

PERMANENT MAKEUP: A TATTOO IMITATION PROCEDURE FROM THE SHARIAH PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The growing interest in permanent makeup, which provides a lasting and perfect appearance, has sparked concerns regarding its safety and compliance with Islamic beliefs. This study aims to elucidate the Shariah ruling on permanent makeup by employing a document analysis method to examine all relevant Shariah information, including Quranic verses, hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and fatwas. Consequently, this study examines the medical aspects of the procedure to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. This study employed document analysis to investigate permanent makeup procedures from both the medical and Shariah perspectives. The analysis of the Shariah perspective on tattoos and cosmetic procedures included a review of medical journals and websites addressing the practice, focusing on techniques, safety, and concerns associated with permanent makeup procedures. Additionally, fatwas concerning permanent makeup from Islamic scholars available on fatwa websites across the globe were analysed. This study concludes that Muslims should refrain from undergoing permanent makeup procedures because they involve skin penetration and the use of permanent pigments, making them comparable to tattoos, which are prohibited in Islam. This study on halal in cosmetic services adds to the existing body of knowledge in the halal industry, and pave the way for further research to be conducted on similar topics in the future.

Introduction

Cosmetics and self-beautification have long been important to human culture, psychology, and self-expression. In addition to enhancing physical appearance, they have also been associated with increased confidence, identity, and artistry. Furthermore, cosmetics have significantly shaped societal norms and contributed to the booming of the beauty industry. In modern times, makeup has evolved from simple external applications to more permanent forms of facial enhancement, such as permanent makeup. Despite its growing popularity, there is a need for greater monitoring and regulation of medical beauty products to ensure their safety. This is due to the increasing number of reported injuries and adverse effects resulting from procedures performed at unregistered facilities (Wang et al., 2021; Valiga et al., 2022).

This cosmetic product has also sparked a debate about its compliance with Shariah law, as it imitates the act of tattooing. Both tattoos and permanent makeup involve the application of exogenous pigments, which are defining characteristics of tattoos. Permanent makeup is similar despite differences in permanency and procedures. Hence, this study aims to investigate the issues surrounding permanent makeup procedures and the Shariah law. To rule out the permissibility or prohibition of permanent makeup, it is necessary to understand the medical aspects of the procedure, including its nature, purpose, and potential risks.

Islamic scholars have established several well-known rules, one of which is that a new and unknown occurrence cannot be judged without fully comprehending its reality. A Shariah legal maxim (*qawaid fihiyyah*), “*al-‘ilmu fī shay’ far’un ‘an tasauwwurihi*”, states that understanding the reality of things is necessary for making a ruling. This is because a ruling must be consistent with reality; otherwise, severe consequences can occur. Ibn Utsaimin stated, “*Judging a thing is a branch of its conception, and if we do not imagine this thing as it occurred, then we do not judge it*”. Therefore, definitions require visualisation, and pursuant to visualisation, a ruling can be formulated (Al-Utsaimin, 2013;).

This study employed document analysis to investigate permanent makeup procedures from both the medical and Shariah perspectives. Document analysis techniques systematically and effectively examine written, verbal, and visual communication materials (Stake, 1995). By analysing pre-existing texts, researchers can uncover meanings, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem without extensive field research (Merriam, 1998). Document analysis is an iterative process that involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpreting (Bowen, 2009). To ensure the relevance, authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and representativeness of the documents, the researcher determined their fit for the study. The analysis may be performed entirely or selectively, as the documents may cover broader topics than the scope of the study.

To gather documents for this study, books, articles, and websites from both the Shariah and medical perspectives on tattoos and cosmetic procedures were collected from both physical and electronic versions. The analysis of the Shariah view on tattoos and cosmetic procedures involved medical-related journals and websites concerning the practice, including techniques, safety, and issues related to the permanent makeup procedure. Shariah materials, especially books, were selected based on the consensus of scholars on their authenticity, consisting of books from tafsīr, ḥadīth, and fiqh from the four madhhabs. Additionally, fatwas concerning permanent makeup from Islamic scholars available on fatwa websites across the globe were analysed.

Medical Perspective

The tattooing and permanent makeup processes involve inserting small pigment granules into the dermis or dermal papillary layer using manual or electric needles (Ju et al., 2020). These pigments are absorbed by surrounding macrophages and deposited on fibroblasts, resulting in a permanent colour (Miranda, 2020). The injected pigment particles in the dermis also determine the specific colour of the tattoo based on the design (Jin & Chang, 2022). The pigments used in tattoos are derived from various sources and can be organic or inorganic, such as plant- and mineral-based pigments (Kerure et al., 2023). The composition of permanent makeup pigments varies from that of the tattoo ink. Permanent makeup pigments are specifically designed for facial use, and will eventually fade over time. They are confined to natural shades of skin, lips, and hair, as opposed to tattoo inks, which come in more striking hues (Jin & Chang, 2022). In addition, tattoo inks were formulated to maintain their colour and vibration for an

extended period. Both procedures use a handheld machine with micro-sized needles; however, permanent makeup may use a finer needle with a shorter bar and lower voltage than tattoos (Miranda, 2020). This is because permanent makeup is typically applied at a shallower depth than that of tattoos, resulting in a shorter permanency period (Huisman et al., 2019). While tattoos can last a lifetime, permanent makeup can last anywhere from three weeks to five years, depending on the procedure (Kerure et al., 2023).

There are concerns that the permanent nature of the embedded pigments in the skin may increase the likelihood of infection and allergic responses. Inorganic substances such as titanium dioxide and iron oxide, which are commonly used in permanent makeup pigments, have been known to cause allergic reactions such as itching, redness, swelling, and more severe symptoms (Pazos et al., 2021). Although these substances are commonly used in conventional makeup, they can be hazardous when used in transdermal procedures. The non-degradable or slow-to-degrade nature of these pigments makes them more likely to cause adverse effects such as allergic reactions, granulomas, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, and scarring (Setterfield, 2020).

The potential for heavy metals to be present in older or low-quality unregulated pigments cannot be overlooked (Foerster et al., 2023). These unregulated pigments, devices, and colorants may not have been evaluated for safety, efficacy, and quality (Kandhari et al., 2020). Studies have shown that samples of permanent makeup inks randomly picked from markets tested positive for microbiological contamination, heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), primary aromatic amines (PAA), and preservatives (Andreou et al., 2021). These harmful ingredients in pigment formulations may cause long-term health problems, including DNA damage and cell mutations in some organs, which can become systemic after transdermal injection. They can interact with other medications and foods (Omi, 2018) and, worse, may also alter the immune response (Dodou, 2021).

On the other hand, non-medical facilities such as medical spas are increasingly offering and delivering this procedure. However, these facilities may not adhere to the requirements of medical practice, including proper qualifications and competency, standard operating procedures, and availability of emergency equipment. This can result in complications and malpractice as reported by Wang et al., (2020). Furthermore, failure to follow sanitation and hygiene procedures can be disastrous because the use of non-sterilised needles and contaminated pigments can introduce bacteria into the skin and cause infections. For example, a case report by Lim et al., (2022) documented a human papillomavirus infection as well as co-infections with *Mycobacterium abscessus* and fungus at a makeup tattoo parlour.

Moreover, removing the pigments embedded in the skin can be a challenging and costly process that may require laser treatment or other corrective procedures. In some cases, complete removal may not be possible. Laser removal may also be problematic when dealing with colourants containing iron oxides and titanium dioxide, as it can cause darkening of the affected skin under high-power laser treatment, leading to disappointment for those seeking to remove their tattoos (Serup et al., 2015). Permanent makeup may not hold the same effect. However, it shares the same irremovable attribute. Individuals have to wait for the pigments to self-excrete from their skin layers.

Thus, the absence of legal provisions governing permanent makeup procedures in Malaysia could have negative consequences. Despite the growing demand for these services, no regulations or certifications ensure their safety and quality. The pigments and colourant suspensions used in the procedure are not subject to the same standards as ordinary injectable pharmaceuticals, as they are non-pharmaceutical in nature (Guerra et al., 2018). This lack of oversight may result in the use of low-quality and potentially unsafe pigments, some of which may be found on e-commerce platforms. The devices used for these procedures are readily accessible and can be purchased online for home use, thus raising further safety concerns for consumers (Wang et al., 2021).

In contrast, Japan, South Korea, and the United States have adopted a more cautious approach to regulate permanent makeup procedures. Japanese law classifies permanent makeup as a medical procedure that should be performed only by qualified doctors and nurses (Tomita et al., 2021). South Korean law has addressed the issue of non-medical personnel practicing permanent makeup and tattoos by prohibiting such activities. Article 25 of Section 3 of the Medical Practitioner's Law states that such activities may only be performed by licensed medical personnel with full qualifications (Koh & Kyoungjin, 2021). In the United States, individuals without medical training may practice permanent makeup but only under

the direct supervision of physicians. The law also requires practitioners to use only FDA-certified inks and devices for permanent makeup (Andreou et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, potential hazards related to permanent makeup raise questions regarding its simplicity and safety. As a medical intervention that demands caution to prevent adverse consequences, weighing its benefits and drawbacks before opting for them is crucial. It is prudent to seek licensed experts with the appropriate qualifications and expertise to carry out these procedures (Truswell, 2020).

Shariah Perspective

From the preceding discussion on the medical perspective, it is clear that these two procedures share several similarities. Hence, it is crucial to consider the reasons for the prohibition of tattoos in Islam when discussing permanent makeup from the Shariah perspective. The prohibition on tattoos is explicitly stated in both the Quran and hadith. Allah SWT, in the Quran, states that:

Translation: There is no altering of Allah's creation.

(Surah Al-Rum, 30:30)

Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi (2010) elaborates on this verse in his book, *Tafsīr al-Bahr al-Muhīt*, and one of the many interpretations of this verse is that it refers to the act of tattooing. This interpretation is based on the opinions of Ibn Mas'ud and al-Zujaj, who linked the verse to a hadith interpreted as prohibiting unnecessary bodily changes.

A hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) narrated by 'Abdullah states:

Translation: Allah has cursed women who tattoo and those who have themselves tattooed, as well as those who pluck hair from their faces and those who alter the creation of Allah for beautification purpose by creating spaces between their teeth.

(Sahih Muslim, 2007, Hadith 5565)

This hadith identifies tattooing as one of the several acts of beautification prohibited in Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) also condemns women who practice tattooing, seek to be tattooed, and remove hair from their faces for beauty purposes (*Jāmi' Tirmidhī*, 2007, Vol. 5, Hadith 2782). Abu Daud (1969) defined the term "*al-wāshima*" or tattooer in the hadith as women who make ornate designs on their faces using kohl or ink. However, Al-'Asqalani expanded this definition to a broader perspective, claiming that it was not restricted to the face only, as face tattooing was in vogue during that time. An-Nawawi (1998) outlined the prohibition to include all parts of the body in his definition.

The prohibition of tattoos in Islam is based on several principles. While Muslim jurists are divided in the justification of this prohibition, one argument is that the act of tattooing is akin to altering Allah SWT's creation. In Islam, the human body is considered sacred and should be treated with respect. Any form of self-mutilation or body modification that changes Allah SWT's natural creations is discouraged. The act of tattooing is seen as an attempt to alter or change the natural form given by Allah SWT, which is considered disrespectful to the divine creation. Allah SWT said:

Translation: He who created all things in the best way and He began the creation of man from clay.

(Surah As-Sajdah, 32:7)

Hence, changing normal and sound conditions solely for beautification purposes is not acceptable. However, it is worth noting that while these procedures may be seen as altering Allah SWT's creation without necessity, if they are performed for medical reasons and deemed safe by medical experts, they may be permissible due to necessity. The Quran acknowledges exceptions to the prohibition in cases of necessity, as stated in the verse:

Translation: But if someone is compelled by necessity—neither driven by desire nor exceeding immediate need—they will not be sinful. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:173)

In summary, the focus should be on avoiding harmful activities and refraining from actions that could harm others while considering the potential benefits of permanent makeup for medical reasons in cases of necessity.

Moreover, historical evidence indicates that tattoos have been linked to pagan rituals and practices that Muslims are required to disassociate themselves from (Miranda, 2020). Additionally, the practice of tattooing is commonly associated with cults or immoral groups as a means of identification. Therefore, it is not suitable for Muslims to engage in the same practice. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) discouraged Muslims from imitating non-Muslim practices or following the customs of other religions or pre-Islamic cultures. He warned in a hadith narrated by Ibn Umar:

Translation: He who imitates any people (in their actions) is considered being one of them.

(Sunan Abū Dāwūd, 2008, Hadith 4031)

Puncturing the skin for pigment delivery in both tattoo and permanent makeup procedures also raises concerns. It can cause bleeding and trapping of blood, which is considered filthy. Many jurists from the Maliki, Shafī, and Hanbali schools of Islamic jurisprudence have supported the idea that tattoos are prohibited because of this. However, they differ in terms of the type of pigment used. Some permit the use of henna and prohibit the use of permanent pigments. In contrast, others prohibit all types of pigments, including henna, as they consider them extreme adornments and a prohibited form of bodily alteration.

Further, the potential risks associated with pigments and the procedure itself cannot be ignored. These risks include the possibility of harmful substances in the pigments used, which may contribute to their prohibition in Islam. Furthermore, concerns regarding the health and hygiene risks associated with tattooing and permanent makeup procedures persist. As stated previously in medical discussions, studies of permanent makeup procedures have suggested that these procedures may increase the risk of infection or the use of contaminated tools, thereby posing potential health risks. Allah SWT forbids Muslims from undertaking anything that may harm themselves in any way possible. Allah SWT stated in His Glorious Book:

Translation: Do not throw yourselves into destruction.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:195)

Translation: And do not kill yourselves.

(Surah An-Nisa, 4:29)

Therefore, according to hadiths and traditions, eating anything or engaging in anything considered dangerous or harmful to human beings is forbidden. Some jurists even suggest that eating soil and engaging in unauthorised conflict are regarded as signs of suicide.

The concept of preventing harm is also emphasized in the Shariah legal maxim “*No harm shall be inflicted or reciprocated*” (*la darar wa la dirar*), which is rooted in the hadith that instructs:

Translation: Do not cause harm or return harm.

(Al-Nawawi, 1999, Hadith 32)

This maxim underscores the importance of prioritising harm prevention over potential benefits. The Quran also highlights this principle, warning of the dangers of intoxication and stating:

Translation: There is great harm (harm) in both, although they have some benefit for people. Still, their harm (harm) is far greater than their benefit.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:219)

The ultimate message from this verse is that preventing harm should always take precedence over the potential benefits. Avoiding harmful activities and refraining from exposing oneself to actions that could harm others single out its potential benefits. This shows how Islam places great importance on protecting one's health and avoiding harm to oneself and others.

It should be noted that the process of altering one's facial features can also be misused for deceptive purposes, significantly changing one's appearance. Islam strictly prohibits any form of dishonesty or deception, such as *tadlis*, as stated by the Prophet (PBUH) when he said:

Translation: He who deceives is not of me (is not my follower).

(Jāmi' Tirmidhī, 2007, Hadith 1315)

The practice of permanently enhancing one's appearance through permanent makeup can also lead to excessive self-adornment, which is discouraged in Islam. Allah SWT warns against such actions when He says:

Translation: And do not *Tabarruj* yourselves like the *Tabarruj* of the times of ignorance.

(Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:33)

It is important to remember that excessive beautification may result in a sense of pride, which is considered a forbidden attitude in Islam. As the Prophet (PBUH) said in a hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Mas'ud:

Translation: There will be no heaven for a person whose heart contains pride as big as a mustard seed.

(Sahih Muslim, 2007, Hadith 265)

It is also worth noting that wearing good clothes and comfortable footwear is not considered a source of pride, as it is considered a sign of appreciation for beauty and good taste.

Fatwas and Scholars Opinions

There are few fatwas on the permissibility of certain permanent makeup procedures. In Malaysia, the only official fatwa issued by the State Fatwa Committee on the subject matter are those from Perlis. The Perlis State Fatwa Department has deemed the use of permanent makeup or the BB Glow procedure to be permissible due to its benefits (*maslahah*) and the absence of *tadlis* (Perlis Fatwa Department, 2020). However, it is not permissible if the procedure causes harm or utilises non-halal ingredients. The Federal Territories Fatwa Department has also issued a ruling statement (Akhbār Hukum) on the permissibility of the BB Glow procedure as long as it is not harmful, tattoo-like, permanent, or alters Allah SWT's creation (Bakharudin, 2021). It is important to note that there is no further elaboration of the ruling, as this is not a fully researched fatwa, and it has not been gazetted.

According to Muhammad Salama (2024), the act of implanting pigments into the skin after creating fine incisions is equivalent to a prohibited tattoo. Mufti Mohammed Tosir Miah from Dar al-Ifta Birmingham also emphasised that microblading involves two prohibited actions, as the eyebrow tattooing itself is haram (prohibited). Furthermore, suppose that the procedure involves removing some eyebrows to achieve the desired shape. In this case, it falls under the prohibition of plucking eyebrows, as this action is explicitly prohibited in the hadith (Tosir Miah, 2020). Moreover, a fatwa from Majlis Ulama Indonesia prohibits micro-blading due to its potential for *riya'* and *'ujub*. It is important to note that getting an

eyebrow tattoo for beautification may be considered an attribute of *'ujub* or an excessive preoccupation with physical appearance.

Dar al-Ifta Egypt, on the other hand, has declared that microblading is permissible. According to them, microblading is permissible because it involves using pure substances to draw eyebrows and is not permanent, unlike tattoos. Tattooing is prohibited because the ink mixes with the blood, making it impure (Allam, 2018).

From these fatwas and decisions, it is clear that if permanent makeup does not involve skin penetration and uses temporary and pure dyes, it falls under the category of permitted adornments. If it involves skin penetration, it falls under the category of a prohibited practice. However, the widely practised permanent makeup at beauty facilities adopts the skin-pricking technique using micro-needles that penetrate the skin and embed pigments under the epidermis layer. Although it may not be as deep as tattoo insertion, it still involves skin penetration.

It is essential to observe certain religious requirements before undergoing a beautification procedure. Islam permits self-beautification but prohibits excessiveness. However, permissibility is subject to several requirements. Islamic scholars have discussed the possibility of the permissibility of aesthetic enhancement procedures based on three *maqāṣid-sharīah* (objectives of Islamic law): *ḍarūriyyah*, *ḥājjiyyah*, and *taḥṣīniyyah* (Atiyeh et al., 2008; Al-Mahamid, S. H., 2020; Hamdan et al., 2022). These *maqāṣid al-sharīah* aim to realise benefits (*maṣlahah*) and are associated with the objectives of preserving lives and preventing harm (Rosman et al., 2019). *Ḍarūriyyah* and *ḥājjiyyah* are *maṣlahah* undertaken during times of emergency and dire needs that require swift action to save lives and eliminate difficulties. Thus, the procedures undertaken to fulfil these goals will be allowed only to the extent of necessities.

However, the *taḥṣīniyyah* category does not rely on the characteristics of dire needs or necessities. Instead, *taḥṣīniyyah* focuses on enhancing the quality of life and amplifying blessings (Hamdan et al., 2022). Permanent makeup may offer benefits such as removing blemishes and boosting self-esteem, but it does not involve the urgency of saving lives. Thus, despite the benefits it may offer, undergoing *taḥṣīniyyah* procedures for non-justified reasons can be seen as disrespectful to Allah SWT's perfect creation. This provision is based on the Shariah legal maxim, "*Matters shall be judged by their objectives*" (*al-umūr bi maqāṣidihā*), meaning establishing intention alongside action is paramount. This shows how Islam places great importance on Muslims' intentions and purpose in everything they do, and the purpose and intention behind seeking permanent makeup is an integral part of the rulings. Likewise, as mentioned before, any procedure delivered or received for malicious, deceitful, and boastful intent should never be condoned.

Second, the prohibition of things results from their impurities and potential for harm (Al-Qardawi, 1999). The ultimate aim of Shariah is to eliminate harm and avoid possible dangers. Pursuing benefits should never outweigh the potential risks and damages associated with any procedure, including permanent makeup. The Shariah legal maxim is that the prevention of harm is preferred to the attainment of benefit (*dar'ul maḥāṣid awla min jalbi al-maṣālih*). *Mafṣadah*, in this provision, refers to harm (*ḍarar*). Harm in this proviso carries both bodily harm, such as physical and mental injuries inflicted by the bogus procedure. It may also cover spiritual damage, such as the nullification of worshipping actions, due to the possibility of water impermeability of permanent makeup pigments (Muhsin, 2023). Safe and halal ingredients are also part of safety precautions. It is essential to ensure that the ingredients used in the procedure are free of toxic and haram substances (Sugibayashi et al., 2019). Thus, despite claims of permanent makeup advantages, should there be evidence of its harmfulness, it must be avoided.

The principle of eliminating harm and taking the benefit should also be realised through implementing regulations and government intervention. The legal principle of *tasarruf al-imām manūf bi al-maṣlahah* allows the government to make decisions in the best interests of its citizens. Due to the alarming increase in associated injuries, there is a pressing need to strengthen regulations in cosmetic procedures, particularly in non-medical settings like medical spas in Malaysia. Adhering to the *sadd al-dharī'ah*, which prohibits certain practices to prevent harm, is also essential (Mohd Aswadi, M. S., Md Sawari, M. F., Sitiris, M., & Baharuddin, A. S., 2021). This underscores the urgency of eliminating fake doctors or unauthorized personnel from performing medical procedures for aesthetic purposes. Facilities lacking proper licensing and operated by non-authorized personnel pose a significant threat and should not be allowed.

Addressing the issue of cosmetic procedure safety requires more than just regulatory changes. It is crucial to establish a user-friendly platform that allows consumers to report grievances and seek fair recompense for any harm suffered. This practical solution not only safeguards consumers from harm and financial hardship but also empowers them by providing a direct avenue for their concerns. Consumers should also be fully informed about the products and procedures they are considering. This enables them to make well-informed decisions and provide consent. It is essential for consumers to be aware of their rights and have access to avenues for recourse, as this is vital for their protection. This is especially pertinent for Muslims, as Islam obligates them to safeguard the essentials of religion, life, progeny, intelligence, and wealth. This underscores the comprehensive nature of Islam's guidance in all aspects of life.

Conclusion

Given the evolving nature of cosmetics, it goes against the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to remain relevant and refuse modern interventions in aesthetics for beautification. Therefore, it is safe to say that if a procedure for aesthetic enhancement does not involve harmful ingredients or non-halal substances, does not significantly change one's natural appearance, and does not imitate prohibited acts explicitly prohibited in the Qur'an and Sunnah, then it is permissible.

Nevertheless, findings revealed the issues of Shariah and medical in permanent makeup procedures due to the potential presence of non-halal and harmful substances, unjustified physical alterations, and similarity to tattoo procedures. Besides, it is noteworthy that permanent makeup procedures may not be advisable due to procedural safety and legal issues. Without proper regulatory monitoring, it is not easy to ensure the safety and compliance of such procedures. Additionally, considering the diverse interpretations among Islamic scholars regarding modern beauty techniques, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Therefore, it is essential to seek advice from knowledgeable Islamic scholars specialising in Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary issues, who can provide personalised guidance that considers an individual's unique circumstances and aligns with Islamic principles.

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