

Perspective of Muslims on Kidney Transplantation in Indonesia: A Narrative Review

Maruhum Bonar Hasiholan Marbun^{1*}, Jesslyn Mellenia¹, R. Mohamad Javier¹, Dina Elita¹, Nur Rasyid², Pringgodigdo Nugroho¹

¹Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Indonesia - Dr. Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital, Jakarta, Indonesia.

² Department of Urology, Faculty of Medicine Universitas Indonesia - Dr. Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital, Jakarta, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author:

Maruhum Bonar Hasiholan Marbun, MD., PhD. Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Indonesia – Dr. Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital. Jl. Diponegoro no. 71, Jakarta 10430, Indonesia. Email: mbhmarbun@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

The prevalence of end-stage renal disease patients in Indonesia is predicted to increase by the end of 2025. Kidney transplantation is the preferred treatment for end-stage renal disease, and the demand for kidney transplants is steadily increasing globally, including in Indonesia. However, organ transplantation and donation are debatable issues in the medical field, particularly when considered in conjunction with religious views. The Qur'an and Hadith do not directly discuss transplantation in Islam, prompting several interpretations and fatwas. Diverse ideologies, cultures, and beliefs also result in prospective differences. To address these differences, fatwas regarding the permissible conditions for transplantation have been issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of Muslims and Islamic law on kidney transplantation in Indonesia. The study also includes comparative studies of Muslim perspectives from different countries. The findings provide an overview of Islamic law, the perspectives of religious scholars, and the perspectives of Muslims residing in Indonesia, as well as in other countries.

Keywords: kidney transplantation; Muslim perspective; Islamic law; Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The incidence of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in Indonesia is increasing annually.¹ Data from the Social Security Agency on Health, also referred to as *Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial Kesehatan*, indicates the incidence of roughly 736,000 cases of ESRD in 2020. The number of cases has been increasing at an average rate of 12.76% and was predicted to reach 1.3 million cases by 2025. However, these findings may underestimate the actual prevalence of ESRD in Indonesia.² The progression of Chronic Kidney Disease to advanced stages continues to be a significant cause of reduced quality of life

and increased mortality.³ Kidney transplantation is performed to enhance the quality of life and prolong survival for patients suffering from ESRD,⁴ and remains the treatment of choice due to its superior outcomes.¹ Compared to patients with ESRD who remain on dialysis, those receiving a kidney transplant have better long-term survival outcomes.⁴ The demand for kidney transplantation is steadily increasing worldwide, including in Indonesia.⁵

Organ transplantation and donation in Indonesia remain topics of discussion in medical science since they are intertwined with religious aspects.⁶ The religious diversity in Indonesia

has led to the development of a rich and varied cultural perspective. The six religions formally recognized by the Indonesian government are Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Catholicism. Approximately 87% of the Indonesian population is Muslim, making Indonesia a country with the largest Muslim population globally.⁷ Over time, organ transplantation and donation are issues that have elicited growing interest from various religious communities, given their significant connection with social and religious concerns within society.⁶

Organ transplantation faces various challenges in Indonesia and is a sensitive topic of discussion among several parties in the medical field and in religious circles. The varying ideologies, cultures, and beliefs are responsible for the differences in perspectives. Issues such as organ rejection, post-transplant complications, and potential risks associated with transplantation give rise to questions regarding the ethics, legality, and policies about transplantation.⁵ In Indonesia, organ transplantation is explicitly regulated by the Health Law (*UU Kesehatan*) and its implementation is governed by government regulations (*Peraturan Pemerintah*); however, the issue remains subject to ongoing review by various religious institutions. The practice of organ transplantation is regularly assessed by the Islamic organizations, which also issue fatwas that are continuously updated. These fatwas address various aspects associated with organ transplants, from the mechanisms involved in the permissibility of organ donation practices.⁶

In practice, the issue of transplantation evokes both support as well as opposition. Debates associated with transplantation are often shaped by religious beliefs and principles.⁶ According to a study by Ika Herani⁸, cultural and religious beliefs act as significant barriers and render most of the population reluctant to accept organ transplantation and donation.⁸ All advancements are not supported by religious beliefs. As a result, it is necessary to explore the relevant verses that address this matter.⁹ Transplantations are significant for patients,

and considering the existing differences in opinion, provision of a more comprehensive understanding to the Muslim community regarding the legal and ethical aspects of organ transplantation in Islam is needed. This study aims to assess the perspective of Muslims in Indonesia and the Islamic legal perspectives concerning kidney transplantation.

RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSPLANTATION

Organ transplantation for ESRD is a medical-surgical procedure that involves laparoscopic and open surgery approaches. Patients suffering from ESRD will have a better long-term prognosis after transplantation compared with dialysis.⁴ Currently, a wide range of organs and tissues, including the kidney, can be successfully transplanted.¹⁰ Kidney transplantation extends and enhances the lives of individuals with ESRD.⁴

In the Islamic religion, the issue of transplantation is implicitly addressed in the Qur'an or Hadith. The Qur'an consists of Shari'ah (law in Islam). In Islam, importance is given to the sanctity of life, and it is held in the highest regard. However, regardless of religion, the life of an individual must be protected. The Q.S. Al-Maiyah: 32, which states that saving a life is equivalent to saving all humanity, implicitly conveys this principle. Organ transplantation and donation for saving another person's life align with the teachings of Islam. For instance, a kidney transplant can save the life of a person suffering from kidney failure, and that person will be at risk of death without this medical intervention. Therefore, kidney transplantation is a crucial social responsibility of every Muslim and serves as an expression of their duty to protect and save the lives of others.¹⁰

For Muslim individuals, the simple principle of doing good to others (altruism), under the guidance of religious teachings, serves as the reference point for their actions.⁶ Donating an organ to someone with a damaged organ is regarded as an act of altruism and compassion that deserves a significant reward both in this life and the Hereafter from the Almighty.

However, due to the wide variations in the interpretations and fatwas (nonbinding rulings by recognized authorities), there exists a lack of a unified stance on the issue.¹⁰

According to Islam, disease is not a result of an act of demons or evil spirits, but rather it is a natural phenomenon. It is also not an act of punishment from God or any celestial being. Rather, it is regarded as a form of tribulation that serves to expiate the sins of humans. Individuals who endure these hardships with patience and dignity are rewarded both in this life and in the Hereafter. Nevertheless, individuals are encouraged to seek remedies for their illnesses.¹¹

According to a narration by Usamah bin Sharik, Prophet Muhammad once mentioned in an Islamic hadith, "make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, except for one disease, namely old age." According to this hadith, a cure has been created and provided by God for every disease. Transplantation can be considered a contemporary treatment for a diseased or failing organ. Muslims are encouraged by the Islamic teachings to seek cures for their diseases and trust God to decide the outcome. The body's function can be restored by transplanting a healthy organ to replace a failing one. The Muslim population is a responsible one and is encouraged to seek suitable medical remedies, such as transplantation, to manage their health difficulties, instead of taking a fatalistic stance.¹⁰

Muslims strongly believe that God is both the creator and the sustainer of human life. They also believe in the profound connection between the self and the body. Life and death are solely in the hands of the creator, and no individual or authority is entitled to take a human life. Human life and body are considered sacred in Islam, despite the body being diseased. Islamic teachings emphasize that the lives and bodies of humans belong to God. This belief is the backbone of Islam's ban on suicide and euthanasia. Selling human organs, irrespective of whether they are from living or deceased individuals, is prohibited.^{10,11}

In situations of emergencies, Islam permits

the use of human organs from a deceased donor for medical treatment. Transplantation can be performed if prior consent was obtained from the donor before death or if permission was posthumously obtained from the donor's heirs. Legally and medically, Islam permits the use of organs from a deceased person to save the life of another person, if all therapeutic options have been exhausted and the patient continues to experience a life-threatening emergency that cannot be treated without a transplant. This is supported by the Fiqhiyyah principle: "Necessity permits what is otherwise prohibited."^{12,13}

However, in situations involving the need to consider an Islamic principle (*kaidah*) that states that danger should not be removed with another danger needs to be considered. When making any decision, potential consequences such as risks for the donor need to be considered. Even if the act of kidney transplantation is performed with a noble intention, the donor can later face the risk of kidney failure, which is considered a potential harm for the living donor. This principle highlights that Islam forbids counteracting one danger by creating another potential danger. A person donating an organ while in good health can be considered an effort to prevent harm, but it carries the risk of causing a new danger.⁶

Under certain conditions (*muqayyad*), transplantation from living and deceased donors is allowed in Islam. In situations in which the recipient is in urgent need of a kidney, living donor kidney transplantation is deemed permissible. The Second National Symposium on "Organ Transplantation," which was signed by the organizations of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian Ulema Council (also known as *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*), has supported this stance. They affirmed the permissibility of organ transplantation in emergencies to save another person's life.¹²

INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Multiple authorities, including religious scholars (ulama), are generally involved in the decisions in Islam. Contemporary Muslim scholars address the issue after engaging in an *ijtihad* (independent scholarly reasoning). Hence,

there are possibilities of multiple *ijtihad*s.¹⁰ In Islamic legal terminology, *Ijtihad* indicates the process of deriving religious rulings from the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions, which are the primary sources of Islam. In short, *Ijtihad* represents the act of independent reasoning applied to matters of Fiqh.¹¹

Religious scholars around the world differ in their opinions regarding the legality of transplantation. Dr. 'Abd al-Salam al-Syukri from Egypt and Mufti Muhammad Sayfi'i from Pakistan argue that transplantation cannot be permitted, based on principles and considerations like the sanctity of life (human body), the body as a trust, treating the human body as a material object, and preserving human dignity.¹²

Conversely, Yusuf al-Qardhawi from Egypt has stated that transplantation is permissible under certain circumstances (*muqayyad*).^{11,12} Qardhawi has supported organ transplantation from living donors. He has opined that although the body is a trust from Allah, humans have the authority to use and benefit from it, and has compared organ donation with donating wealth. Other scholars, such as Quraisy Shihab from Indonesia, have also spoken in favor of transplantation, stating that the welfare (*maṣlahat*) of the living must be prioritized. K.H. 'Alī Yafie from Indonesia agreed with this view and cited a *shul fiqh* principle that has supported the permissibility of transplantation: "*hurmatul hayyim a'dhamu min humatin mayyiti*" (the sanctity of the living is greater than that of the deceased). Additionally, Abdul Qadim Zallum from Pakistan has asserted that an individual can donate part of their organs while alive, if it is done voluntarily and without using any form of coercion.^{5,14}

Advancements in science could be related to religious teachings in daily life. Religious scholars attempt to align themselves with the civilization that influences them. This reflects how the Muslim community addresses contemporary issues through fatwas. Scholars strive to analyze and engage with modern life while remaining faithful to religious principles. Being one of the largest Muslim-majority countries in the world, religious principles are deeply embedded in the lives of Indonesians. One example of this is the practice of transplantation.⁶

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON KIDNEY TRANSPLANTATION

Several people in Nigeria are willing to become living donors without coercion. However, this issue has led to differing opinions among Muslim scholars and researchers, who have been divided into two groups: one supporting its permissibility and the other considering it illegal, since organ transplantation is subject to *ijtihad*. In addition, several cultural and religious challenges are associated with transplantation from a deceased donor. Several Nigerian families refuse autopsies and the removal of organs from deceased family members. Furthermore, deceased organ donation is largely unfeasible in Nigeria, considering the country's underdeveloped economy, coupled with insufficient intensive care and organ support facilities for deceased donors.¹⁵

A study by Brand S. *et al*¹⁶ involving Muslims from South Asian ethnicity inhabiting the East Midlands region of the United Kingdom indicates that certain communities exhibit a greater complexity of information and decision-making regarding living donor kidney transplantation (LDKT). Specific cultural and religious norms make the decision-making process even more challenging.¹⁶

The decision regarding transplantation was more difficult for Muslims, since illness was often perceived as a test from God. This perspective caused some individuals to view transplantation as something conflicting with God's will, which made LDKT unacceptable. However, there was a difference of opinion with regard to this perspective. Some other Muslim individuals opined that organ donation and transplantation were not considered harmful in Islam. Attitudes and opinions about organ donation in the Muslim community are influenced by various factors, including sect affiliation, culture, and the interpretation of leaders' guidance. In addition, several recipients were hesitant to accept a kidney from a living donor due to concerns regarding the donor's condition following transplantation.¹⁶

PERSPECTIVES OF MUSLIMS IN INDONESIA

The permissibility and ethics of transplantation remain an enigma among Muslims in Indonesia.

Islamic organizations have already issued fatwas; however, society has not fully accepted the concept of transplantation. The ongoing divide in public perception makes the matter more challenging, as not all members of the Muslim community have fully embraced the practice. Some Muslim individuals are passive, some actively engage, and some outright reject it due to ethical concerns. One of the underlying reasons is that organ donation is not entirely relevant to the cultural context of Indonesian society and is coupled with the continued misconceptions and varying interpretations of religious texts.⁶

Some Muslims have a narrow attitude and are often influenced by religious beliefs. A large portion of the Muslim community is frequently confronted with contradictions in their religious convictions. Reactions leaning toward fundamentalism, where individuals generally reject anything associated with modernity, emerge within the Muslim community. These differences in the interpretation of faith eventually make transplantation and donation taboos.⁶ In addition to religion, factors that influence decision-making in transplantation include previously available information, education level, and culture. In Indonesia, the perspectives of family members often influence decision-making.⁸

In 2019, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued three fatwas regarding transplantation for the recipient, living donor, and deceased donor. According to Fatwa No. 11 of 2019, organ and/or tissue transplantation from a living donor for oneself is permitted under the following conditions:¹⁷

- A valid need exists, that is permitted in accordance with syar'i (for treatment)⁵, whether at the level of al-hajah (necessity) or ad-dlarurah (extreme necessity or dangerous).
- It is safe for the individual's health.
- The transplantation is carried out by a competent and credible professional.

Transplantation is not allowed if the only purpose is tahsiniyat (cosmetic or nonessential reasons).¹⁷

According to Fatwa No. 12 of 2019, organ and/or tissue transplantation from a deceased donor is permitted under the following

conditions:¹³

- There exists an urgent need that is permitted in accordance with syar'i (*dlarurah syar'iah*).
- Other than transplantation, no other medical alternatives are available to treat the condition.
- The act is based on altruism (*tabarru'*) and is not solely for commercial purposes.
- An expert opinion based on strong evidence (*ghalabatil zhonn*) predicting the likely success of the organ transplantation for the recipient exists.
- A competent and credible professional performs the transplantation.
- Family and/or government consent for the procedure is obtained.
- The state organizes and supervises the transplantation process.

According to Fatwa No. 13 of 2019, organ and/or tissue transplantation from a living donor for others is permitted under the following conditions:¹⁸

- An urgent need exists that is permitted in accordance with syar'i (*Dharurah Syariah*).
- The removal of the organ and/or tissue, whether partial or total, shall not cause any harm to the donor.
- The type of organ being transplanted is not a vital organ that affects the donor's life or survival.
- Other than transplantation, there are no other medical alternatives available to treat the condition.
- The act is based on altruism (*tabarru'*) and is not for commercial purposes.
- Consent is obtained from the potential donor.
- There is a recommendation from healthcare professionals or qualified experts to ensure the safety and health of the transplantation process.
- There is an expert opinion based on strong evidence (*Ghalabatil Zhonn*) predicting the likely success of the organ transplantation for the recipient.

Table 1. Summary of Muslim's Perspective on Kidney Transplant

Aspect	Pros (Supportive Perspective)	Neutral/Conditional Perspective	Cons (Restrictive Perspective)
Religious Rulings (Fatwa)	MUI (Indonesian Ulama Council) allows organ donation under certain conditions.	Acceptability depends on scholarly consensus and local fatwa endorsement.	Some scholars still debate the permissibility, especially regarding deceased donors.
Saving Life	Considered a noble act that fulfills the goal of preserving life.	Permissible only when no alternative treatment is available.	Some argue that altering the human body after death may conflict with respecting the deceased.
Donor Consent	Living donations with informed, voluntary consent are ethically acceptable.	Requires a thorough assessment to ensure no coercion.	Coercion, unclear intention, or financial incentive are unethical in Islam.
Deceased Donation	Permissible if prior consent was given and the donor met ethical criteria.	Acceptable if family agrees and procedures align with Islamic burial guidelines.	Objections arise when family consent is missing.
Body Integrity	Islam allows medical intervention to promote health and survival.	Limited disfigurement may be tolerated if life-saving, otherwise it should be minimized.	Some interpret preserving body integrity after death as a religious obligation.
Cultural Interpretation	Fatwas by MUI have improved acceptance in some communities.	Acceptance varies by region, and local religious leaders' interpretations can influence opinion.	Strong cultural or ethnic traditions may oppose any form of organ removal.

- A competent and credible professional performs the transplantation.
- The state organizes and supervises the transplantation process.

The reproductive organs, genital organs, and the brain are not included in the Organ and/or tissue transplantation, as mentioned above. Selling of organs and/or tissues to others is prohibited, because these body parts are not considered personal property (*haqqul milki*). Transplantation of organs and/or tissues without a legitimate reason supported by syar'i is considered haram (forbidden).^{13,18}

CONCLUSION

There are various interpretations and differing opinions with regards to kidney transplantation among religious scholars and Muslims. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) has issued fatwas that permit kidney transplantation under specific conditions in accordance with Islamic law. However, opinions within the Muslim community in Indonesia remain diverse and challenging. These challenges have been influenced by the information regarding transplantation, educational levels, and cultural factors. Muslims

in other countries also have diverse perspectives regarding transplantation. Overall, kidney transplantation in Indonesia is considered permissible if it adheres to the conditions stipulated by Islamic law or principles.

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

FUNDING

This research was conducted without external funding.

REFERENCES

1. Supit T, Nugroho EA, Santosa A et al. Kidney transplantation in Indonesia: An update. *Asian J Urol*. 2019 Oct;6(4):305-311.
2. Nurtandhee M. Estimasi biaya pelayanan kesehatan sebagai upaya pencegahan defisit dana jaminan sosial untuk penyakit gagal ginjal. *JJKN*. 2023;3(2):84– 101.
3. Hashmi MF, Benjamin O, Lappin SL. End-stage renal disease. In: StatPearls. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2024.
4. Abramyan S, Hanlon M. Kidney transplantation. In: StatPearls. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2024.
5. Saifullah. Transplantasi organ tubuh (Perspektif Hukum

- Islam, Hukum Positif dan Etika Kedokteran). Al-Murshalah. 2016;2(1):1-12.
6. Mahyuddin M, Halim A, Iskandar I. Altruisme Islam, transplantasi dan donasi organ: Pergumulan agama dalam wacana dan praktiknya di Indonesia. Pusaka. 2021;9(1):1–18.
7. Hutabarat F. Navigating diversity: Exploring religious pluralism and social Harmony in Indonesian society. *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy*. 2023;3(6):6–13.
8. Herani I. Organ donation? Why not: Keputusan untuk mendonorkan organ tubuh (studi pada living donor). *Psikovidya*. 2017 Dec 29;21(2).
9. Islam T. Organ donation in Islam: A search for a broader Quranic perspective. *Religions (Basel)*. 2021;12(8):647.
10. Ali JA. Islamic perspectives on organ transplantation: A continuous debate. *Religions (Basel)*. 2021;12(8):576.
11. Amin F. Applicability of Islamic methodology concerning novel issues to organ transplantation in religious scholars' contemporary discourse. *Religions (Basel)*. 2021;12(9):670.
12. Jamali LL. Transplantasi organ tubuh manusia perspektif al-Qur'an. *Diyaafkar*. 2019;7(01):124-126.
13. Indonesian Ulema Council Commission (MUI). Fatwa on organ and/or tissue transplantation from deceased donors for others. Fatwa No. 12 of 2019. Jakarta: Indonesian Ulema Council; 2019. [Cited January 9, 2025]. <https://mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/transplantasi-organ-dan-atau-aringan-tubuh-dari-pendonor-mati-untuk-orang-lain>
14. Rouf A. Hizbut Tahrir: pemikiran dan pergerakan sosial-politik di Indonesia. *Konstelasi Ilmiah Mahasiswa Unissula (KIMU)* 7. Universitas Islam Sultan Agung; 2022 Jan 19. p. 175-189.
15. Bakari AA, Abbo Jimeta US, Abubakar MA, et al. Organ transplantation: legal, ethical, and Islamic perspectives in Nigeria. *Niger J Surg*. 2012 Jul;18(2):53-60.
16. Brand S, Daga S, Mistry K, et al. Sikh and Muslim perspectives on kidney transplantation: phase 1 of the DiGiT project—a qualitative descriptive study. *BMJ Open* 2023;13:e059668.
17. Indonesian Ulema Council Commission (MUI). Fatwa on organ and/or tissue transplantation from deceased donors for oneself. Fatwa No. 11 of 2019. Jakarta: Indonesian Ulema Council; 2019. [Cited January 9, 2025]. <https://mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/transplantasi-organ-dan-atau-jaringan-tubuh-untuk-diri-sendiri>
18. Indonesian Ulema Council Commission (MUI). Fatwa on organ and/or tissue transplantation from living donors for others. Fatwa No. 13 of 2019. Jakarta: Indonesian Ulema Council; 2019. [Cited January 9, 2025]. <https://mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/transplantasi-organ-dan-atau-jaringan-tubuh-dari-pendonor-hidup-untuk-orang-lain>