



MITIGATING EMERGENCY RISKS IN SUNNAH CUPPING THROUGH MEDICAL AND SHARIA INTEGRATION

MITIGASI RISIKO KEGAWATDARURATAN DALAM BEKAM SUNNAH MELALUI INTEGRASI MEDIS DAN SYARIAH

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Abstract

Sunnah cupping therapy is a traditional Islamic health practice increasingly embraced for its spiritual and therapeutic benefits. However, its widespread use, especially by uncertified practitioners, raises serious concerns about patient safety and emergency risks. This study aims to identify key systemic risk factors of medical emergencies related to sunnah cupping and propose an integrative framework combining Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) with modern clinical standards. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed journals, clinical reports, Islamic texts, and contemporary fatwas. Thematic analysis revealed five major risk categories: lack of medical screening, unlicensed practitioners, hidden comorbidities, absence of emergency protocols, and poor understanding of medical safety. Reported complications included hypovolemic shock, infections, and prolonged wound healing—especially in patients with undiagnosed diabetes or coagulation disorders. The study also found that public misconceptions equating religious merit with clinical safety further worsen these risks. The research highlights the urgent need for standardized medical and sharia-based training, certification systems, and public education. Collaboration among healthcare professionals, Islamic scholars, and educational institutions is essential to establish a safe, accountable, and spiritually valid model of sunnah cupping. Integrating medical protocols with fiqh compliance can significantly reduce emergency incidents, enhance practitioner competency, and preserve the prophetic nature of the practice within a modern health framework. These findings offer a strategic path for safer implementation of prophetic medicine across Muslim communities.



Keywords : risk mitigation, emergency response, sunnah cupping, medical, sharia, practitioner certification

Abstrak

Terapi bekam sunnah merupakan praktik kesehatan tradisional Islam yang semakin populer karena diyakini memiliki manfaat spiritual dan terapeutik. Namun, penggunaannya yang meluas, terutama oleh praktisi tanpa sertifikasi medis, menimbulkan kekhawatiran serius terkait keselamatan pasien dan risiko kegawatdaruratan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi faktor risiko sistemik dalam praktik bekam sunnah serta menawarkan kerangka integratif berbasis fiqh dan protokol medis modern. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui studi pustaka sistematis terhadap jurnal ilmiah, laporan klinis, literatur Islam, dan fatwa kontemporer. Analisis tematik mengungkap lima kategori risiko utama: tidak adanya skrining medis, praktisi tanpa izin, komorbiditas tersembunyi, ketiadaan protokol kegawatdaruratan, serta rendahnya pemahaman terhadap keselamatan medis. Komplikasi yang dilaporkan mencakup syok hipovolemik, infeksi, dan penyembuhan luka yang lambat, terutama pada pasien dengan diabetes atau gangguan pembekuan darah yang tidak terdeteksi. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa anggapan masyarakat bahwa nilai ibadah menjamin keamanan klinis memperburuk risiko yang ada. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya pelatihan bersertifikat yang menggabungkan standar medis dan kepatuhan syariah, serta perlunya edukasi publik. Kolaborasi antara tenaga medis, ulama, dan institusi pendidikan diperlukan untuk mewujudkan praktik bekam sunnah yang aman, sahih, dan bertanggung jawab. Integrasi protokol medis dengan prinsip fiqh diyakini dapat menurunkan risiko kegawatdaruratan secara signifikan dan memperkuat legitimasi pengobatan nabawi di era modern.

Kata Kunci : mitigasi risiko, kegawatdaruratan, bekam sunnah, medis, syariah, sertifikasi praktisi

1. INTRODUCTION

Sunnah cupping therapy (also known as hijama) is a significant practice in traditional Islamic medicine rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The procedure involves making small incisions on the surface of the skin to extract what is considered "dirty blood" and is typically performed on specific days in the Hijri calendar, such as Mondays, Thursdays, and the odd dates in the middle of the lunar month (17th, 19th, and 21st). Sunnah cupping is not only regarded as a form of physical therapy but also carries spiritual dimensions that reinforce its cultural acceptance among Muslim communities (El-Olemy et al., 2017; Alrawi et al., 2017; Al-Yousef et al., 2018). In recent years, the practice has gained popularity as part of a healthy lifestyle that integrates traditional values and religious beliefs with modern health consciousness (Khalil et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, there remain serious concerns regarding the lack of standardization in sunnah cupping practices and the professional qualifications of its practitioners. Many hijama practitioners lack formal medical training, posing risks of complications such as infection, uncontrolled bleeding, and vasovagal reactions, particularly in patients with undiagnosed comorbidities (Mehta & Dhapte, 2015; Alam, 2021). Research has shown that such complications are more common when cupping is performed by uncertified individuals who



do not adhere to proper sterilization protocols (Alrawi et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019). The absence of regulatory oversight and clinical protocols exacerbates these risks and may undermine the spiritual value of hijama itself.

Another factor affecting the safety of this practice is the limited awareness among patients regarding complementary and alternative medicine, including sunnah cupping. Many patients hesitate to disclose their use of such therapies to medical professionals for fear of stigma or rejection (Khalil et al., 2018). This highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive educational approach to bridge traditional practices with modern medical standards, while preserving the spiritual essence they embody. Medical training for practitioners, strict regulatory frameworks, and public health campaigns could serve as effective solutions to enhance the safety and efficacy of this practice (Shahrajabian et al., 2019; Mahmudah & Muhammad, 2022).

Considering the importance of integrating sharia values with contemporary medical principles, this study aims to critically analyze the risk factors that may trigger medical emergencies in sunnah cupping practices. This article also seeks to offer scholarly contributions toward the development of a cupping model that is spiritually sound, medically responsible, and aligned with Islamic law.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach based on a systematic literature review with a thematic framework to analyze sunnah cupping practices, associated medical risks, and the integration of Islamic values with modern health principles. The study was conducted from February to April 2025, utilizing data drawn from peer-reviewed medical journals published between 2015 and 2025, along with authenticated hadiths and contemporary fatwas.

Data collection was carried out through a systematic search using keywords such as sunnah cupping, hijama complications, and Islamic medical ethics across databases including Scopus, PubMed and Google Scholar. Thematic analysis followed the coding method developed by Braun & Clarke (2019), comprising three stages: theme identification, subtheme categorization, and findings confirmation (Kuckartz, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017).

Additionally, media reports and clinical documentation were reviewed as case studies to illustrate actual medical complications resulting from improperly conducted cupping procedures (Mlakar-Mastnak et al., 2022; Wood & Alsawy, 2017). All data were synthesized to formulate recommendations for developing safety standards in sunnah cupping practices, grounded in both medical evidence and Islamic law (Sundler et al., 2019; Yasti et al., 2024).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lack of Medical Screening in Sunnah Cupping Practices

One of the increasingly recognized risks in sunnah cupping therapy, particularly when performed by non-medically trained practitioners, is the absence of medical screening to assess a patient's health status. This negligence can trigger severe physiological reactions such as hypovolemic shock, excessive bleeding, and infections caused by open wounds. Several reported cases indicate that the lack of preliminary health assessments significantly contributes to serious complications, such as volume depletion shock during procedures conducted without knowledge of the patient's medical history (Amiruddin et al., 2022; Said et al., 2023).



Hypovolemic shock is characterized by a drastic reduction in circulating blood volume, leading to poor tissue perfusion and organ dysfunction. Studies show that undiagnosed hypertension or other comorbidities can significantly increase the risk of complications during cupping procedures (Holler et al., 2019; Krishnan & Parameswaran, 2019). Further findings reveal that many patients undergoing cupping without prior health checks often have underlying conditions that elevate procedural risks (Sutriyono et al., 2019). This reinforces the urgent need to integrate medical evaluation into every sunnah cupping procedure.

The issue is exacerbated by common public misconceptions that sunnah cupping is inherently safe due to its religious origins. Clinically, however, initial screenings—such as blood pressure checks and medical history reviews—are critical in preventing serious outcomes (Pradhan et al., 2022; Lauridsen et al., 2015). Lack of awareness regarding the necessary medical principles accompanying the procedure often leads to inadequate preparation and worsens patient conditions during treatment (Aslamzai et al., 2024; AlBedah et al., 2019).

Therefore, integrating formal medical training and certification for sunnah cupping practitioners is an urgent necessity. Research confirms that negligence in clinical assessment is a primary cause of cupping-related complications, especially when carried out by non-medical personnel (Escobar et al., 2017; Khanna et al., 2024). Public education campaigns correcting misconceptions about the safety of sunnah cupping and emphasizing the importance of medical evaluation should be prioritized. Bridging Islamic values with evidence-based medical practice ensures the therapeutic benefits of hijama are achieved without compromising patient safety (Ali et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the importance of medical screening prior to sunnah cupping is reinforced by scientific findings and documented cases highlighting the dangers of neglecting this aspect. Comprehensive practitioner training and public education are essential in minimizing risk and establishing a practice that is both medically sound and religiously valid..

Uncertified Sunnah Cupping Practitioners

The practice of sunnah cupping therapy (hijama) raises significant concerns, particularly regarding the qualifications and certification of its practitioners. A considerable number of hijama practitioners come from non-medical backgrounds, including religious figures or self-taught individuals, lacking formal education or training in essential areas such as human anatomy and safe clinical procedures (El-Olemy et al., 2017). The absence of professional training increases the likelihood of procedural errors, improper techniques, and inadequate preparedness to manage potential medical complications during treatment.

The risks associated with uncertified practitioners are substantial. AlBedah et al. (2019) found that patients treated by non-certified hijama practitioners exhibited higher rates of local infections and wound complications compared to those treated in medical facilities. Additional studies show that lack of basic medical knowledge significantly raises the probability of technical errors, directly impacting patient safety (Daneshfard et al., 2025).

A key factor exacerbating these risks is the absence of standard medical equipment and emergency protocols in traditional practice settings. Many practitioners do not use sterile antiseptics, medical gloves, or protective gear, all of which are critical for invasive procedures like cupping (Li et al., 2016). The misguided belief that spiritual authority or traditional experience is sufficient to perform medical procedures reflects a lack of awareness about the importance of safety and therapeutic efficacy (Cage, 2019).



Furthermore, serious complications such as neurological disorders and systemic infections often go undocumented, especially in regions reliant on unregulated traditional methods (Daneshfard et al., 2025). These realities underscore the urgent need for a clear and strict regulatory framework to oversee alternative medical practices, including sunnah cupping. Some countries have begun to formulate training and certification standards for complementary therapy practitioners, covering critical aspects such as sterilization techniques, basic anatomical knowledge, and first aid skills (El-Olemy et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the prevalence of uncertified sunnah cupping practitioners constitutes a major risk factor that must be urgently addressed. Policy interventions in the form of comprehensive regulation and structured training are essential to ensure that cupping therapy is not only spiritually valid but also medically safe. This step is foundational to achieving a harmonious integration between Islamic values and modern health standards.

Hidden Comorbidities in Sunnah Cupping Practices

Hidden comorbidities significantly impact the safety and effectiveness of sunnah cupping, especially among individuals with undiagnosed medical conditions such as diabetes mellitus, coagulopathies, and chronic cardiovascular diseases. These conditions notably increase the risk of complications both during and after the cupping procedure. Studies have shown that undiagnosed diabetes can impair wound healing and elevate vulnerability to serious post-procedural infections (Asghar et al., 2023). Documented cases report hijama wounds failing to heal properly, resulting in severe infections requiring further medical intervention.

Recent findings confirm that patients with uncontrolled diabetes are at higher risk of infection due to elevated blood glucose levels, which hinder tissue regeneration and promote bacterial colonization on skin wounds (Farida et al., 2024). Furthermore, patients with undetected clotting disorders may experience uncontrollable bleeding during the cupping procedure, potentially leading to fatal outcomes if not promptly addressed. Additional research indicates that metabolic syndrome in type 2 diabetes patients increases the risk of cardiovascular disease by up to threefold, reflecting a high burden of comorbidities often overlooked in traditional cupping settings (Asghar et al., 2023).

Lack of patient awareness regarding their own health conditions exacerbates this risk. Many individuals rely on anecdotal evidence or traditional beliefs about the benefits of sunnah cupping, without considering the hidden medical dangers involved (Mohammadi et al., 2019). The absence of educational programs that integrate medical safety principles with Islamic healing practices further contributes to ill-informed decision-making by both patients and practitioners.

To mitigate these risks, basic health evaluations are strongly recommended prior to treatment. Simple checks such as blood glucose and blood pressure measurements can help identify high-risk individuals. Moreover, training practitioners to recognize signs of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension is essential to reducing complication rates stemming from undetected comorbidities (Farida et al., 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the intersection of hidden comorbidities and sunnah cupping presents undeniable clinical risks. Comprehensive health assessments before treatment are imperative. Therefore, public education, practitioner training, and regulatory oversight must work in synergy to bridge Islamic values with modern medical principles, ensuring both the safety and spiritual integrity of the therapy.



Limited Understanding of Medical Protocols among Sunnah Cupping Practitioners

The growing popularity of sunnah cupping therapy has not been matched by an adequate understanding of basic medical protocols among its practitioners. This knowledge gap is particularly evident among those without a healthcare background, making them highly unprepared to manage medical emergencies such as severe bleeding, deep tissue injuries, or shock reactions. The absence of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for critical conditions further exacerbates these risks and highlights the urgent need for improved training and education for cupping therapists.

Studies have shown that cupping therapy conducted in home-based or semi-clinical settings typically relies on basic tools such as cupping knives and antiseptic cotton, without the support of emergency medical equipment. A study by Alsaad et al. (2017) assessing the emergency preparedness of primary care clinics in Dammam revealed that many traditional medical facilities lacked emergency supplies and medications, indicating a serious gap in alternative medicine's emergency readiness.

Furthermore, a systematic review by Alhamaid et al. (2024) found that emergency preparedness is highly correlated with clinical experience, meaning that many cupping practitioners without formal medical training lack the practical competence to manage critical conditions, thereby endangering patient safety. The unavailability of basic equipment such as oxygen tanks, IV fluids, and first aid kits results in an inability to intervene promptly when complications arise during the procedure.

Several studies, including those by Naserallallah et al. (2023) and Khan et al. (2015), have confirmed the link between the absence of medical protocols in non-conventional therapies and increased patient morbidity. In some cases, patients had to be referred in critical condition to hospitals due to the absence of appropriate equipment or SOPs at the cupping site (Alzahrani & Kyratsis, 2017).

Therefore, integrating a comprehensive understanding of medical protocols into the training curricula and certification programs for sunnah cupping practitioners is urgently needed. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that all forms of therapy, including traditional medicine, must meet safety, efficacy, and quality standards that incorporate risk mitigation strategies (Khan et al., 2019). Enhancing practitioner capacity in emergency care and ensuring the availability of emergency medical equipment are essential strategies to safeguard patients and prevent severe complications.

In conclusion, the lack of understanding of medical protocols in sunnah cupping practices presents a real threat to patient safety and therapeutic outcomes. Emergency training, clinical SOPs, and access to medical tools are critical foundations for establishing a practice that is not only religiously sound but also medically responsible and aligned with modern healthcare standards.

Sharia-Medical-Based Education and Standardization of Sunnah Cupping

The integration of sharia principles with modern medical standards in the practice of sunnah cupping (hijama) is crucial for ensuring patient safety while preserving the spiritual dimensions embedded in this traditional therapy. As a treatment rooted in Islamic tradition, sunnah cupping requires an educational framework that unites clinical training with ethical considerations grounded in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). This integration allows practitioners



to provide care aligned with patients' religious beliefs without compromising clinical safety and effectiveness (Isdianto, 2025a; Isdianto, 2025b).

Effective training programs for sunnah cupping practitioners should encompass two core components: technical competence and religious understanding. Practitioners must be equipped with basic medical skills such as human anatomy, sterilization techniques, and emergency response. Simultaneously, they must comprehend the fiqh aspects of cupping, including its recommended timing, patient etiquette, and Islamic legal boundaries. This dual approach not only enhances clinical capacity but also reinforces the religious legitimacy of the practice, thereby increasing public acceptance (Isdianto, 2025a; Isdianto, 2025b).

To establish this integrated training system, cross-sector collaboration is essential. Islamic scholars can develop contextually relevant religious guidelines aligned with maqāsid shariah, while healthcare professionals design technical curricula focused on patient safety. Educational institutions play a central role as facilitators of training and certification, ensuring that sunnah cupping practitioners are competent in both religious and scientific domains (Indriani & Patuti, 2024; Ningtyas et al., 2022).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also acknowledged the importance of integrating traditional medicine into modern healthcare systems and has emphasized the need for educational strategies that respect local cultural and religious contexts (Han et al., 2016; Murdani, 2022). Current trends show that the success of traditional therapies, including sunnah cupping, largely depends on educational frameworks that honor cultural roots while meeting modern medical safety standards (Myeong et al., 2015).

Although many testimonials highlight the benefits of sunnah cupping, such claims must be substantiated by rigorous scientific research. Recent studies have called for standardizing procedures in sunnah cupping practices, including the alignment of sanitary techniques and practitioner conduct with Islamic principles (Isdianto, 2025a; Isdianto, 2025b). This dual emphasis on patient safety and sharia compliance forms the foundation for modernizing the practice and securing its place within contemporary health services.

In conclusion, developing an educational and standardization system for sunnah cupping that integrates both sharia and modern medicine is a strategic response to present-day challenges. This initiative not only prioritizes patient safety but also safeguards the cultural and spiritual heritage of traditional practices, ensuring their relevance and acceptance in modern society.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that sunnah cupping therapy, when performed without adequate medical foundations and proper adherence to health protocols, presents significant clinical risks. Complications such as hypovolemic shock, infection, and uncontrolled bleeding are more likely to occur when the procedure is conducted by uncertified practitioners who lack medical training, fail to conduct initial screenings, and are unprepared for emergency situations. These risks are further amplified by undetected comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, and coagulation disorders, especially when no pre-procedural health assessment is carried out. The absence of standard operating procedures and emergency medical equipment remains a fundamental weakness in many traditional hijama settings.

On the other hand, the study affirms that integrating sharia principles with modern medical standards provides a strategic foundation to enhance both the safety and the religious



legitimacy of sunnah cupping. Training programs that combine Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) with biomedical competencies, supported by regulatory frameworks and public health education, are essential to building a responsible and standardized practice. Such integration ensures that hijama can continue to be practiced safely while preserving its spiritual essence.

This conclusion aligns with the research objective to identify emergency-related risk factors and propose mitigation strategies through an interdisciplinary lens. It also highlights the urgent need to establish national certification systems, develop standardized training curricula, and promote collaborative governance involving scholars, healthcare professionals, and educational institutions. By bridging Islamic values with evidence-based clinical practice, sunnah cupping can evolve into a prophetic medical therapy that is both spiritually authentic and medically accountable. Therefore, further empirical research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating medical protocols and Sharia principles in reducing emergency risks in sunnah cupping practices.

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