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Beyond Taharah: Integrative Interpretation of QS Al-Baqarah 2:222 in Biology, Psychology, Spirituality

Putri Yasmin Nurul Azizah Tandean[1], Jihan Kharisma Hidayatulloh[2], Ahmad Nurrohim[3]

1. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: g100251062@student.ums.ac.id

2. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: g100241078@student.ums.ac.id

3. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: an122@ums.ac.id

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Beyond Taharah: Integrative Interpretation of QS Al-Baqarah 2:222 in Biology, Psychology, Spirituality

Abstract. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 discusses menstruation through the concept of adha, the prohibition of sexual intercourse, and regulations of cleanliness until a state of purity is attained. In the classical exegesis of al-Qurtubi, this verse is understood within the normative-legal framework of fiqh al-

taharah, thereby confining its meaning predominantly to ritual jurisprudential rulings. Such an approach reveals limitations in interpreting menstruation as a multidimensional phenomenon that also encompasses biological and psychological aspects. This study is a library-based research employing an integrative thematic exegesis approach, combining linguistic analysis, al-Qurtubi's tafsir, and relevant biological and psychological literature. The findings indicate that adha refers to biological disruption and physical-emotional discomfort, rather than merely "impurity". The phrase fa'tazilu is also understood as a protective restriction of sexual relations, rather than social isolation. The integrative analysis demonstrates that menstruation represents the unity of physiological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, the verse is not solely normative-legal in nature, but also contains protective, relational, and reflective meanings in understanding women's bodily experience in a more holistic manner.

Keywoards: Al-Baqarah 222, Menstruation, Integrative Exegesis, Al-Qurtubi, Taharah

INTRODUCTION

QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 is a verse that explicitly addresses menstruation, encompassing the concept of *adha* (harm/discomfort), the prohibition of sexual intercourse during menstruation, and the command to maintain cleanliness until a state of purity is restored. Within the classical exegetical tradition, this verse is generally interpreted within the framework of *fiqh al-taharah*, thereby emphasising boundaries of lawful and unlawful conduct as well as the rules of ritual purification. This dominance of a normative-legal approach contributes to a tendency towards interpretative reductionism, whereby the meaning of the verse is often confined to formal ritual aspects and is less explored in broader dimensions.

The development of scientific knowledge indicates that menstruation is a complex phenomenon involving biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. Biologically, menstruation is part of the reproductive cycle associated with hormonal changes and certain health conditions (Syarif et al., 2020). Psychologically, this phase is often accompanied by emotional fluctuations such as mood changes, anxiety, and symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) (Nabilla et al., 2025). From a spiritual perspective, menstruation may be understood as a reflective phase related to self-awareness and the existential relationship between human beings and God. This complexity suggests that the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 requires an approach that is not solely normative, but also integrative and multidisciplinary.

Previous studies have shown a tendency towards fragmentation in understanding this verse. Aulia, Sari, and Saragih (2025) highlight aspects of health and hygiene, yet their focus remains limited to the biological dimension. Amelia and Nurhayani (2026) examine the concept of *taharah* through a thematic exegetical approach and relate it to character education, but still operate within a normative-educational framework. Firdaus (2022) discusses the dimension of spirituality through the concept of peak experience, yet does not specifically relate it to Qur'anic verses addressing biological conditions such as menstruation.

Based on this review, the research gap in this study lies in the absence of a simultaneous and integrative analysis that connects biological, psychological, and

spiritual dimensions in the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222. Existing studies remain partial and fragmented, and thus have not yet provided a comprehensive understanding of menstruation as a multidimensional phenomenon within the Qur'anic worldview.

In response to this gap, this study proposes a reinterpretative approach to QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 through the integration of biological, psychological, and spiritual perspectives. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to shift the paradigm of exegesis from a normative-legal approach towards a holistic-integrative one, as well as in formulating an analytical model that connects the Qur'anic text with findings from modern biological science and psychological studies simultaneously, while positioning the spiritual dimension as a unifying framework of meaning. This approach is expected to broaden the horizon of Qur'anic studies and contribute conceptually to the development of contextual and multidisciplinary Qur'anic scholarship.

The aim of this study is to analyse QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 through an integrative exegetical approach that goes beyond the concept of *taharah*, to examine its relevance from a biological perspective in relation to women's reproductive health, to identify the psychological implications accompanying the menstrual phase, and to uncover the spiritual meanings embedded within it as part of women's religious experience. In addition, this study seeks to formulate an interpretative model capable of linking the Qur'anic text with biological, psychological, and spiritual perspectives in a comprehensive manner.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a qualitative research employing a library research design, focusing on textual analysis of the Qur'an, specifically QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222. The approach used is thematic exegesis with an integrative orientation that connects biological, psychological, and spiritual perspectives. The primary source of data is the Qur'anic verse itself as the object of study, while the exegetical reference is specifically drawn from the classical work *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* as the main basis of analysis. Supporting data are obtained from relevant scientific literature in the fields of reproductive health and psychology to enrich the contextual reading of the verse.

Data analysis is conducted using a descriptive-analytical method through several stages: (1) linguistic analysis of key terms within the verse, (2) examination of interpretations in *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* as a representation of classical exegesis, (3) a dialogue between exegetical findings and insights from biological and psychological sciences, and (4) a synthesis of spiritual meaning as a form of integrative reinterpretation. This approach is employed to produce a comprehensive understanding while maintaining the connection between the authority of classical exegesis and developments in modern scientific knowledge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Analysis of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيْضِۗ قُلْ هُوَ اَذًىۙ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاۤءَ فِى الْمَحِيْضِۙ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهُنَّ حَتّٰى يَطْهُرْنَۚ فَاِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوْهُنَّ
مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ ٢٢٢

Meaning: *They ask you (O Prophet Muhammad) about menstruation. Say, "It is a form of discomfort." So keep away from women during menstruation and do not approach them for sexual relations until they are purified (after the end of their menstrual period). And when they have fully purified themselves (after performing ritual غسل/ghusl), then approach them as Allah has commanded you. Truly, Allah loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222) (Indonesia, 2020).

Linguistic analysis forms an essential foundation before moving towards broader interpretation. Understanding the key lexical items in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 does not only determine the direction of legal interpretation, but also opens the possibility of expanding meaning into contextual domains. The verse employs several key terms with rich semantic depth, such as *al-mahid*, *adha*, *fa'tazilu*, as well as the distinction between *yathurna* and *yatatahharn*. Each of these terms does not stand independently, but is interrelated in constructing the semantic structure of the verse.

TABEL 1 LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF QS. AL-BAQARAH [2]: 222

Term	Root	Lexical Meaning	Contextual Meaning	Implication
al-mahid (المحيض)	ح-ي-ض	Flowing (of blood)	Menstruation/menstrual period	Indicates a biological condition of women, not merely a legal category (Nurhayat et al., 2024)
adha (أذى)	أ-ذ-ي	Harm, something painful	Physical/psychological discomfort during menstruation	Expands meaning beyond "impurity" to a bodily-emotional condition
fa'tazilu (فاعتزلوا)	ع-ز-ل	To withdraw, to separate	Abstaining from sexual intercourse	Does not imply total isolation, but a specific relational restriction
yathurna (يطهرن)	ط-ه-ر	To become pure	Natural completion of menstruation	Indicates biological purity (natural state)
yatatahharn (يتطهرن)	ط-ه-ر	To purify oneself	Ritual purification through action (ghusl)	Indicates ritual purity (intentional purification)

Semantic Analysis and Linguistic Implications

The term *adha* becomes a crucial point in determining the interpretative direction of the verse. Semantically, this term is not identical to "impurity", but rather refers to a condition involving discomfort or disturbance. Restricting its meaning solely to a juridical category risks obscuring its descriptive dimension. When returned

to its original semantic field, *adha* more accurately represents the biological condition of menstruation, which involves pain, hormonal imbalance, and emotional effects. This indicates that the verse does not merely establish normative boundaries, but also responds to the lived reality of the female body.

Another linguistic implication can be seen in the use of *fa'tazilu*, which denotes a specific restriction of sexual relations rather than complete social separation (Nurfuaida, 2024). This affirms that the prohibition in the verse is proportionate and context-specific. Furthermore, the distinction between *yathurna* and *yatatahharn* reflects two layers of purity: biological and ritual. This structure indicates that the Qur'an distinguishes between the natural state of the body and symbolic acts of purification in worship (Nurrohim & Sidik, 2020).

Overall, the linguistic structure of the verse demonstrates that its literal meaning does not end at the level of *taharah* jurisprudence. There are strong indications that the verse also contains dimensions of protection, health, and relational balance. Thus, an interpretative reading that integrates biological and psychological perspectives has a solid linguistic foundation, rather than being merely an external imposition.

Classical Exegesis of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 in *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*

Al-Qurtubi's interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 begins from the socio-historical context surrounding the revelation of the verse. The transmitted reports indicate that societal practices at the time tended to be extreme in their treatment of menstruating women. Certain communities, particularly those influenced by the traditions of the Children of Israel, would completely isolate menstruating women, refraining from eating with them or sharing living spaces. On the other hand, there also existed permissive practices without any restriction on sexual relations. This verse came as a corrective to both extremes, offering a moderate position. The Prophet, through hadith, clarified that interaction remains permissible so long as sexual intercourse is avoided. Thus, the verse is not intended to establish social isolation, but rather a proportional regulation of conduct (al-Qurtubi, n.d.).

From a linguistic perspective, al-Qurtubi pays particular attention to the term *adha*. He interprets it as something that causes disturbance or discomfort, especially associated with the smell of menstrual blood and the accompanying physical condition. This understanding does not remain purely ritualistic, but also implies an empirical dimension that can be experienced. However, within the structure of Islamic jurisprudence, this meaning subsequently shifts towards the conceptualisation of ritual impurity (*najasah*), which carries legal implications regarding purification and specific prohibitions. Here, a transition from descriptive meaning to normative construction becomes evident.

Regarding the command *fa'tazilu al-nisa'*, al-Qurtubi emphasises that it does not refer to complete avoidance of women, but rather to the restriction of sexual relations. He supports this interpretation with prophetic traditions that permit all forms of interaction except sexual intercourse. The majority of scholars he cites agree that marital relations may continue within certain limits, with some even allowing physical closeness provided that the prohibited area is avoided. Differences of opinion

emerge in terms of caution: some advocate stricter limitations to prevent potential transgression, while others emphasise flexibility as long as the essence of the prohibition is upheld.

The discussion becomes more complex when al-Qurtubi examines the phrases *hatta yathurna* and *fa idha tatahharna*. He notes variations in recitation (*qira'at*) and their legal implications. Some scholars understand "purity" as the cessation of menstrual bleeding, while others require ritual bathing (*ghusl*) as the completion of purification. Al-Qurtubi tends to support the view that permissibility of sexual relations is only established after two conditions are met: the cessation of bleeding and the performance of ghusl. This argument demonstrates a tendency towards caution in establishing legal boundaries, while also showing how linguistic analysis directly influences the construction of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) (Nurmilasari et al., 2026).

In addition, al-Qurtubi documents a range of scholarly opinions concerning the duration of menstruation, the rulings of *istihadah*, and the consequences for suspended acts of worship. He presents the spectrum of views from major legal schools without eliminating their complexity. This approach highlights the strength of classical exegesis in preserving an intellectual tradition grounded in chains of transmission and collective ijtihad. The verse is not understood in isolation, but through a long dialectical engagement among scholars that produces a relatively established legal framework.

The primary emphasis of this exegesis remains on the normative-juridical dimension. Its focus lies in establishing boundaries of lawful and unlawful conduct, determining conditions of purity, and regulating marital relations in legal terms. The strength of this approach lies in its legal clarity and practical guidance, offering operational rules for the Muslim community. However, this orientation also reveals certain limitations. The biological experience of women is not elaborated in depth, nor are the accompanying psychological and spiritual dimensions of menstruation fully explored. The term *adha*, which potentially opens broader semantic possibilities, tends to be reduced to a juridical category.

From this perspective, al-Qurtubi's exegesis provides a strong normative foundation, yet it does not fully accommodate the complexity of menstruation as a multidimensional phenomenon. This limitation is not a methodological flaw, but rather a consequence of the epistemic context of its time. It is precisely at this point that space for reinterpretation emerges, namely, the development of a reading that remains rooted in classical authority, while being expanded through dialogue with scientific perspectives and a more comprehensive understanding of human experience (Muhsinin, 2026).

Biological Perspective: Menstruation as a Physiological Process

From a biological perspective, menstruation is part of the female reproductive system that occurs periodically within a biological cycle regulated by a complex hormonal system (Astuti et al., 2023). Reproductive physiology shows that this cycle involves the interaction of oestrogen and progesterone, which regulate the growth and shedding of the endometrium. Oestrogen plays a role in thickening the uterine

lining in preparation for implantation, while progesterone maintains its stability (Pitaloka, 2024). When fertilisation does not occur, the decline in both hormone levels triggers the shedding of the endometrium, which is then discharged as menstrual blood.

Physiologically, the menstrual cycle consists of four main phases: menstruation, follicular, ovulation, and luteal phases (Villasari, 2021). The menstrual phase is characterised by the shedding of the endometrium, followed by the follicular phase, which involves increased oestrogen levels for follicle maturation (SIREGAR, 2022). The ovulation phase refers to the release of the ovum, while the luteal phase is marked by progesterone dominance in preparation for possible implantation (Sulistina et al., 2025). This structure confirms that menstruation is not a pathological condition, but a normal biological process with reproductive functions and systemic effects on the body.

Within this framework, the term *adha* in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 has broader semantic relevance. Linguistically, *adha* is not identical to "impurity", but refers to something that causes disturbance or discomfort. This aligns with medical findings showing that menstruation is often accompanied by dysmenorrhoea, fatigue, and hormonal imbalance affecting physical condition (E. N. Amelia et al., 2026). These hormonal changes also impact the nervous system, leading to emotional fluctuations and reduced psychological stability. Thus, *adha* is more appropriately understood as a representation of a complex physiological condition, rather than merely a ritual category.

The tendency in classical exegesis to interpret *adha* as "impurity" reflects a narrowing of meaning from a broader semantic spectrum. In *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, interpretation is centred on legal and prohibitive aspects, consistent with the jurisprudential orientation of its time. However, such an approach does not fully elaborate the physiological dimension implicitly contained within the Qur'anic diction. This reveals interpretative space that can be developed through dialogue with modern scientific knowledge, without negating the authority of classical exegesis.

Reproductive health perspectives further reinforce the biological dimension of this verse. Medical studies indicate that during menstruation, the cervix is slightly more open and the environment becomes more susceptible to infection if hygiene is not maintained (Aniroh & Mawardika, 2025). In this context, the command *fa'tazilu* (to withdraw) from sexual relations can be understood not only as a normative regulation, but also as a biologically grounded preventive measure. The prohibition functions as a mechanism for protecting women's reproductive health.

The correspondence between the Qur'anic text and modern biological findings suggests that the verse contains a protective dimension that goes beyond mere legal structuring. This reinterpretation does not simply affirm compatibility between scripture and science, but shifts the perspective from a normative-legal approach to a more holistic biological-protective framework. From this viewpoint, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 does not merely regulate relations, but also reflects sensitivity towards the human body.

This reading positions *adha* as a physiological category that acknowledges the complexity of women's bodily experience. This then provides a foundation for further

integration with psychological and spiritual dimensions, allowing the meaning of the verse to evolve from a set of norms into a comprehensive and contextual framework of understanding.

Psychological Perspective: Emotional and Mental Dynamics of Women

From a psychological perspective, menstruation is not only associated with physical changes but also involves significant emotional dynamics. Hormonal fluctuations during the premenstrual and menstrual phases contribute to the emergence of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), characterised by mood swings, irritability, and increased anxiety (Asidah et al., 2025). This condition is not pathological, but it does affect emotional stability and an individual's responses to their social environment. In other words, the experience of menstruation presents situational and temporary psychological vulnerability.

The implications of this condition are evident in interpersonal relations. Emotional changes may influence communication patterns, sensitivity to conflict, and the need for personal space. In this context, the command *fa'tazilu* (to withdraw) should not be narrowly understood as physical avoidance alone, but may also be read as a regulation of relational distance that allows emotional stabilisation. "Withdrawal" in this sense is not a form of exclusion, but a mechanism for maintaining balance in interaction so as not to impose additional psychological pressure on the person experiencing such changes.

This reading opens the possibility of reinterpretation that the Qur'anic injunction is not solely legal or biological, but also carries a dimension of emotional protection. Restricted interaction during this phase can be understood as an acknowledgement of women's psychological condition, as well as an effort to minimise potential conflict arising from emotional imbalance. Thus, the verse not only regulates actions but also guides an ethic of relationship that is sensitive to internal human conditions.

The integration of exegesis and psychology shows that the structure of prohibition in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 carries broader relational implications. Classical exegesis provides a normative framework, while psychological perspectives expand its meaning into the realm of social interaction and emotional well-being. Through this synthesis, "withdrawal" can be understood as a principle of adaptive relational management, rather than mere restriction, it becomes a strategy for maintaining harmony in vulnerable conditions.

Spiritual Perspective: Menstruation as a Reflective Phase

Within a spiritual framework, menstruation should not be positioned merely as a condition of "impurity", but rather as an existential phase with a reflective function. Restrictions on ritual acts of worship are not simply legal exemptions, but may be read as a shift in spiritual orientation from formal action towards inner consciousness (Hura, 2021). This pause creates space to internalise the meaning of worship beyond symbolic practice, ensuring that the relationship with God is not reduced to ritual performance alone.

The bodily condition during menstruation also directs individuals towards an awareness of human limitation. The body is no longer in an optimal state for performing all acts of worship, implicitly affirming the dimension of humanity that is not always constant. In this context, menstruation becomes a contemplative medium that emphasises that spirituality does not always manifest in performative worship, but also in acceptance of one's condition. This awareness resonates with the concept of *ihsan*, namely the presence of inward quality in one's relationship with God, even when one is formally outside ritual practice.

The transformation of meaning in the verse can be seen in the shift in perspective regarding its injunctions. The prohibition is no longer understood merely as restriction, but as a mechanism that opens space for spiritual reflection. When ritual activities are paused, other dimensions of spirituality, such as self-awareness, inner tranquillity, and existential evaluation, gain greater prominence. Thus, menstruation may be understood as a phase that enriches religious experience rather than diminishes it.

This approach expands the horizon of exegesis from regulation towards a deeper understanding of human experience. In this perspective, menstruation is not marginal to religious life but is part of the dynamics that shape spiritual maturity. At this point, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 not only regulates behaviour but also guides human beings towards a more complete understanding of their relationship with God, transcending the boundary between active worship and periods of pause within religious practice.

Integrative Synthesis: Beyond Taharah

The integration of biological, psychological, and spiritual perspectives demonstrates that QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 contains a semantic structure that transcends normative boundaries. These three approaches do not operate in isolation; rather, they mutually reinforce one another in explaining menstruation as a holistic phenomenon. The biological dimension affirms a concrete physiological condition, the psychological dimension reveals emotional and relational dynamics, while the spiritual dimension provides a reflective framework of meaning. The intersection of these three produces a more comprehensive reading compared to a single, law-based approach.

The reconstruction of meaning shifts from a normative framework towards a holistic approach. The injunctions in the verse are no longer understood merely as legal regulations, but as mechanisms containing biological rationality, psychological sensitivity, and spiritual depth simultaneously. In this sense, the concept of *adha* is no longer confined to the category of "impurity", but develops into an indicator of bodily condition requiring specific consideration. Likewise, the command *fa'tazilu* may be understood as an adaptive regulation of relations rather than an absolute restriction.

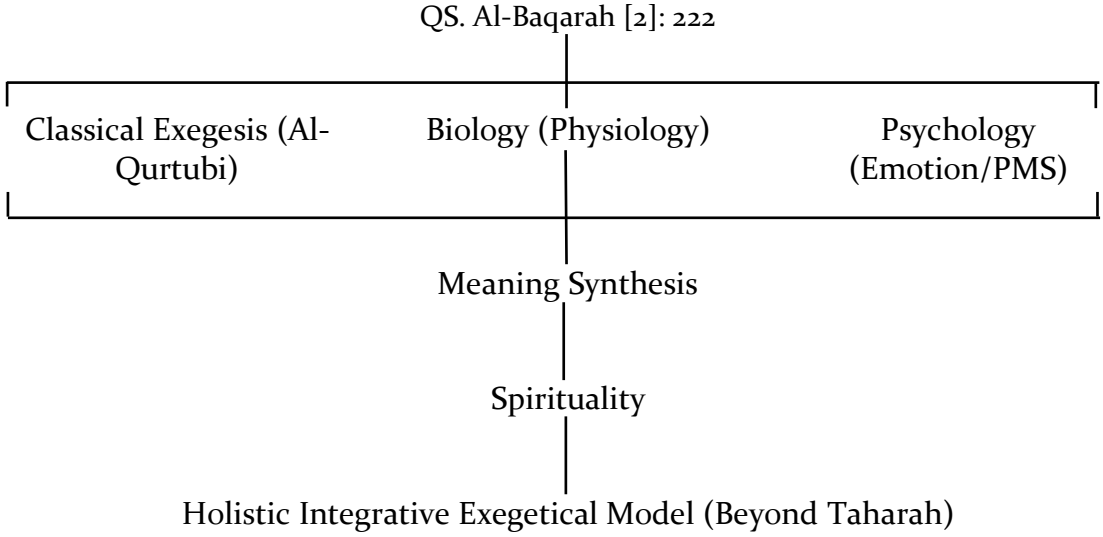
Based on this, the study formulates an integrative interpretative model as its primary novelty. This model proceeds through four analytical stages: the Qur'anic text as the normative foundation, classical exegesis as the initial authority, dialogue with biological and psychological sciences as an expansion of meaning, and spiritual

synthesis as the final interpretative framework. This trajectory does not negate classical exegesis but positions it within a dialectical process that allows for semantic enrichment in line with scientific development.

Theoretically, this approach contributes to the expansion of Qur'anic exegetical paradigms, shifting from a predominantly normative-legal orientation towards a multidisciplinary integrative model. Exegesis is no longer understood as a static final product, but as a dynamic process open to dialogue with various fields of knowledge. This simultaneously affirms the Qur'anic text's capacity to be continually recontextualised within different scientific frameworks (Sabilla, 2022).

The contemporary relevance of this approach lies in its ability to offer a more humane and comprehensive understanding of menstruation. Menstruation is no longer positioned as a condition that limits women's religious roles, but as a recognised and valued biological and existential experience (Sholikhah, 2025). Thus, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 may be understood as a text that not only regulates, but also protects, acknowledges, and humanises women's bodily experiences in a holistic manner.

Figure 1 Integrative Exegetical Model



Implications and Contributions of the Study

The findings of this study carry methodological implications for Qur'anic studies, particularly in encouraging a shift from a predominantly normative approach towards an integrative one. Exegesis is no longer positioned merely as legal explanation, but as an interpretative process open to dialogue with scientific knowledge (Afifah et al., 2025). This approach strengthens the position of tafsir as a dynamic discipline, while demonstrating that the Qur'anic text can be read contextually without losing its authority.

Within Islamic gender studies, this research offers a more balanced perspective on women's bodily experience. Menstruation is not understood as a condition defining inferiority or religious restriction, but as a biological phenomenon acknowledged within the framework of revelation. This contributes to efforts to deconstruct interpretative biases that tend to position women in subordinate roles,

while opening space for a more equitable and empirically grounded reading (Nurrohim, 2024).

In the field of religious education, the findings provide a conceptual basis for developing more contextual and relevant teaching materials. Understanding menstruation is not limited to legal rulings, but also includes dimensions of health, psychology, and spirituality. Such an approach has the potential to foster more comprehensive thinking patterns and prevent the reduction of religious teachings to mere formal rules without deeper meaning.

Conceptually, this study addresses the identified research gap, namely the absence of research integrating biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions in the analysis of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222. More importantly, it proposes an integrative exegetical model as its main contribution, which may serve as an analytical framework for other Qur'anic verses related to human experience. This model affirms that the integration of knowledge is not merely complementary, but an epistemological necessity in understanding religious texts in a holistic manner.

CONCLUSION

QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 222 does not only contain normative dimensions related to taharah, but also a broader and multidimensional semantic structure. Linguistic analysis shows that key terms such as *adha*, *fa'tazilu*, and the distinction between *yathurna* and *yatatahharn* open interpretative space beyond legal aspects, encompassing biological conditions and lived human experience. Classical exegesis, particularly al-Qurtubi, provides a strong normative foundation in legal formulation, yet tends to focus on jurisprudential aspects, thereby not fully accommodating the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of menstrual experience.

The integrative approach demonstrates that menstruation may be understood as a complex physiological phenomenon, a dynamic psychological experience, and a reflective phase within spirituality. The injunctions in the verse are not purely legal, but also contain biological rationality, psychological sensitivity, and profound spiritual meaning. Thus, the integrative exegetical model that connects the Qur'anic text, classical interpretation, and modern scientific knowledge offers a more comprehensive, contextual, and humanistic understanding of women's bodily experience.

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