also as a result of the pandemic which requires people to limit outdoor activities. This impaired mobility also reduces the daily rate of calorie burning. In addition, a lifestyle that is increasingly facilitated by the convenience of devices such as ordering food and drinks through applications makes calorie intake increase. This makes some people obese. In fact, in addition to reducing aesthetics, obesity can reduce the quality of life. Therefore, a breakthrough is needed to change the post-pandemic lifestyle, namely by implementing a halal lifestyle by fasting. In this study, the fasting in question is fasting Ramadan, fasting David, and fasting Monday-Thursday. This turns out to be in line with a diet method practiced by non-Muslims called *intermittent fasting*. The method used is qualitative with an *interpretive paradigm* on Youtube media. The analysis used is *reception analysis* —an analysis that examines the relationship between media content and the audience as an *active interpreter* who gives meaning to videos that combine the concept of *intermittent fasting* with fasting. The purpose of this research is as *exploratory research*. While the approach taken is integrative interconnective, namely combining the viewpoints of two branches of science, namely religion and science. The results obtained are that there is great potential that sunnah fasting can be applied as a halal lifestyle that has been studied for its benefits in terms of science. So, this does not make the branding of sunnah fasting a dogma but reaffirmation of sunnah fasting as a sensible halal lifestyle.

Keywords: Sunnah fasting, Halal lifestyle, Diet

Introduction

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In carrying out daily activities, humans have a habit as a result of what they repeat continuously (Ritchie et al., 2003). This will then have an impact on human life. Habits that are repeated continuously can be said as a lifestyle. But for more details, some experts have the appropriate meaning of what a lifestyle is. From a psychological point of view, it explains that lifestyle is a form of compensation for imperfections in certain things, formed at the age of 3-5 years (Palacz-Poborczyk et al., 2025, p. 45), lifestyle can also be used to understand individual behavior, become the background of individual characteristics, and is determined by certain inferiority (Sunaryo, 2004, p. 109).

In addition to the above understanding, lifestyle can be used as a differentiator of individual characters from others (Bocu et al., 2024, p. 9). This is because each person has a different pattern of behavior. Lifestyle is also influenced by social organizational behavior related to consumption behavior (Mulyana, 2022, p. 72). Life is a series of choices. There is a saying that "You are what you eat". Therefore, we must be wise in choosing food and managing the right portion. This has a direct impact on the quality of life. Healthy lifestyle choices refer to intentional personal decisions to engage in behaviors that reduce or increase risk and disease. For example, choosing fasting as a lifestyle will have a good impact on health (Ernawati, 2022, p. 15).

Fasting is practiced by almost all religions in the world. Both Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Hinduism make fasting as one of worship (Francis et al., 2010, p. 146). In Islam, fasting is one of the pillars of Islam. It is undeniable that fasting has its own meaning for people who do it. Both in terms of spiritual and physical, fasting has a significant impact (Wahid, 2019, p. 2). As for the basis of the obligatory fast for every Muslim, namely:

أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَكُمُ الصَّيَامُ إِلَى الدِّينِ لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ

"O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may become pious." (Surah Al-Baqarah, n.d.)

The virtues of fasting were narrated by the Prophet Muhammad, as follows:

"From Abu Hurairah RA said: The Messenger of Allah, said: Allah said: Except fasting, the deeds are for Me and I will repay them. Because he has left his lust and his food because of Me. For people who fast get two happiness, namely happiness when breaking the fast and meeting their Lord." (HR Muslim) (Bukhari & Muslim, 2017, p. 497).

The wisdom of carrying out sunnah fasting is to train oneself from lust, teach simplicity, maintain health, train oneself to get used to istiqomah, and get the pleasure of being part of the Prophet's ummah. (Aidah, 2021, pp. 49–50). Meanwhile, in terms of health, fasting also has a good impact. Based on research, fasting can beat at least 25 diseases including bronchitis, headaches, constipation, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, cancer, etc. In addition, it is also mentioned that the crime rate decreases during the month of Ramadan. Therefore, it is interesting to study how fasting can be used as a lifestyle for people, especially after the pandemic (Azwar, 2005, pp. 58–59).

Based on the research of Kristin K. Hoddy, et al., explained that the Intermittent Fasting Approach can provide health benefits independent of weight loss. This is consistent with a meta-analysis showing decreased fasting insulin (9,115) although there was no difference in weight loss between the IF and CR regimens (9-10,86,115). It's possible that one IF regimen could outperform another, but this remains to be directly tested. Nonetheless, repeated samples across each type of IF regimen did show an insulin-sensitizing effect occurring soon after diet initiation. It is possible that this IF effect could be mediated through circadian biology as diurnal variation in glucose (116), energy expenditure (117,118), and substrate utilization (119) favoring eating in the morning and fasting at night (Hoddy et al., 2020, p. 534).

Based on research from Anisa Cherif, et al., explained that exercise has an impact on brain function, but information about the effects of a combination of exercise and IF (CR, RIF and IF) on cognitive function is scarce. Research has revealed that regular exercise improves certain types of learning, including executive function of cognition, learning, and memory span, and also stimulates neurogenesis. In addition, depending on the type of IF, cognitive function and physical performance may be enhanced or negatively impacted. Several studies have shown that long-term food restriction is associated with impairments in cognitive function, including poor performance on sustained attention tasks. However, other studies have shown that memory performance is significantly improved during fasting. In investigating the mechanism by which dietary restriction acts on cognitive function and to determine how this diet works (Cherif et al., 2016, p. 44).

Based on research from Santos and Mecido stated that IF may be a dietary method to help improve lipid profiles in healthy men and women, obesity and dyslipidemia, reduce total cholesterol, LDL, triglycerides and increase HDL. However, most studies analyzing the impact of IF on lipid profile and weight loss are observational and lack detailed information on diet. Randomized clinical trials with larger sample sizes are needed to evaluate the effect of IF especially in patients with dyslipidemia (Santos & Macedo, 2018, p. 20).

Method

This research is qualitative in nature, which is general in nature, changing, or developing according to field conditions. This method is also often referred to as naturalistic research because the research is carried out in settings or conditions natural ones. This method is positivistic and uses interpretive techniques. Researchers are tasked with interpreting the data found in the field (Setiawan, 2018, p. 17). The analysis used is reception analysis, an analysis that examines the relationship between media content and the audience as an active interpreter who gives meaning to videos that combine the concept of intermittent fasting with sunnah fasting (James, 2010, p. 59). The approach used in this research is an integrative-interconnective approach. The integrative-interconnective approach is an approach that seeks to respect each other's general knowledge and religion, being aware of each other's limitations in solving human problems. This will give birth to a collaboration, at least understanding each other's approach (approach) and method of thinking (process and procedure) between the two disciplines (Abdullah, 2006, p. 33). The primary data used is a video from the Diet Santuy YouTube channel entitled "How to Intermittent Fasting / OCD, Fasting Weight Loss Without Dieting" with a duration of 10 minutes 19 seconds. Data collection techniques using observation, documentation, and literature study. Observations were made by observing the object of research, namely in terms of content and interaction between viewers in the video commentary session. Documentation is carried out as a reinforcement to the data collected. Literature Study is a method of collecting data sourced from reference books, journals, papers, websites and readings that are related to research titles that can support problem solving obtained in research (Hartono, 2017, p. 16).

Results and Discussion

Correlation between Ramadan Fasting, Sunnah Monday-Thursday, Sunnah Fasting of David and Intermittent Fasting

The basis for the obligatory fasting of Ramadan has been mentioned in the previous chapter, namely al-Baqarah verse 183. Fasting Ramadan is one of the obligations of worship for every Muslim who is able to withstand hunger, thirst, and things that invalidate the fast from sunrise to sunset (Suwaidân, 2013, p. 174). The basis for the Sunnah fasting Monday-Thursday is the hadith narrated by the Prophet Muhammad, as follows:

الْأَعْمَالُ الْإِثْنَيْنِ الْخَمِيسُ أَحَبُّ أَنْ لِي أَنَا إِيَّاهُ.

"Deeds are exposed (to Allah) on Mondays and Thursdays, so I like it if my deeds are exposed when I am fasting." (Narrated by Bukhari Muslim)

From the hadith above, it is found that there is wisdom for those who fast on Monday-Thursday so that our final deeds are good in front of Allah. While the basis for the stipulation of the Sunnah of David fasting, namely,

أَحَبُّ الصَّيَامِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَمْ أُؤَدَّ أَنْ ۖ

"The fast that Allah loves the most is the fast of the Prophet David. He fasts a day and does not fast for a day." (Narrated by Bukhari).

From the above hadith, it can be seen that David's fasting is the most beloved fasting practice by Allah SWT, (Abdillah, 2021, pp. 142–144). So what is the procedure for implementing these two sunnah fasts? First, the sunnah fasting Monday-Thursday is actually almost the same as the obligatory fast during the month of Ramadan (Fatahi et al., 2021, p. 3391). However, what distinguishes it is in the reading of the intention as follows,

الصَّوْمُ الْإِثْنَيْنِ الْخَمِيسِ لِلَّهِ إِلَى

"I intentionally fast Monday/Thursday because of Allah ta'ala."

As for the intention of fasting David as the reading below,

الصَّوْمُ أَوْدَّ إِلَهُ إِلَى

"Accidentally I fasted David kana Allah ta'ala"

The two sunnah fasts above have the same procedure as obligatory fasting in general, namely refraining from everything that invalidates the fast from sunrise to sunset. It's just that both have different execution times (Nonaka, 2021, p. 437). Monday-Thursday sunnah fasting is carried out on Mondays and Thursdays outside of the fasting time of Ramadan. While the fast of David is carried out by fasting one day while the next day is not fasting (Hambali, 2020, pp. 283–285).

So, what about intermittent fasting? Intermittent fasting is a diet method using fasting (Diastiti, 2017, p. 9). Intermittent fasting is an eating pattern in which there is a cycle between periods of eating and fasting which is known to have the goal of losing weight and controlling several chronic diseases (Litaay et al., 2021, p. 97). Intermittent fasting has many benefits. There is even a Greek proverb which says that it is better to fast than taking medicine today (Correale, 2022, p. 90).

Based on research from Rafael and Mark on the effectiveness of intermittent fasting in health, aging, and disease, this has a good impact (Dalvi & Medithi, 2024, p. 241). Preclinical studies and clinical trials have shown that intermittent fasting has a broad spectrum of benefits for many health conditions, such as: obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and neurological disorders (Lassi & Bhutta, 2013, p. 652). In animals it is shown that intermittent fasting improves health throughout the life span, whereas clinical research mainly involves short-term interventions, over a period of several months (Mishra et al., 2024, p. 759). In addition, clinical studies have focused primarily on overweight young and middle-aged adults, and we cannot generalize to other age groups the benefits and safety of intermittent fasting that have been observed in these studies (Naaman et al., 2024, p. 8). Although it is not fully understood the specific mechanism, the beneficial effects of intermittent fasting involve metabolic switching and cellular stress resistance. However, some people are unable or unwilling to adhere to a regimen of intermittent fasting. By better understanding the processes linking intermittent fasting with broad health benefits, we may be able to develop targeted pharmacological therapies that mimic the effects of intermittent fasting without the need to substantially change feeding habits (Ahmed et al., 2018, p. 2706). Studies of the mechanisms of calorie restriction and intermittent fasting in animal models have led to the development and testing of pharmacological interventions that mimic the health and disease-modifying benefits of intermittent fasting. (de Cabo & Mattson, 2019, p. 2549)

Even in other studies intermittent fasting has an impact on several diseases. Patient demographic data, history of seizures, and seizure frequency. Six children attempted intermittent fasting and ranged in age from 2 to 7 years (Cars & Craig, 1990, p. 134). All families offer an agreed-upon intermittent fasting approach to try. The diagnoses included Lennox-Gastaut syndrome (two patients), Doose syndrome (two patients), and one child each with idiopathic generalized epilepsy and multifocal epilepsy (Fernández-Rodríguez et al., 2023, p. 11173). All patients except one were in a 4:1 ketogenic ratio and all were in KD for at least 4 months, which is sufficient time to determine whether KD has worked as the only dietary treatment for seizures. Interestingly, all children who had a positive response to the intermittent fasting regimen experienced atonic seizures as part of their semiology (Wilhelmi De Toledo et al., 2020, p. 152). Only two children (patients 2 and 6) did not increase seizures with KD on intermittent fasting. Other children experienced some degree of seizure improvement, but not to a degree of seizure freedom. (Hartman et al., 2013, p. 276)

Diet Santuy YouTube Content on Intermittent Fasting and Sunnah Fasting

According to Anton Septian—creator of the Diet Santuy Youtube channel—explains in his video that the meaning of intermittent fasting in language means intermittent fasting (Gueldich et al., 2019, p. 703). Meanwhile, in terms, intermittent fasting is an approach to regulating eating patterns by applying intermittent fasting and eating times (Karras et al., 2023, p. 264). There are three well-known approaches to intermittent fasting. First, the alternate day approach—that is, a diet method by fasting one day, one day after eating. In a religious context it is called the fast of David.



Figure 1. Fasting monday-thursday

Second, the 5:2 fasting approach—that is, within a week there are two days of fasting followed by five days of eating. In a religious context it is known as fasting Monday-Thursday. Although in intermittent fasting there is no need to fast for the two days mentioned.



Figure 2. David's fast

Third, the time-restricted feeding approach—that is, the fasting approach with limited eating hours (Cuccolo et al., 2022, p. 480). In a matter of one day there are hours to fast and there are hours to eat. Usually, the progression of this diet is to reduce eating hours gradually (Marventano et al., 2018, p. 103). For example, in the early stages of fasting for 12 hours, then the remaining 12 hours are for eating. Gradually the fasting time was increased, and the meal time was reduced (Sandoval et al., 2021, p. 740). For example, in the next stage it becomes 14 hours of fasting and 10 hours of eating. Some extreme people even eat only a small amount of time. People call it one meal a day because they only eat once a day. It is not recommended for the general public. This time-restricted feeding approach is similar to fasting during Ramadan—that is, a few hours for sahur and eating after fasting. The difference is in intermittent fasting it is permissible to drink water, while in Ramadan fasting it is not allowed to drink.

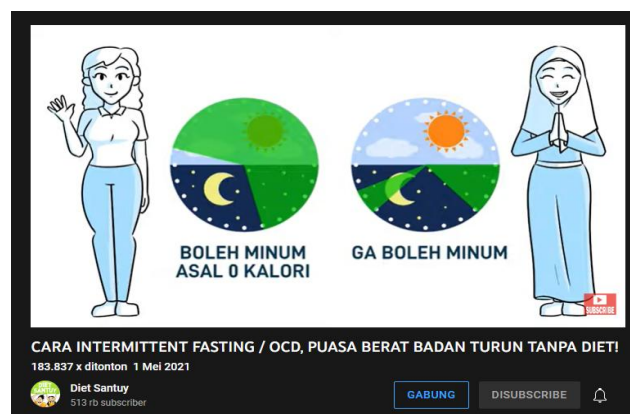


Figure 3. Ramadan fasting

The effectiveness of intermittent fasting with a restricted time feeding approach has been scientifically tested. In the first study, there were 20 obese people and had metabolic syndrome parameters. These 20 people fasted for 14 hours and the remaining 10 hours to eat. The result, after 12 weeks of fasting, the average study participants experienced a decrease in caloric intake by 8.6% and managed to lose weight as much as 3.3 kg. The second study fasted for 16 hours so the remaining 8 hours for eating. The participants were 40 people with 20 people fasting while the remaining 20 people eating as usual. After 12 weeks the people who were asked to fast had a calorie deficit of 341 calories and lost 2.6% of their weight. Then the next study used only 4 hours to eat, 6 hours, and the last group did their usual eating pattern. The study participants were 60 people grouped into 3 patterns as previously mentioned. The results after 8 weeks found that the group that ate only 4 hours a day experienced a calorie deficit of 528 calories, while the group that ate only 6 hours a day experienced a calorie deficit of 566 calories. And his weight managed to drop as much as 3.2%. So, from this research it can be concluded that this is effectively done. Because indirectly, by fasting food intake is reduced.

The advantage of intermittent fasting is that it is very easy to do. We don't need to count calories or other weird methods to lose weight (Jin et al., 2024). The drawback is that we must be ready to withstand hunger, affecting activities and life style, if the standard meal hours are carried out freely without having good nutritional literacy, this could be in vain or the nutritional intake eaten is not sufficient for the body's needs. Intermittent fasting does not recommend eating carelessly during meal times. If the hours of eating are short, it will be difficult for us to meet nutritional needs. If there is a tendency to eating disorders, it is not recommended to fast. This is because intermittent fasting applies skipping meals. Skipping meals to lose weight is considered dangerous for people with eating disorders (Nizami et al., 2022, p. 500).

There are several suggestions that can be applied in intermittent fasting. First, choose a reasonable eating window to start intermittent fasting. Second, stick to a good nutrition plan. Do not vent hunger by eating food that exceeds the body's needs. Third, intermittent fasting can be executed with a simple approach. For example, it's like a myth to stop eating after 18.00 or at night because it can make the body fat. Even though this is a hoax, it can be applied in the context of intermittent fasting. This has indirectly implemented intermittent fasting because they have fasted for 8 hours of fasting. At the time of eating can be added high-fiber foods to hold hunger longer. Lastly, please adjust it to the life style that has been applied (Diet Santuy, 2021)

Content Analysis and Viewers' Conception of the Diet Santuy towards Intermittent Fasting and Fasting

Detailed explanations about fasting and intermittent fasting managed to attract the hearts of the audience. This is proven by the video which has been watched 1824,012 times since it was uploaded on May 1, 2021. Not only that, the video also managed to get 5600 likes, and 691 people actively participated in providing feedback in the comment column.

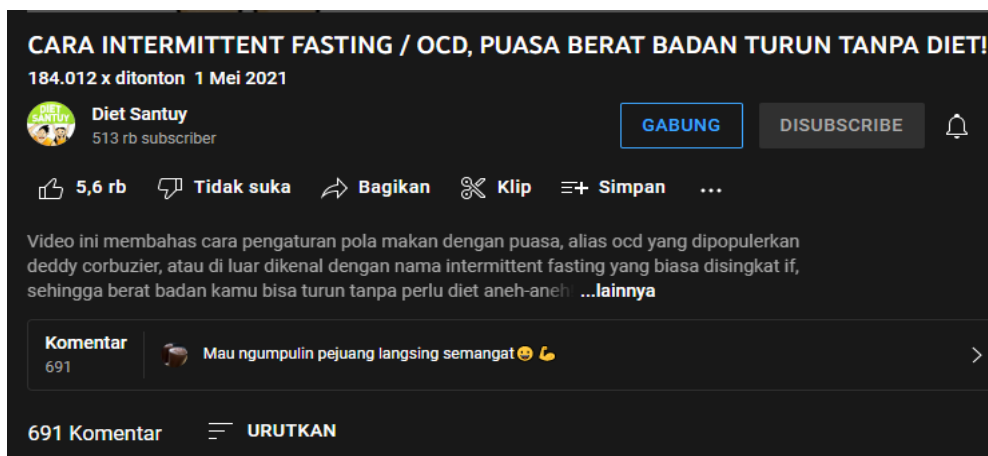


Figure 4. Proof of number of likes on content

From here we have seen a potential how the concept of intermittent fasting and fasting will educate the public at a wider stage. There are several positive things that make the Diet Santuy worthy of applause from the audience, including:

Presentation Display with Attractive Animation

The Diet Santuy gives a presentation screen-like appearance with dominant colors of green and white. This is also supported by animated characters whose visuals are eye-catching. In addition to its beauty, the images displayed represent the messages that are conveyed well. As stated by Roland Barthes—a philosopher from France—he explained that images have a trick effect. This is defined as the process of manipulating images to convey messages (Andhita, 2021, p. 55). In addition, in the context of education, visual media is one of the most widely used learning media because of the ease of conveying the meaning of the message content to the audience (Sartika et al., 2022, p. 72). So, the diet santuy has succeeded in displaying its educational content so that it is easy to understand and not boring.

Straightforward Delivery Accompanied by Relevant Examples

Anton Septian managed to explain intermittent fasting and fasting in a straightforward manner. His monologue did not feel monotonous because he invited the audience to react several times. For example, as in the 32nd second section as follows



Figure 5. The uniqueness of the content that makes the content interesting

This certainly brings the audience's interest up, because they feel involved in the discussion (Al-Tabany, 2017, p. 137). In addition, an interesting discussion of the diet santuy is also accompanied by examples that are relevant to the audience. For example, an explanation related to the myth that it is forbidden to eat at night. Bringing context into everyday life is certainly successful in making it easier for the audience to understand what is meant by the creator (Parera, 2004, p. 47)

Combining Explanations in Religious and Scientific Contexts

In the diet Santuy narrative about intermittent fasting, two approaches are used at once. The first is a religious approach and the second uses a scientific approach. Although the term intermittent fasting comes from non-Muslim circles, Anton Septian managed to find similarities in fasting. This is explained in three intermittent fasting approaches. In addition, education about research data is explained in a simple way to make it easier to understand. This is a reinforcement of the reason fasting is very well applied as a lifestyle (Tinsley & Horne, 2018, p. 49).

Presenting the Objective Side by Explaining the Advantages and Disadvantages

The explanation of intermittent fasting by presenting a religious and scientific context provides reinforcement for suggestions for the audience to do. This will lead to the decision to overdo it. In addition, it can encourage fanaticism and ridicule to others who choose not to do so. Therefore, it is very interesting in the video to explain the advantages and disadvantages of doing a fasting diet or intermittent fasting (Yehya et al., 2023, p. 453).

From the four reasons above, it can be understood how the diet Santuy deserves praise for its educational content. On the other hand, this can provide a new concept of intermittent fasting, which is a foreign term that is

very close to the religious context. This is evidenced by several comments from the audience that support the content. As mentioned by the owner of the Gading Aurora account,

"If the intention is to fast, usually it can last until sunset, but if the intention is IF, the stomach is usually rumbling in broad daylight. In the end, until now, I prefer sunnah fasting (Monday-Thursday, ayyamul bidh, etc.). Anyway, it all depends on the intention."

This is also supported by comments from the owner of the Harely Lusiana account which states that

"Once, Sis, I think it's better to watch your mealtime, because you can adjust your busyness with the incoming food. For those who fast intermittently or 2 days a week, it can be adjusted to the hours of commotion/laying down which are more than activities to rest the body, or it's not bad to save money when it comes to boarding children."

But on the other hand, this also creates a difference of opinion which states that intermittent fasting and fasting are two different things. As Chiro de Kocheng mentioned,

"Fasting for me is essentially different when fasting is worship, the bonus is that it has a diet and detox effect, but in my religion, fasting is not allowed every day of the year except for fasting in Ramadan which can be full for a month, so if you want to diet, choose a relaxed diet, only this year I'm learning fasting is brought along with the diet, correcting the eating pattern. Because sometimes fasting just takes worship, iftar is out of control, it's lazy to eat at dawn. Now trying to follow a better pattern."

From this it can be understood that the content of the diet santuy has presented a new concept about fasting. From a religious point of view, fasting is a form of worship that has other benefits. This is reinforced by the support of scientific explanations for the reasons why intermittent fasting is good to do. With the reach of content that has been watched more than 1000 times, of course, this can be a potential to make fasting branding rise to the next level. Not only dogma about obligations or sunnah recommendations, but can be used as a new lifestyle. Especially in a post-pandemic situation, this can be the best solution to introduce fasting as a halal lifestyle (Heiat et al., 2021, p. 29).

Conclusion

Intermittent fasting literally means intermittent fasting. Meanwhile, based on the term, intermittent fasting is a diet method that uses fasting as a way to lose weight. The three approaches to intermittent fasting are similar to the fasting worship performed by Muslims in general. The first alternate day is similar to the concept of David's fasting. Secondly, 5:2 approaches are similar to the Monday-Thursday fasting approach. Thirdly, time restricted feeding methods are similar to the Ramadan fasting method. There are several things that distinguish Islamic fasting from intermittent fasting, namely the intention of the implementation, in the implementation of fasting it is not allowed to eat and drink; while intermittent fasting is allowed to drink as long as it is low in calories, fasting is done at a time determined by sharia; While intermittent fasting can be done at a time that has been planned by each individual as needed. In the diet santuy content about intermittent fasting, it was successful in introducing this diet method by bringing a religious context. This brings the image of fasting which has only been seen as one of the pillars of Islam into a sensible lifestyle. This is because the content of the diet santuy does not only present a religious context but is supported by a scientific context. So, this is able to lead the audience's conception to be more objective.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

* The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPHELS Journal belongs to the authors.

Conflict of Interest

* The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

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