

# The Relation between Monday and Thursday Fasting towards Emotional Intelligence (EI): A Preliminary Report

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**Abstract.** Mental health disorders are easily experienced by medical students, which can be aided by enhancing emotional intelligence (EI), that can be trained by Monday and Thursday fasting. This preliminary report was done as an early step to becoming a reference for advanced study, as the researcher pursues. This study aimed to investigate the relation between Monday and Thursday fasting towards EI. The Method of this study was analytical cross-section with one-time data retrieval. 50 subjects were chosen randomly and divided similarly into fasting and non-fasting group. EI scores were measured and analyzed by the Chi-square test. Resulting in 33 subjects with Good (66.0%), 6 with Very Good (12.0%), 7 with Pretty Good (14%), and 4 subjects with Not Good EI level (8%). EI score enhancement in the fasting group compared to the non-fasting group was significant with  $p < 0.05$ . Based on the results, we found that Monday and Thursday fasting has a significant relation to EI.

**Keywords:** Monday-Thursday Fasting, EI, Mental Health.

## 1 Introduction

Fasting, also known as Sawm in Arabic, is one of the commandments for Muslims, too fast as it is beneficial for health. Fasting is done by muslims pursued due to its mandatory or non-mandatory(sunnah) value. As for the implementation and the necessity differs accordingly with intentions and within a period. Mandatory fasting must be executed during the month of Ramadhan, while Sunnah fasting can be done some time as desired according to the Islamic Law. [1]

In the Qur'an and Sunnah, fasting is to refrain and leave everything that is prohibited by God. It can also be interpreted as to restrain from the desires of food and drink for the body, the drive of expressing emotion, and biological needs during the fasting period. Fasting is performed from dawn until dusk when Maghreb/evening adhan is sounded, it is meant to be a time of spiritual discipline. By refraining and leaving these prohibitions, it puts Muslims closer to God.[2] The Qur'an that commands Muslims to perform Fasting is found in surah Al-Baqarah, verse 183, " O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you, that you may become righteous".

Sunnah fasting as narrated by Abu Hurayrah, Rasulullah SAW often performed sunnah fasting on Monday and Thursday. The virtue of fasting on Monday Thursday is expressed by

its conviction. "All charities were presented on Mondays and Thursdays. That is when God forgives every Muslim or every believer, except who sins openly. Allah SWT said, ' seek for him '. (Narrated by Ahmad with Saheeh Isnaad).

Some studies have shown the benefits of fasting in both physical and mental health, which are the components of health defined by WHO. According to WHO, the definition of health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.[3] It defines that health is broadly not only covering the medical aspects, but also the mental and social aspects, and not just a state of disease-free, disability, and weakness. The WHO senses positive health and appreciates the central role of mental and social aspects. The effort to maintain health for Muslims is fasting. Wisdom of fasting for physical health as a healing therapy of the disease. Doctor Abdul Aziz Ismail of Egypt said that generally fasting can be used as a therapy to prevent some diseases.[4] Other evidence, research by Dewanti L et al, shows that Ramadan fasting can lower blood pressure and hematological levels. [5]

The role of fasting in improving mental health is to prevent psychiatric disorders and mental health tools.[6] In HR ibn Maajah mentioned, "fasting is half patience". Patience training is believed to make someone emotionally strong so they can overcome life's problems well.

Emotion imbalance is one of the mental health disorder causes. Emotion balance depends on individual emotional intelligence, which also plays an important role in regulating mood.—According to Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence is an ability to perceive, identify, employ, and control emotion, which is thought to be essential to emotional harmony and disclosure through self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills.[7] Sun Jung and Hyun Yoon, stated in their research that these outputs of emotional intelligence mentioned above are divided into two categories of the individual (personal competence and self-sufficiency) and social capabilities (the ability to manage an individual's relationship to others). [8] This Masoumeh B et al reported on his research that there was a direct correlation between positive religion, including fasting and emotional intelligence.[9] Fasting is one of Islamic Religious worship. It is supported by the acquisition of Masiid N et al study, stating that fasting can be one of the factors that affect emotional intelligence.[10] However, there is a difference value obtained from the study conducted by Karimi F, et al, that there is no positive correlation between religiosity and Emotional intelligence in the university student.[11]

A prospective, descriptive-analytical study was conducted by Masood, et al. in 2015 discovering the effect of fasting on EI. The researcher reported that each individual has various levels of EI, in which the proportion of this capacity is intrinsic and influenced by external factors such as effort, exercise, and experience. Fasting is one of the methods to exercise EI, increasing self-identification, stress tolerance, responsibility, and empathy. The study resulted in EI increased significantly after Ramadan compared to one week before Ramadhan ( $p < 0.001$ ) and decreased one week after Ramadhan compared to the completion of Ramadhan ( $p < 0.001$ ). [10]

The study of the Monday and Thursday fasting towards EI has been widely reported, mostly declared having a supportive effect, and was conducted in a qualitative approach. However, it is still quite rare to find some researches about the relation between Monday and Thursday Fasting towards EI, which were conducted by a quantitative approach. Therefore, the researcher realized the necessity of exploring this topic using a quantitative approach, so that the result can be objective, more scientific, and has a high value of reliability and

validity. The researcher planned to use the result as a reliable reference to be applied in advanced studies.

## 2 Methods and Materials

The study was approved by the ethical committee of the Faculty of medicine UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (The number ethical clearance B-008/F12/KEPK/TL.00/2/2020). The analytical research design with a cross-sectional approach was used in this study. The sample was obtained by using a random sampling method, with 50 respondents in total. The sample population was preclinical students of the Medical Faculty of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. 50 subjects were chosen randomly and divided into a fasting group (25 subjects) and a non-fasting group (25 subjects). Subjects from the fasting group performed fasting based on the Islamic way of Monday and Thursday sunnah fasting, which is twice a week (Monday and Thursday), approximately 14 hours from dawn until dusk.

All of the subjects were asked to fill out the EI questionnaire, with the result that the EI score each subject represents their own EI status. The tool used to measure the subject EI level/EI status was an EI questionnaire created based on a book written by Daniel Goleman that had been validated and used by Puput Nilam Sari,[12] with EI score as its outcome. This questionnaire was adopted and revalidated by the researcher to keep its validity. This revalidated questionnaire was done to adjust the sample characteristics, therefore this questionnaire could be appropriately implemented in this preliminary study and could be adopted and will be used in the next upcoming study.

Data was taken in the form of categorical and numerical data. The data obtained were later analyzed using the Independent T-test that starts with the normality test. If the data was not normally distributed, then the data analysis will be replaced by a Chi-square test using SPSS version 22. [13]

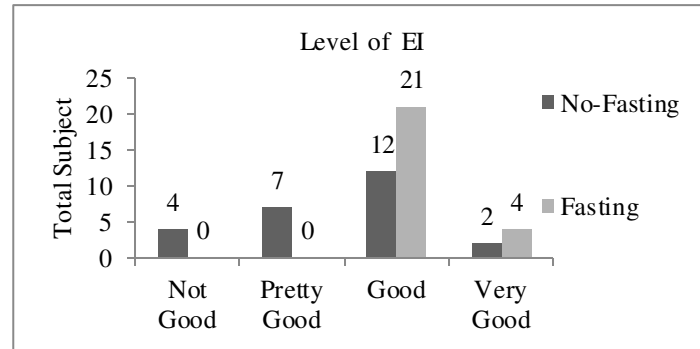
## 3 Results

The result showed that 66% of total samples (33 samples) obtained Good EI Score, 12% (6 samples) obtained Very Good EI score, 14% (7 samples) obtained Pretty Good EI score, and 8% (4 samples) obtain not good EI score, as listed in table 1.

**Table 1.** EI score results

Category of EI Level	Sum	Percentages (%)
Not Good	4	8,0
Pretty Good	7	14,0
Good	33	66,0
Very Good	6	12,0

<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
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**Fig. 1.** Distribution of samples based on fasting relationship to EI.

The diagram above explains that 33 samples with Good EI score consist of 21 samples from the Monday-Thursday fasting group and 12 samples from the nonfasting group. 6 samples with a very good EI score consist of 4 samples from the fasting group and 2 samples from the nonfasting group. 7 samples with Pretty good EI score and 4 samples with Not Good EI score consist of samples from the nonfasting group only.

**Table 2.** Chi-square test analysis result EI level. Chi-square test results show meaningful results between the Monday-Thursday fasting with EI with a value of P 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Fastin g	Level of EI								Tota l	%	p- Valu e	OR	CI (95%)	
	Not Good		Pretty Good		Good		Very Good						Min	Max
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%						
<b>No</b>	4	16,0	7	28,0	12	48,0	2	8,0	25	50	0,000	1,876	0,136	25,941
<b>Yes</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	21	84,0	4	16,0	25	50				
<b>Total</b>	4	8,0	7	14,0	33	66,0	6	12,0	50	100				

## 4 Discussion

Based on the data mentioned above, the researcher concluded that a better EI score was founded dominantly in the fasting group, meanwhile worse EI score was founded in the nonfasting group only. These fasting and non-fasting variables strongly affected the outcome of the EI score, resulting in a statistically meaningful relationship. The results of this analysis support the hypotheses, mentioning there is a relationship between Monday-Thursday fasting and proven EI.

Previous research was conducted by Alhamdu and Diana Sari[14] about the intensity of Monday-Thursday Fasting and EI. The study mentions that there was a significant link between the intensity of Monday-Thursday fasting with EI in Campus Da'wah Organization members in 2013 and 2014. Unfortunately, the research was done without a control group. Another supporting study was done by Ahmad Ahsin[15] in Malang regarding continuous Monday and Thursday fasting against EI that resulted in a significant relationship between Continuous Monday-Thursday Fasting and EI. The method of this study is the difference from the study by Ahmad Ahsin since they didn't put a control group and using limited subjects.

A significant correlation was also found between EI and Monday-Thursday fasting in a study done by Reza, et al. in 2017. That prospective study reported that all of the samples that did Monday and Thursday fasting significantly related to the increase of EI score,  $p < 0,05$  specifically to all of the EI domains according to Daniel Goleman, (2009); personal skills (knowing one's emotions  $p < 0,001$ , managing emotions  $p = 0,002$ , motivating oneself  $p < 0,001$ ), social skills (recognizing emotions in others  $p < 0,01$ , handling relationships  $p = 0,004$ ). [16] The limitation of this research was they did only 15 Subjects and without a control group.

These studies depicted that the mechanism may due to "Blocking Mind Bypassing and Hijacking Mechanism", as done by the researcher to demonstrate. This mechanism is controlled by emotional factors and takes place in the Amygdala. This mechanism allows the brain to trick its thoughts, instead of doing what the individual desires, the individual chooses to do something more positive and beneficial. <sup>1</sup>[17], [18]

Amygdala is occupied by neuronal bundles which vary in size and function. Smaller and shorter bundles take a role in receiving inputs from the sense before encoded by the cortex. The inputs are bypassing the neocortex from the thalamus to the amygdala directly. That process explains the reason why emotional reaction and memory can be formed without any cognitive participation or deliberation. It means that Amygdala may preserve memory and emotional response, making an individual act without consciously realize why the individual acts like that. <sup>2</sup>[17], [18]

EI is also directed towards gaining capability in containing emotion before taking any actions, which is obtained if the neuronal working mechanism connecting the thalamus to amygdala is controlled by neocortex or the presence of active participation of hemisphere cortex. This mechanism is hugely believed to occur when someone does Monday and Thursday Fasting seriously and continuously, along with implementing moral objectives and controlling habit behavior. The moral objectives implementation and avoiding habit behavior may control mind bypassing and hijacking mechanism so that emotional carelessness may not result. <sup>3</sup>

This mechanism provides the peacefulness thoughts within. This signal is transferred into the brain as a positive perception (positive thinking). In the state of positive perception the thalamus control hypothalamus to lower down the production of ACTH so that it also prevents CRF to stimulate the adrenal cortex. Reduce adrenal cortex stimulation leads to lesser production of cortisol, norepinephrine, and vasopressin, which play a role in inducing

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<sup>1</sup> Fond G, Macgregor A, Leboyer M, et al.: Fasting in mood disorders: neurobiology and effectiveness. A review of the literature. Elsevier Psychiatry Research. (2013)

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Fond G, Macgregor A, Leboyer M, et al.: Fasting in mood disorders: neurobiology and effectiveness. A review of the literature. Elsevier Psychiatry Research. (2013)

the individual to be short-tempered, behave aggressively and offensively, and other emotionally careless behaviors.<sup>4</sup>

Another supportive result was also reported in a pediatric EI study by Moh. Saleh, in 2003, stating that there was a strong correlation between Monday and Thursday fasting towards EI. Based on the analysis, the result was delivered with  $r_{xy}$  values 1.4376, ranging between 0.90-1.00, the researcher concluded that this religious method may function as an alternative way to optimize children's EI. Since the positive EI feedback from Monday Thursday Fasting is earned by making it a routine practice in daily life, and without ruling out the implementation of moral values during the period of fasting. [18]

Executing EI in life is essential in Islamic teachings. The holy Qur'an and the Sunnah included many verses and hadiths that indicate and promote the skills and values of EI, ranging from self-awareness, self-management and self-control, empathy, and social awareness and relationship management. From several skills and values of EI itself, emotion management is one of the implementations, in the field of dealing with our own emotions and others'.<sup>5</sup> [19]

The Qur'an that commands Muslims to manage the emotion is stated in Surah Ali-Imran verse 27, "Good Muslims in the eyes of God are those who show patience, firmness, and self-control. Who are true (in word and deed); who worships devoutly; who spends (in the way of Allah); And who prays for forgiveness in the early hour of the morning." And Surah Hud, verse 115 "Be patient (in adversity): for verily God will not let the reward of the righteous be wasted." These verses contain EI values regarding the importance of patience, firmness, and self-control, that is beneficial and necessary for Muslims to implement to be stable during the good and bad moments in their life.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, regardless of whether EI viewed from an Islamic perspective, EI certainly is proven to be related as an important factor in both personal mental health and professional practice,[20] that the low level of it is seen correlated with some psychiatric disorders such as depression, addiction, and educational failure. [21], [22]

However, a different result reported in the study from Anwar Rosyadi,<sup>7</sup>[23], analyzing the influence of Monday and Thursday fasting on emotional and spiritual Intelligence in Sidoarjo, they mentioned that there was no strong influence or relation between the Monday and Thursday fasting towards emotional spiritual and intellectual. The difference in the outcome was influenced by the condition of the respondents that already have a good level of ESQ, other factors were environmental impact, congregation prayers, Tahajjud prayers, and other forms of observance.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> Abdullah NA. Emotional Intelligence: Drawing Its Meaning and Significance from the Islamic Tradition. Penerbit University Kebangsaan Malaysia. (2017)

<sup>6</sup> Abdullah NA. Emotional Intelligence: Drawing Its Meaning and Significance from the Islamic Tradition. Penerbit University Kebangsaan Malaysia. (2017)

<sup>7</sup> Rosyadi, MA. Effect of Monday-Thursday fasting against emotional spiritual question students Pondok Pesantren manba'ul hikam putat tanggulangin Sidoarjo. Surabaya, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. (2019)

<sup>8</sup> Rosyadi, MA. Effect of Monday-Thursday fasting against emotional spiritual question students Pondok Pesantren manba'ul hikam putat tanggulangin Sidoarjo. Surabaya, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. (2019)

One of the demands of Prophet Muhammad which relates to fasting is to not say bad words or shout when fasting. If we get scolded by someone, we should say, "I am fasting. I am controlling my lust so that I will not speak or act unless according to religious requirement." Therefore, Emotional Intelligence leads us to speak and behave properly, with the purpose that at the end of this study society, especially medical students or other groups prone to have emotional imbalance will be encouraged to exercise their EI by implementing Monday -Thursday fasting, and also applying the moral values of it. As already proved by the result, the fasting group has a higher EI score.[4]

## **5 Conclusion**

We obtained thirty-three subjects with good EI level (66.0%), 6 Subjects with very good (12.0%), 7 Subjects with pretty good (14%), and 4 subjects with Not Good EI level (8%). EI score enhancement in the fasting group compared to the nonfasting group was significant with  $p < 0.05$ . Based on those results and discussion delivered above, the researcher concluded that the Monday and Thursday fasting have a relationship with EI students of the Faculty of Medicine Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta.

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