

The Ruling of Football Watching According to Contemporary Islamic Scholars

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Abstract

Football is a well-known game to the world population nowadays. That also goes to the Muslim countries. There is almost no country that does not have its own football team. To the population of Muslim countries, football game itself raises many reactions among the people. Some want to watch football either at home or stadium and some do not want to watch it on the reason that it is a prohibited act in the religion and its ruling is *haram*. Debate on football game and its ruling has not been touched in focus by classical scholars, instead it is only touched in focus by contemporary scholars. The objective to put forward this article is to explain on the ruling of watching football match according to contemporary scholars to provide clarification for the for-football fans among Muslim population of the world in general and Malaysian Muslim in specific that whether it is allowed or not for the act. Writing method is based on qualitative study. Data were collected according to document analysis by referring to books on Quranic interpretation, Prophet's traditions, classical books of Islamic jurisprudence, contemporary Islamic jurisprudence, current fatwas and views of contemporary Islamic scholars from various countries. Data were collected, analyzed and elaborated by using inductive, deductive and comparative methods to gain appropriate result in alignment with the decided objective of study. The findings of this study are watching football raises clash of views among contemporary Islamic scholars between those who prohibited it entirely due to its larger harms to public properties and dignity of viewers and country compared to the gained benefits, and those who allow it with condition by pointing out that there is no authentic and concrete evidence that prohibits it and the harms only involve external factors outside of the is football match rather than from the football game itself. The chosen opinion in this issue is the second opinion as it is more appropriate with the need of community today. In addition, it is also bound to strict conditions which must be observed by the viewers of a certain football match.

Keywords: *Game, Football, Harm, Need, Concrete*

Introduction

Football game has gained attention from the whole world including Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia itself is famous as a country with scholars of Salafi path who are strict in faith matter, and it also has its own football team competing at the national and international level, even though some of the scholars are not in agreement with the football game, stating that it wastes time and a doing of no benefit to the Muslim life. However, football game is seen as not raising any problem to other Muslim countries including Malaysia. Critics pointed are only towards the riot initiated by the viewers and the viewing time clashing with the time of prayer and others.

It is undeniable that football game and viewing of football match are not touched in the classical fqih books and past fatwas as this game did not exist at the time, in turn that it only appeared in the 19th century. Therefore, it is not weird that the law related to it is not found in the classical books of Islamic jurisprudence. Nevertheless, the situation has changed a lot nowadays. Football sport is fancied throughout the whole world including among Muslim countries. Contemporary scholars begin to discuss the ruling of watching football match according to Islamic perspective seriously to obtain the real law of watching football match itself and the reasons pointed out by them. Indeed, the game and match of football are not only watched in stadium but also at individual home, in the view of that almost every Muslim home owns television. The question is what is the exact ruling of football watching according to contemporary scholars and are they in agreement on it?

The purpose to put forward this article is to explain the ruling of watching football game and match according to contemporary scholars' view. This is because its ruling still raises clash of opinion among contemporary scholars that affects the public. There are some among the public saying that it is *haram* to watch football as the players expose *aurat*. To this group, they do not watch any football match. Meanwhile, there are some who believe that the ruling of football watching is *harus*, as it is included into permitted game in Islam in clear. This group of people watch football either at stadium or at home. These views are related by them to particular contemporary scholars whose published opinion is held onto.

Writings on game and football match have been produced a lot by scholars nowadays. Among them is Uthaimin (2017) commenting on the issue of football through website of Islamic fatwa question and answer which is <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa>, Yusoff (2015) in *Journal of GEOGRAFIA Online TM Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 11 issue 13 (72 - 78) 72 on the misconducts among football viewers in Malaysia, al-Qalmuni (2011) in a work titled *Kurrah al-Qadam Wa Akhawatuha*. He discussed on the history of football and its infiltration into Islamic countries and the raised harms from the football game itself and Salman (1998) in *Kurrah al-Qadam Bayna al-Masalih Wa al-Mafasid al-Syar'iyah* on football game and focusing on the aspects of needs and harms caused by the game. Al-Qaradawi (2006) elaborated in *Fiqh al-Lahwi wa al-Tarwih* on the conditions to be fulfilled by a football team competing in a certain football match. However, a specific discussion on the ruling of football watching among the scholars nowadays is seldom found. If it exists, it only emphasises the ruling of football game itself. A group defines it as *haram* while another puts it as *harus*. Each group has their own reason. In spite of that, ruling for watching of football game is not touched by them. Hence, this study is brought forward to explain the real status of ruling for football watching by contemporary scholars and reasons posed by them.

Methodology of Study

This writing was based on qualitative study. Data were collected according to document analysis by referring to books related to Quranic interpretation, Prophet's tradition, classical fiqh books, contemporary fiqh, current fatwas and views of contemporary Islamic scholars from various countries. Data were then collected, analysed and elaborated through inductive, deductive and comparative methods to obtain appropriate result aligning with the decided objective of study.

Findings

Islam has its own view on game. Al-Qaradawi (1996:148) lined two types of games in Islam which are first the permitted games and second the prohibited games. Among the permitted games are:

- a. Games involving physical movements.
- b. Games in the form of military training.
- c. Games in the form of body strengthening.
- d. Games in the form of skills building and development of ability and talent.

Meanwhile, among the prohibited games are:

- a. Games exposing the players to dangers without a need of doing that such as wrestling, as it injures one's self and others without any excuses.
- b. Games exposing women's body which is unlawful for the stranger men to watch, before the eyes of the stranger men, such as swimming, diving and others. It is advised that they are provided with separate pools or game fields which could not be entered by stranger men.
- c. Games exposing the animals or birds to torture such cock fighting or sheep fighting. Prophet SAW prohibited sheep fighting. Public should not fancy by the blood flowing from the animals which are unable to speak, to get life satisfaction (al-Qaradawi,1996:148).

In hadis narrated by Mujahid explaining:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَهَى عَنِ التَّحْرِيشِ بَيْنَ الْبَهَائِمِ

Meaning: *Prophet SAW prohibited animal fighting.*

(Sahih: al-Tirmizi: 1631)

Besides that, there is another hadis narrated by Abu Hurairah RA explaining, Prophet SAW said;

مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ

Meaning: *Those who do not show mercy, will not be shown mercy.*

(Hasan Sahih: al-Tirmizi:1834)

Objectives of Games in Islam

In Islam, game has its own objectives. They are not practised just because they are favourites of public and contested for medals, name and others. Instead, it has many big objectives. Among them are:

- a. To form a strong and healthy body to face war and protect it from being contracted by dangerous diseases.
- b. To provide a rest for the soul from boredom feeling as working too much and purify it from plunging into bad habits.
- c. To guard the familial integrity and educational system in the community.
- d. To guard internal and external peace of country through strong army and their active assistants.
- e. To take care of body's health (al-Jizani, 2005:345-348)

Football Game

Football involves match between two competing teams. Each team consists of 11 players. One of them acts as a goalkeeper while the remaining players are on the field. A referee is appointed to judge the match and two linesmen are at each of the sideline. The referee will make decision in each match, while the two linesmen act as the observers of players' movement and report any foul done by any player or any act violating the rules of football. The referee can discard any player seen by him as violating the rules of the game by giving red card to the involved player. The referee can also pose warning to player acting rough or others, by giving yellow card. Each team attempts to shoot the ball into the opponent's goal. Football game involves a game field and its corners possess doors. Each competing team has its own door in which they come out from that.

Two competing teams attempts to score as many goals as they can into the opponent's goal and the winner goes to the one who scores the most goal. The match will proceed for two rounds and each round takes time of 45 minutes. It is separated by one period of rest. The misconduct that happen in the football game are such as touching the ball with hand, being rough to the opponent and protesting the decision made by the match referee. There are other fouls which are given certain penalties. Among the penalties are penalty kick, free kick and corner kick (al-Syathri, 1997:194).

The Ruling of Watching Football Game

Contemporary scholars and fatwa committees in Muslim countries differ in opinion of ruling for watching game and football match. Some prohibit it and some allow it with condition.

Ruling of Football Watching According to Contemporary Islamic Scholars

The ruling of football watching raises different opinions among contemporary scholars. Some among them decide it as *haram*, as it will lead to harms to the players, viewers and other Muslims. Meanwhile, some other people put it as *harus* as it bears beneficial aspects to Muslim community and at the same time it is in absence of evidence to say that it is haram in clear and concrete.

Scholars who Forbid Football Watching

Among the scholars who forbid watching of football match whether at home or stadium are:

- a. Ibn Jibrin (<http://ibn-jebreen.com>, 2018).
- b. Muhammad bin Ibrahim Ali al-Syeikh.
- c. Salih bin Fauzan al-Fauzan.
- d. 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad al-Badr.
- e. 'Ali bin Mukhtar al-Ramli (<http://www.ajurry.com>, 2018).

Reasons for Prohibition of Watching Football Match

Among the reasons of prohibiting the watching of football match are:

- a. Football players do not cover their *aurat* properly especially at the thigh part.
- b. The attire of football player is thin and exposing aurat at the back of the thin attire and it attracts women's attention (<http://ibn-jebreen.com>, 2018).
- c. Football players abandon prayer, leave congregational prayer, and delay prayer from its period when the play time coincides prayer time.
- d. Football game could break the community into many groups, initiate trials and nourish the brink of hatred and envy in the community. This contradicts with the pure teachings of Islam which prioritise the spirit of tolerance, solidarity and brotherhood and purification of soul and heart from hatred and boycott.
- e. Football game invites dangers to the players' body, as there would be frequent collision with the opponent players. There are those collapse, faint, and experience arm or leg fracture.
- f. Football game does not fulfill the objectives of allowed and permitted game in Islam to energise the body, prepare for the war and avoid dangerous diseases.
- g. Football game causes the Muslims to spend their time for useless activity.
- h. Football game wastes Muslims' time into hocus-pocus.
- i. Football game inculcates feeling of love to *fasik* (disobedient) and *kafir* (infidel) people and their idolisation.

- j. Football game influences the viewers to hang the pictures of their favourite players on the wall, while the action of hanging those pictures is not permitted.
- k. Football game creates *al-wala'* and *al-Bara'* to certain football teams and induces *asabiah jahiliah*.
- l. Football game involves funding for purchase of newspapers and magazines to follow up the progress happening in the football worlds. Despite, the funding for that matter is not a needful aspect in daily life. (<http://www.ajurry.com>, 2018).

Scholars who Allow Viewing of Football with Condition

Among who stand with the opinion are:

- a. Jawatankuasa fatwa Kerajaan Arab Saudi (al-Ghamidi 1429H:187).
- b. Muhammad Salih Uthaimin (<https://islamqa.info>, 2018).
- c. 'Abd al-Aziz bin 'Abdullah Ali al-Syeikh (<http://www.ajurry.com>, 2018).
- d. Abdullah al-Faqih (<http://www.ahlalhdeeth.com>, 2018).
- e. 'Ubaid bin Abdullah al-Jabiri (<http://www.ajurry.com>, 2018).
- f. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (<http://www.ahlalhdeeth.com>, 2018).
- g. al-Qaradawi (2016:72-73).

Reasons of Permitting the Watching of Football Game with Condition

Among the reasons posed by this group are that:

- a. There is no authentic or concrete evidence to forbid football watching neither from al-Qur'an nor al-Sunnah, while to decide whether an action is haram must be based on authentic and concrete evidence.
- b. Football game is a game involving culture and custom of the community in which the original ruling regarding it is permitted until there is evidence that make it *haram*.
- c. Most of the scholars who decide that football watching is *haram*, do not refer to the football match itself, instead it relates to other factors either internally or externally.
- d. Football still does not raise any large harm compared to benefits gained from it.
- e. Football game and match have happened throughout the world including Islamic countries in which their scholars forbid the football game itself. Muslims may not agree to do something bad according to Islamic view.

Conditions of Watching Permitted Football

Among the conditions of watching football which must be observed by the viewers either at stadium, coffee shops or home are:

- a. The viewing does not prevent one from performing prayer, does not expose to *aurat*, and does not initiate fight and hostility.

- b. The viewing does not void any obligation or leads to forbidden action (al-Ghamidi, 1429H:187).
- c. The viewing does not cause any defamation or insult between the supporters of both competing teams.
- d. The viewing does not cause large sharia needs to be ignored (al-Qaradawi, 2006:72-73).
- e. The viewing still makes someone to hold onto good moral conducts and ethics.
- f. The viewing does not make somebody to become extremely fanatic to any team until he hates and becomes hostile to the opponent team (<http://www.ajurry.com>, 2018).

Conclusion

Scholars in past time had never discussed on football game seriously as the game did not exist in their time. The highest level of the discussion was on the spear play in front of Madinah mosque which is permitted by agreement of all scholars. Instead, watching football match in this modern time whether at stadium or home does not get agreement among them, and leads to differing opinions between the two groups which are the first group that prohibit it and the second group that permit it with strict conditions to be fulfilled by each viewer. In this case, the chosen opinion is the second opinion as its reasons are stronger and appropriate with the current situation. It also binds to strict conditions that can avoid destruction of public properties, mental disturbance, harms to the dignity of team and country and teachings of Islam itself.

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