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## Physical Education in the Al Quran Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Physical education plays a crucial role in shaping human beings holistically, yet in formal educational practice it is often narrowly understood as merely physical activity without the integration of Islamic values. This study aims to examine the concept of physical education from the perspective of the Qur'an, its relationship to physical health and the quality of worship, and its contribution to shaping healthy, strong, and noble individuals. This study uses a qualitative approach of the literature study type with the tafsir mawḍū'ī method. Data were analyzed from Qur'anic verses, classical and contemporary tafsir literature, hadith, and the views of scholars. The research findings show that the Qur'an views the physical (jasad) and spiritual (rūh) dimensions as an inseparable whole. The term "quwwah" is redefined to encompass not only muscular strength but also the aspects of capability (qudrah), moral integrity (wara'), consistency (wajūl), and submission (tawakkul). The Qur'anic narrative about the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Thalut emphasizes that the ideal human quality is a combination of physical strength (al-qawiyy) and moral integrity (al-amīn). Quranic-based physical education plays a vital role in shaping individuals capable of optimally fulfilling the role of khalifah through maintaining health in line with the principles of maqāṣid al-syarā'ah, particularly hifz al-nafs (protecting the soul) for the perfection of worship. Thus, physical education is an integral component in realizing the ideals of insān kāmil.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Physical education is often viewed through a secular lens as a physical activity aimed solely at motor fitness, athletic achievement, or biological health (Aksir et al., 2024; Hasmyati et al., 2024). In modern educational narratives, the human body is treated as a machine whose function must be optimized. However, this perspective often ignores the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions underlying human existence. This is the point where the Quran emerges as a comprehensive guide (hudan) that not only regulates matters of the afterlife but also provides a philosophical foundation for bodily maintenance.

Historically, the integration of physical strength and spiritual intelligence was a hallmark of early Islamic civilization (Gholami, 2024; Solihah et al., 2025). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of sports such as archery, horse riding, and swimming (Charef & Benmaiza, 2025; Insaf & Ashath, 2024). However, over time, a dichotomy has emerged in contemporary Islamic education (Sahin, 2018): physical education is viewed as a secular supplement, while religious education is viewed as a static, cognitive-spiritual activity. The neglect of the physical dimension in theological discourse has created a gap in the formation of a perfect human being who is physically and mentally resilient.

The global health crisis, the rise of sedentary lifestyles, and mental degradation in the digital age demand a reconsideration of how we view the body (Cockerham, 2023; Singh et al., 2024). The Quran states that Allah bestows excellence upon a person through "Zadatan fil 'Ilmi wal Jismi" (broadness of knowledge and physique), as mentioned in the story of Thalut (Quran, Al-Baqarah: 247). This emphasizes that physical strength is not a separate entity but rather a prerequisite for leadership and devotion to God.

Physical education, from a Quranic perspective, transcends the concept of *mens sana in corpore sano* (Brownridge, 2025; Umar et al., 2023). In Islam, the body is a trust (*amanah*) for which accountability will be held (Shuhari et al., 2019). Physical exercise is not merely a means for aesthetics or narcissism, but rather a form of gratitude and preparation for optimal worship (Ellis & Weir, 2020; Greenwood & Delgado, 2013). Prayer, Hajj, and jihad require excellent physical endurance. Therefore, physical activity transforms from mere mechanical movement into a form of worship (*ghairu mahdah*).

Nevertheless, contemporary literature remains significantly deficient in examining the epistemology of physical education directly through Quranic principles. Most research stops at the level of practical hadiths on exercise without examining the ontological structure of the body within the Quranic text (Bakti et al., 2025; Benn et al., 2012; Mohammadi, 2025). There is an urgent need to formulate a physical education curriculum based on the values of monotheism, where every athletic movement is oriented towards strengthening the servant's connection with the Creator.

This article offers several novelties that distinguish it from previous studies on sports in Islam. Unlike general physical education research that focuses on physiological outcomes (He et al., 2023; Martin-Rodriguez et al., 2024; Tao et al., 2022; Wicks et al., 2022), this article establishes a new paradigm that the physical is a "spiritual vehicle." Its novelty lies in the shift in focus from physical achievement to spiritual resilience through physicality. This research specifically examines the terminology of "Quwwah" (strength) in the Quran. We do not simply refer to the power of war but reinterpret it in the context of preventive health and mental resilience for modern humans. This article introduces a Qur'anic-based concept of movement ethics, encompassing the principles of *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (proportionality), and purity of intention. This model is a new approach that integrates Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of worship with sports science. In the booming sports industry, which often takes advantage of the body and ignores private parts and times for worship, this article presents a model of "Shari'a

Physical Education" that is still competitive but stays within religious limits. The Quran describes human creation in various stages (athwara), highlighting the significance of this integration. The perfection of this creation demands balanced maintenance.

Physical education, from a Quranic perspective, must encompass three main pillars: the Quran encourages Muslims to possess strength. Strength here is holistic. In the context of physical education, this approach means developing the cardiovascular system, muscular strength, and flexibility, aimed at the benefit of the community. Unlike the Western view that views health as an individual right, the Quran views it as a moral obligation. Maintaining health through physical activity is part of the Maqasid Sharia (objectives of Sharia), namely Hifz an-Nafs (protecting the soul/life). Physical education in the Quran prevents humans from excessive behavior (israf). Exercise should balance time for physical health with time for spiritual obligations, avoiding both extremes of neglect and overcommitment.

Thus, the reconstruction of physical education from a Quranic perspective is not merely an attempt to "Islamize" sports science but rather a rediscovery of the roots of human nature. This article aims to fill the gap in academic literature connecting sacred texts with modern kinesiology practices. Through a qualitative-interpretive approach, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions for physical education educators in Islamic educational institutions, enabling them to produce a generation that is not only physically strong but also steadfast in faith.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach using library research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand, interpret, and construct the meaning of physical education based on the perspective of the Qur'an and relevant Islamic and educational sources. Library research was used because all research data is sourced from written texts, including verses of the Qur'an, commentaries, hadiths, and scientific literature discussing physical education, health, and the concept of humanity in Islam. With this design, the research does not focus on numerical measurements, but rather on in-depth analysis of the meaning and relevance of the concepts studied.



Figure 1. Library Research Design

The research design used is a conceptual-analytical study with a thematic interpretation approach (tafsir maudhu'i). In this design, verses of the Qur'an related to the physical, health, physical strength, life balance, and human activities are collected and analyzed systematically to develop a comprehensive concept of physical education. This approach is combined with studies of modern physical education theory and the thoughts of classical and contemporary scholars to obtain an integrative understanding of Qur'anic values and the concept of physical education. This research design allows for the development of a synthesis between Islamic normative sources and physical education practices in the context of formal education.

Data were collected by searching, reading, and reviewing primary and secondary sources relevant to the research focus. The primary sources in this study were the Qur'an and tafsir books, while secondary sources included books, scientific journals, proceedings, and previous research results related to physical education, health, and the concept of humanity in Islam. Data collection was conducted systematically by recording verses, opinions of scholars, and concepts of physical education related to the research objectives.

The development of research instruments was carried out in the form of document analysis guidelines. This instrument was compiled to assist researchers in identifying, classifying, and interpreting data obtained from various sources. The analysis guidelines cover several aspects, namely: (1) The meaning of physical education in the Qur'an; (2) The relationship between physical education and the Qur'an; and (3) The contribution of Qur'an-based physical education in the formation of healthy, strong, and noble human beings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

##### The Meaning of Physical Education in the Qur'an

Physical education can also be understood through the concept of *quwwah*, which is derived from the Arabic root (*qawiya–yaqwa–quwwah*), meaning strength or power (Shihab, 2007). In the *Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language* (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia/KBBI), *quwwah* or strength is defined as power, firmness, or solidity (Tim Redaksi, 2008). In the Qur'an, this word appears in various forms, both singular (*mufrad*) and plural (*jam'*), occurring 42 times across 25 surahs, consisting of 16 Makkan surahs and 9 Madinan surahs.

According to Ibn Faris, the word *quwwah* (قوة) denotes "hardness" or "strength" and is the antonym of *da'if* (ضعف), which means weakness. Al-Asfahani explains that the word *quwwah* (قوة) is sometimes used to mean "ability" or "capacity," such as the potential contained in a seed to grow into a tree. Al-Razi identifies four meanings of *quwwah*. First, it refers to types of weapons. Second, it is narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) interpreted *al-quwwah* (strength) as archery and the skill of shooting arrows, as stated in his saying: "Indeed, strength is archery," which he repeated three times. Third, some scholars interpret *al-quwwah* as "fortresses" (*al-huṣūn*). Fourth, some lexicographers argue that the term is general in nature,

encompassing all forms of strength that can be used to confront enemies (Hendri Irawadi, n.d.). Thus, all military equipment and means of jihad are included within the concept of strength. The Prophet's saying, "*Indeed, strength is archery,*" is not limited solely to archery but represents a broader concept of physical and strategic strength.

The word *quwwah* (قُوَّةٌ) in the Qur'an fundamentally denotes strength, power, capability, and potential. The Qur'an employs this term not only to signify physical strength but also to encompass mental, spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social strength. For instance, in QS. al-Anfal/8:60, Allah commands the Muslims to prepare *quwwah* as a means of safeguarding religion and human life.

Semantically, the term *quwwah* is often associated with the concepts of *istikāmah* (steadfastness), readiness, firmness, and resilience in carrying out the commands of Allah. Thus, *quwwah* is not an autonomous form of strength; rather, it is strength that originates from faith and obedience to Allah. Strength devoid of a foundation in faith may lead human beings to arrogance and oppression, whereas *quwwah* grounded in *taqwā* gives rise to benefit, righteousness, and social well-being.

From a semantic perspective, *quwwah* also shares close meanings with the terms *shiddah* (firmness), *ba's* (fighting spirit or resilience), and *qudrah* (capability). However, *quwwah* emphasizes the comprehensive potential possessed by human beings as *khalīfah* on earth, encompassing both physical and spiritual potentials.

As *quwwah* is often defined through the arrangement of its letters, the word *quwwah* (قُوَّةٌ) may also be interpreted symbolically through the Arabic letters that compose it. The term *quwwah* consists of four letters Qāf, Wāw, Wāw (with tashdīd), and Tā' Marbūṭah which some scholars and educators interpret as follows:

1. Qāf (ق) signifies *qudrah* (capability), namely the fundamental potential granted by Allah to human beings to strive, work, and struggle.
2. The first Wāw (و) represents *wara'* (prudence and integrity), referring to moral strength that safeguards individuals from the misuse of power.
3. The second Wāw (و) denotes *wuṣūl* or *wasīlah* (earnestness and continuity), which reflects the strength to maintain consistency and sustainability in righteous deeds.
4. Tā' Marbūṭah (ة) symbolizes *tawakkul* (reliance upon Allah), meaning complete submission to Allah after exerting one's utmost effort.

Thus, *quwwah* in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely physical strength; rather, it is an integrated form of strength that unites capability, moral character, consistency, and dependence upon Allah Almighty. This represents the ideal *quwwah* a constructive and protective strength that guides human beings toward dignity and excellence in both world life and the Hereafter.

#### **The Relationship of Physical Education in the Qur'an**

The Qur'an views human beings as an integrated whole comprising both physical (*jasad*) and spiritual (*rūh*) elements. Physical health occupies a crucial position, as it serves as the primary means through which humans perform acts of worship to Allah Almighty and fulfill their role as *khalīfah* on earth. Without a healthy and strong physical condition, neither religious observance nor productive activities can be carried

out optimally. Therefore, the Qur'an does not separate physical health from the quality of worship and human productivity; rather, it regards all three as an interconnected continuum. This perspective is reflected in QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:77.

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

*The translation of the verse reads: "And seek, through what Allah has granted you, the reward of the Hereafter, but do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not cause corruption on the earth. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters".*

Regarding the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (circumstances of revelation) of the above verse, this verse was revealed within the narrative context of the story of Prophet Moses (*Mūsā 'alayhi al-salām*) when he fled from Egypt to the land of Madyan. Therefore, this verse does not possess a specific *asbāb al-nuzūl* in the sense of a contemporaneous event during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Rather, it belongs to the category of Qur'anic narratives (*qāṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*) that recount events of previous nations as lessons (*'ibrah*) for the Muslim community.

According to the explanations of Qur'anic exegetes such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, this verse is related to the event in which Prophet Moses (*Mūsā 'alayhi al-salām*) assisted two women from Madyan who were struggling to water their livestock because they were physically overpowered by male shepherds. By virtue of his physical strength, Prophet Moses was able to remove the large stone covering the well and provide water for them. This incident clearly illustrates the physical strength (*al-quwwah al-jismiyyah*) possessed by Nabi Musa As.

Afterward, Nabi Musa as invited to the home of the two women's father—whom some commentators identify as the Prophet Shu'aib (peace be upon him) or a pious man from Madyan. One of the women then proposed that Moses be employed, arguing that he fulfilled two key criteria for an ideal worker: strength (*al-qawiyy*) and trustworthiness (*al-amīn*). According to Ibn Kathir, the strong character referred to refers to physical strength and work ability, while the trustworthy character is demonstrated by the morals of the Prophet Moses, who maintained a guarded gaze, politeness, and honesty when interacting with the two women. This is also emphasized by Al-Qurṭubi, who states that this verse serves as a normative basis in Islam that strength and moral integrity are two primary requirements in selecting workers or leaders.

Contextual Meaning of the Verse From the context in which this verse was revealed, several important principles can be understood: (1) Physical strength is an important asset in working and contributing productively. (2) Trustworthiness and morals are the main foundations so that power is not misused. (3) The Qur'an teaches a balance between physical ability and moral quality in social and economic life. (4) This story is an example that human productivity is worth worship if it is based on strength and trustworthiness.

### **The Contribution of Al-Quran-Based Physical Education in Forming Healthy, Strong and Noble Human Beings**

Physical education, from the perspective of the Qur'an, plays a strategic role in shaping individuals who are physically healthy, physically strong, and morally noble. The Qur'an views the body as a trust from Allah SWT that must be protected and developed to support the implementation of worship and the responsibilities of the caliphate on earth. This principle is implied in various verses that emphasize the importance of strength (*quwwah*) and physical abilities, such as in QS. al-Anfal/8:60, which commands Muslims to prepare their strength to the maximum. In the context of physical education, this verse serves as a normative basis for physical development as an integral part of the Islamic education system.

The contribution of Quranic-based physical education is clear in the effort to shape healthy individuals. The Quran encourages humanity to maintain balance in life, including in aspects of consumption and physical activity, as emphasized in Surah al-A'raf/7:31 concerning the prohibition of excess. Physical education based on Quranic values is not only oriented towards improving fitness but also instills a spiritual awareness that maintaining health is a form of obedience to Allah SWT. Thus, physical activity is understood not merely as exercise, but as part of worship with eternal value.

In addition to health, Quranic-based physical education contributes to developing students' physical strength and fighting spirit. The Quran emphasizes that physical strength is a valuable advantage when accompanied by faith and knowledge, as illustrated in Surah al-Baqarah 2:247, which describes the leadership of Thalut, who was chosen for his physical excellence and knowledge. Physical education integrated with Quranic values fosters resilience, discipline, and perseverance, thus producing individuals who are prepared to face life's challenges, both physically and mentally.

Furthermore, Quran-based physical education also plays a crucial role in developing noble character. Physical activity carried out in a focused and educational manner fosters sportsmanship, honesty, patience, and responsibility. These values align with the principles of trustworthiness and integrity emphasized in the Quran, as reflected in Surah al-Qasas/28:26, which outlines the criteria for an ideal human being as strong and trustworthy. Therefore, physical education not only builds muscle and physique, but also shapes the character and morals of students.

Ultimately, Qur'an-based physical education contributes to the realization of a complete human being (*insān kāmil*) who is balanced between body, mind, and spirit. The health and physical strength developed through physical education serve to improve the quality of worship and human productivity in social life. This is in line with the views of scholars, such as Al-Ghazali who emphasized that physical health is an important means for the perfection of worship, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah who placed health care within the framework of *maqāṣid al-syarā'ih*, specifically *hiḍḍ al-nafs*. Thus, Qur'an-based physical education plays a fundamental role in shaping a healthy, strong, and noble generation.

### Discussion

From an Islamic perspective, physical education is not merely a physical activity focused on fitness, but rather an entity fully integrated with spiritual, moral, and intellectual aspects. This concept is rooted in the meaning of quwwah (strength), which in the Qur'an refers not only to physical toughness but also encompasses mental, emotional, and social potential stemming from faith and obedience to Allah SWT. Through this approach, physical activity is understood as a form of worship to maintain the body's trust, thus producing individuals who are not only physically healthy but also possess moral integrity (al-amīn) and high spiritual resilience.

#### Reconstructing the Meaning of Quwwah (Strength)

The results of this study confirm that the concept of physicality in Islam is firmly rooted in the terminology of quwwah, which etymologically means violence or strength, as the antonym of ḍa'īf or weakness. However, this finding reconstructs the meaning of quwwah beyond its purely muscular dimension, revealing a philosophical dimension through the composition of its constituent letters: Qāf symbolizes qudrah (ability), the first Wāw represents wara' (moral integrity), the second Wāw indicates wuṣūl (consistency), and Tā' Marbūṭah symbolizes tawakkul (submission). This interpretation broadens the scope of physical strength to a comprehensive potential that unites technical capability with spiritual independence.

This expansion of meaning aligns with the theory of the integration of body and soul in Islamic anthropology, where the fragmented power of faith tends to lead humans to arrogance and oppression (Cooper, 2016). On the other hand, quwwah which is based on taqwā will give birth to social benefit and welfare, a view that is in line with Al-Ghazali's thoughts regarding physical health to perfection in worship (Aisy et al., 2025; Sulistiyani et al., 2025). Thus, power in the perspective of the Qur'an is not just a mechanical advantage, but rather a form of manifestation of obedience that provides protection and benefits for humanity.

#### Integration of Body and Soul (Islamic Anthropology)

The results of this study confirm that the Qur'an views humans as an integrated whole, uniting the physical (body) and spiritual (rūḥ) elements. Within this framework, physical health occupies a crucial position as a primary instrument for humans to perform their worship of Allah SWT and fulfill their responsibilities as caliphs on earth. This view aligns with Al-Ghazali's theory, which emphasizes that physical health is an essential means to perfect worship, considering that without a strong body, neither religious rituals nor productive activities can be optimally carried out (Aniqoh et al., 2025; Arroisi & Syamil, 2025; Nuriyyah & Soleh, 2026).

Furthermore, the Islamic perspective does not separate the quality of physical health from human productivity and the value of worship but rather views the three as an interconnected continuum (Nuraeni et al., 2023). This provides a normative basis for physical education to encompass balanced lifestyle management, including consumption, as commanded in Surah al-A'raf/7:31, which prohibits excessive

behavior. By integrating the values of the Qur'an, physical activity is transformed from mere dexterity training into a part of worship that has eternal value and supports the maintenance of the soul (hifz al-nafs) within the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah.

#### **Prophetic Case Study: Strength and Trustworthiness**

An analysis of the narrative of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in Surah al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:26 provides an ideal model for human resource development based on the integration of physical strength and moral integrity. In this verse, two main criteria, namely al-qawīyy (strong) and al-amīn (trustworthy), are emphasized as fundamental foundations in selecting leaders and workers. According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation, the character of al-qawīyy represents physical strength (al-quwwah al-jismiyyah) and work capability, while al-amīn refers to noble morals, honesty, and politeness in interactions. This principle emphasizes that in Islam, physical excellence cannot stand alone; it must be accompanied by noble character to prevent the abuse of power and create a balance between economic productivity and social order (Mappasessu, 2025; Nasir, 2020).

This leadership model that combines physical and intellectual excellence is also reflected historically in the story of Thalut in Surah al-Baqarah [2:247], where he was chosen as a leader because of his gift of extensive knowledge and powerful physique. This connection between physical strength and leadership is supported by the views of commentators such as Al-Qurṭubī, who placed physical strength and moral integrity as the normative basis of Islamic social structure (Ulya et al., 2025). Through this approach, physical education integrated with Qur'anic values plays a strategic role in developing resilient, disciplined, and responsible individuals, ultimately contributing to the achievement of the concept of insān kāmil or the perfect human being (Miftah et al., 2025).

Qur'anic-based physical education provides a strategic contribution to realizing the concept of the perfect human being (insan kāmil), which harmoniously balances the potential of the body, mind, and spirit (Andica et al., 2024). Unlike the secular sports paradigm, which tends to focus solely on physical aesthetics or competitive achievement (Peng et al., 2024), this model emphasizes physical maintenance as a form of safeguarding Allah SWT's trust, ensuring readiness for work and struggle. Mentally, these activities are oriented towards fostering discipline, resilience, and sportsmanship, aligned with the values of integrity in the Quran. Spiritually, physical education transforms into a form of obedience or worship with eternal value, as every physical movement is grounded in the awareness to maintain health to optimize devotion to the Creator.

The integration of these values aligns with the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah framework, particularly in the aspect of hifz al-nafs (maintenance of the soul and body), as emphasized by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, who places healthcare within the fundamental structure of Islamic law. This study demonstrates that physical education is not merely a tool for muscle development but also a means of developing strong character and morals in students (Brunsdon & Walker, 2022; Habyarimana et al., 2022; Jadwiszczak

et al., 2025). Thus, through a balance between physical strength (al-quwwah) and moral excellence, Quranic-based physical education can produce a generation that is not only physically superior but also possesses high mental resilience and spiritual independence in facing the challenges of the times.

These findings strengthen the position of physical education as an integral part of the Islamic education system, not just a complementary or additional subject. Maintaining health and developing physical strength in this context is seen as a form of human responsibility towards the mandate given by Allah SWT. Theologically, efforts to maintain the condition of the body fall within the framework of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah, especially in the aspect of hifz al-nafs or protection of body and soul, as stated by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Thus, physical education based on Al-Qur'an values has a fundamental role in forming a generation that is healthy, strong and has noble character to support the optimization of worship and social productivity.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Physical education in the Qur'an is an integrated system, including physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. The main concept is rooted in the term "quwwah," which does not only mean muscle strength but also includes capability (qudrah), moral integrity (wara'), consistency (wuṣūl), and submission to Allah (tawakkul). Physical education functions as a vital instrument in forming human beings who can carry out their role as khalīfah optimally. This is emphasized through the story of Prophet Musa AS and Thalut, which shows that the ideal human quality is a combination of physical strength (al-qawīyy) and trust or moral integrity (al-amīn). Thus, maintaining physical health is an integral part of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah in maintaining the soul (hifz al-nafs) for the perfection of worship.

As a suggestion, it is recommended to reconstruct the physical education curriculum so that it is not only oriented towards physical dexterity or competitive sports but also integrates spiritual values and character building according to the principle of quwwah. Sports teachers should emphasize that physical activity is a form of trust and worship so that students have an awareness of maintaining physical health as a means of increasing productivity and the quality of devotion to the Creator. Furthermore, it is necessary to conduct more in-depth studies on practical models of physical exercise that are in accordance with the sunnah and relevant to modern health challenges to strengthen the implementation of the Qur'an-based curriculum in schools.

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