Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic through an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

COVID-19 was discovered in Wuhan, China, and has since spread exponentially and massively. Numerous casualties have been reported as a result of this outbreak. As a result, different countries implemented measures to halt the virus's propagation. Indonesia, like other impacted countries, implemented a Large-Scale Social Restriction (PSBB) scheme. This rule regulates various aspects ranging from the implementation of education, work to worship. In the field of worship, this rule calls for the temporary elimination of worship at houses of worship and replacing them with worship at home. This legislation has both positive and negative consequences in society. Some argue that closing houses of worship is unnecessary since other public spaces, such as markets, remain open. The law is analyzed using a qualitative approach derived from library science and religious studies. This study establishes that prohibiting worship in houses of worship in the event of a pandemic does not break Islamic law. The author assumes that upholding religion by carrying out worship and possible is as important as saving lives by keeping away from disease outbreaks.

Keywords: Covid-19, Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), Religion, Tha’un, Waba’.

A. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic that occurred throughout 2020 to date can be said to be a non-natural disaster (DeWit et al., 2020; Izumi et al., 2020). This virus is a new disease with a very fast transmission rate and a high mortality rate worldwide. The right drug has not been found to treat this disease (Roser et al., 2020; Kupferschmidt & Cohen, 2020). Only new vaccines have been discovered so far, and these have not been proven to prevent a person from contracting the disease. Almost all countries are believed to be infected by the virus epidemic at the moment.

The COVID-19 virus was first identified in December 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan. The World Health Organization (WHO) conducted further analysis and declared the coronavirus a global health emergency case on January 31, 2020. Any country on the planet (Zhu et al., 2020; Adhikari et al., 2020). 2 months after the determination of March 11, 2020, the viral disease was declared a pandemic. Until January 9, 2021, the number of COVID-19 sufferers has reached 90,833,894 people,
with a death toll of 1,942,974 people worldwide. Until now, it is not known when this pandemic will end; even some experts predict that the virus will never completely disappear (Yong, 2020; Tabish, 2020).

In Islam, the disease is often associated with Bala’s calamity, slander, adzab. Diseases can also be in the form of a type of bacteria created by Allah even though it results from human action itself (Bimaa kasabat Aydin-nas). In other words, use the term waba ‘or thaa’uun. The meaning of thaa’uun is a contagious disease with a very wide range, a disease that pollutes the air and can eat away at the body, and a disease that can cause death in a fraction of a second, very quickly (Firdaus, 2020; Maulana, 2020).

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani explained that waba ‘is an epidemic and hemorrhagic disease, Thaa’uun, which means a deadly contagious disease which could be due to an attack by a genie in the blood which causes a very poisonous blood clot that cannot be treated by a doctor (Arif, 2020a). This was also agreed upon by Ibn al Qayyim regarding thaa’uun. There are three things: first, the symptoms that doctors can generally diagnose. Second, death is caused by infectious diseases. Third, the factors caused by the remnants of the torments of the Children of Israel and the disturbance of the jinn (Arif, 2020b). However, as Muslims, we are always patient and trustworthy in facing all the trials and calamities that come our way.

Allah SWT said in Surah Al-Baqarah: 155-156: “And We will certainly test you with a little fear, hunger, lack of wealth, souls, and fruit. And give good news to those who are patient. (That is) people who, when disaster strikes, say, “Inna lillahi wa Inna ilaihi roji’uun, (verily we belong to Allah and it is to Him that we return)”.

As the majority in Indonesia, Muslims must address this from an Islamic perspective and be as objective as possible. The mass media, both in predominantly Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries, also need to know Islamic wisdom in dealing with a pandemic. This religious perspective has a very strong influence in awakening people to certain actions, including dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak (Ghofur & Subahri, 2020).

The attention of the country and the world is focused on handling this large and disturbing pandemic. Various policies were issued, and large budgets were allocated to overcome them (Vaka et al., 2020). Some of the policies issued by the Indonesian state include Social Distancing, health quarantine, which is then outlined in Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). The budget allocated for Covid-19 countermeasures reached IDR 405.1 trillion (Thorik, 2020). As the Covid-19 outbreak in Indonesia has accelerated, various government regulations have been passed down one after another, including social assistance in the name of Covid19. There are many imbalances and abuses, both conflicts between fellow communities in the lower
order, conflicts with the government, conflicts with religious leaders, and companies because most companies have laid off their employees (Nasruddin & Haq, 2020).

According to data from the Ministry of Labor, until May 1, 2020, there have been 1,722,958 workers from the formal and informal sectors who have been dismissed or laid off. The amount is the newly verified data. There are still around 1.2 million workers whose data is being validated by the Ministry of Manpower. This means that the number of people who have lost their jobs could reach 3 million during this pandemic. Since the coronavirus broke out and became a pandemic; layoffs have continued to occur. Data from the Ministry of Manpower, as of April 20, 2020, states that nearly three million employees have been laid off or have been laid off.

Indonesia has adopted a Large-Scale Social Restriction (PSBB) scheme in order to halt the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. This law applies to school and work holidays, worship rituals, and activities in public buildings (Fauzi, 2020). In its implementation, the PSBB regulations, especially regarding religious activities, require a temporary suspension of worship activities and replace them in their respective homes. This policy reaps pros and cons in society. Some people feel "disturbed" because their worship activities are interfered with by this rule. In addition, they compare it with activities in the market that are still wide open. Therefore they consider this policy not necessarily justifiable under Islamic law.

Based on the description above, it is very relevant and interesting to study the Handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic through the Islamic Religious Approach. This is important as part of providing a comprehensive understanding to all levels of society to understand and comply with government decisions in protecting their citizens.

B. METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach in order to comprehend the different topics discovered through the testing process. It does so through the use of information interpretation methods and library research (Sugiyono, 2010). The content analysis methodology is a form of study that is used to ascertain a text's conclusions. In other words, content analysis is a form of study that aims to uncover the author's embodied and latent ideas. Meanwhile, this study's library analysis draws on secondary data and references such as research findings, papers, and reference books that address topics relevant to the research theme (Gunawan, 2013). Through this approach, it is hoped that the Islamic viewpoint on COVID-19 would become apparent.

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C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As the main source of Islamic teachings, the Qur’an and al-Hadith contain various teachings for human life. The scholars divide the contents of the Qur’an and al-Hadith into three major parts, namely aqidah, morality, and sharia. In the Koran, the explanation is often global about worship and muamalah. It only contains the basics or principles for various legal problems in Islam. Starting from this basis or principle, the Prophet Muhammad SAW explained through his various hadiths. These two sources are then used as the basis for scholars in developing Islamic law, especially in the broader field of human social life (mu’amalah).

The discussion of social life in Islamic teachings is in the field of syari’at, which regulates the very broad rules of human social life. What is certain is that the purpose of Islamic law is to benefit human life more broadly. What is reflected in the maqashid al-Syariah (several objectives of the syari’at) or what is often called kulliyat al-khamsah (five general principles)? The five maqashids are: Hifdzu al-din (protecting religion), Hifdzu al-nafs (protecting the soul), Hifdzu al-aql (protecting the mind), Hifdzu al-mal (protecting property), and Hifdzu al-nasab (protecting offspring) (Al-Syatibi, nd).

All rules that are ordered or prohibited in Islamic teachings in principle refer to the Shari’as five objectives that Allah SWT. Take care for the benefit of human life, not only for believers but also for the whole universe. This is what is stated in the Qur’an, Surat Al-Anbiya (21) verse 107, which means: “And We do not send you, but to (be) a mercy for all the worlds”.

In conjunction with the Covid-19 pandemic's incidence, which was in almost 215 countries with 3,356,205 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 238,730 people worldwide (www.covid19.go.id), It is a phenomenon that must be anticipated its spread that cannot be through a medical approach alone, but a variety of approaches that involve multiple scientific disciplines, including religion. Because indirectly the excesses from this pandemic will impact the socio-religious dimensions of life, such as congregational prayers at mosques or other religious activities that involve many people, their implementation is eliminated in mosques and diverted in their respective homes, not only that socio-religious life. others in the scope of social interaction will experience inactivity due to the enactment of physical distancing or social distancing (Arif, 2020b).

From this phenomenon, a very dilemmatic problem will emerge; on the one hand, the implementation of religious law must be implemented, but on the other hand, there are limitations in the implementation of this law in anticipation of the spread of the Covid-19 virus outbreak through social interaction in the implementation of the religious law (Usman et al., 2020).
Seeing a situation like this, religion is also required to be present in providing solutions to obstructed social life as well as providing awareness to the public through a religious approach in anticipating this epidemic so that it does not spread even further, because it is following the principle of one of the objectives of religious law (maqashid al shari‘ah) this is hifdzu al-nafs or guarding every human soul. This means that Islamic syari‘at is not ordered but to protect the life of every human soul. This basic principle is the basis for implementing every Islamic syari‘at in any situation or situation (Shidiq, 2021; Qotadah, 2020).

**Disaster Theology**

From an Islamic perspective that all forms of disease, damage to the universe, or whatever badness befalls humans are reinforcements' (means of testing) and slander (forging) and can also be punished as a consequence of human actions themselves (Firdaus, 2020).

Allah SWT said in Surah Al-Shura verse 30 and Al-Rum verse 41 which sounds, namely: "And whatever calamities that befall you then are caused by the deeds of your own hands, and Allah forgives most (of your mistakes)". "It has appeared that the damage on land and at sea was caused by the actions of human hands, so that Allah will feel for them a part of (the result) of their actions, so that they will return (to the right path)"

From the two verses above, it is explained that the basic principle of all material and non-material disasters that occur is the result of damage caused by human behavior itself. However, this disaster can be a selection and verification of Allah to His servants, whether he is successful in maintaining the principles of faith in such a condition or whether this condition makes his belief fade?.

This is indicated in one of His words in Surah al-Ankabut verses 2-3, which states: "Do people think that they are allowed (alone) to say: "We have believed, "while they are not being tested anymore? and Verily We have tested those who were before them, Then Verily Allah knows those who are true and Verily He knows those who lie".

The description above confirms that whatever forms of events that occur in this universe, including the COVID-19 pandemic, are a result of human behavior itself, which can be a punishment or can be a means of verifying faith for a believer for Allah to test the level of quality of someone’s faith, whether he believes or their faith is false.

**Terminology of the Plague in Islam**

The problem of infectious diseases between humans, whether it is an epidemic (spreading in an area or the surrounding area) or a pandemic (spreading to many countries in the world) not only this time occurred in the form of a COVID-19
pandemic, but in recent times there has been a SARS or MERS pandemic. Including when the time of the Prophet Muhammad, there was an epidemic that was transmitted between humans.

In connection with this contagious epidemic, there are two terms of plague in Islam, namely \textit{waba'} and \textit{tha’un}. These two terms describe the nature of the spread as well as the quality of the outbreak. \textit{Waba'} is a disease that is contagious (\textit{kullu maradhin’ amm}), or if you use the medical term, it is epidemic and pandemic. As for \textit{tha’un} is a complicated disease that causes death very quickly (\textit{kullu maradhin ghamidh qatil}). Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani explained that based on the opinion of a number of scholars, \textit{tha’un} disease is usually characterized by the appearance of red spots or lumps on the body that cause pain, accompanied by high fever and sometimes accompanied by vomiting called \textit{tha’un} because of the attack “\textit{jinn}” in the blood. For modernists, the term “\textit{jinn}” is meant to mean super-spirits that are in the blood, including viruses. Ibn Sina said that the malignant disease was caused by a poisonous substance (\textit{maddah summiyyah}) in dirty blood (\textit{dam radi’}) (Hajar et al., nd).

According to Iman An-Nawawi, \textit{tha’un} is more specific, narrow, or specific than the word \textit{waba’}. \textit{Tha’un} are purulent sores that appear on the elbows, armpits, hands, fingers, or all over the body. The wound that appears is accompanied by stinging and pain. These sores appear together with a burning sensation. Around the wound the skin is blackened, reddish, greenish, and slightly reddish purple. Other symptoms are increased heart rate and vomiting (An-Nawawi, nd).

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**Limitation of Social Interaction as One Solution**

Islam has provided several solutions in dealing with various disasters in epidemics in anticipation of not spreading to a wider audience. This concept must be understood collectively in social life so that there are no misunderstandings between community members. Rasulullah in several hadiths in response to the epidemic that occurred in a place ordered social distancing and isolation of areas that were affected by the plague, as in several hadiths below:

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عن عبد الله بن عامر بن زية أن عمرا خرج إلى الشام فلم يراك سرع بن بلغه أن الوان فد وقع بالشام فأخبر عبد الرحمن بن عوف أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال إذا سمعتم بهمرض فلا تفردوه عليه وإذا وقع بأرض واتتم به فلا تخرجوه فزارة من فرج فرع عن الخطاب من سرع
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From Abdullah bin Amir bin Rab'ah, Umar bin Khattab RA traveled to Sham. When he arrived at Sarah, Umar received news that an epidemic was hitting the Syam region. Abdurrahman bin Auf told Umar that Rasulullah SAW had said, 'If you hear of a plague in an area, then you don't enter it. But if an epidemic occurs in the area you are in, then don't leave that place.' Then Umar bin Khattab turned around, leaving Sarah.

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 حذَّثَي إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْحَنْظَلِيَّ أَخْبَرَنَا النَّسْرُ جَالِدَةً ذَلِكَ دَاوُدُ بْنِ أَبِي فُرَاتٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ يَحْيَى رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَخْبَرَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلِّي اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الطَّاعُونِ فَقَالَ كَانَ عَذَابًا يَبْعَثُهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى مَن يَشَاءُ فَجَعَهُ اللَّهُ رَحْمَةً لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ عَيْنَ بُنَى فِي بَلْدٍ يَكُونُ فِيهِ وَيَمْكُثُ فِيهَا لَ يَخْزُجُ مِثْلَهَا وَيَمْكُثُ فِيهَا مَثْلَهَا إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْزِيَتِهِ
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Has told me Ishaq bin Ibrahim Al Hanzhali had told us An Nader had told us Dawud bin Abi Furat from Abdullah bin Buraidah from Yahya bin Ya’mar that Aisyah radiiullahu’anhuına informed him, he once asked Rasulullah Sallallahu’alaihiwasallam about *tha’un*, the Prophet said: It is a punishment that Allah sends to whomever He wills, and Allah makes it a blessing for the believers. And not a servant in a country that is affected by *tha’un* disease and he lives there, he does not flee from that country patiently and hopes for a reward with Allah; he realizes that nothing will happen to him other than what He has outlined for him, other than for him a reward like a reward martyrdom.

In response to the spread and spread of COVID-19, which threatens the sustainability of social activities of the world community, there are several mitigation efforts recommended by WHO. Based on the level of risk, mitigation efforts against COVID-19 can be grouped into two, namely low risk and high risk. In
high-risk mitigation, mitigation is carried out by stopping all activities directly related to the old patient for 14 days, doing the best possible isolation to avoid physical contact with the environment. In low-level risk mitigation, efforts to prevent COVID-19 are carried out through self-limitation to carry out activities or social activities that can invite crowds and gatherings. It falls into two-level categories: the implementation of health protocol rules referred to by WHO as social and physical distancing. According to the WHO, social distancing entails keeping social distance by avoiding all events, activities, and locations that attract masses and mass meetings. Social distancing imposes limitations on not just one’s association with the culture, but also on one’s physical mobility. Individuals are advised to remain in their own homes to avoid external interaction with those around them in this situation (Greenstone & Nigam, 2020).

If social distancing requires social distance, then it is different from physical distancing. Physical distancing means keeping physical distance. This definition is slightly narrower than social distancing, which requires the overall distance behavior. Physical distancing entails obtaining permission from each person or peer association to engage in social activities and maintain interaction with others. However, it must be performed in accordance with defined health protocols. When social distancing is applied, individuals are not permitted to shake hands and must retain an ideal distance of one meter when communicating with others, including those who are ill or at high risk of contracting COVID-19 (Aminnejad & Alikhani, 2020).

To date, social-physical distancing policies are the most widely applied form of mitigation worldwide. Even some countries with a Muslim majority apply social and physical distancing policies strictly and thoroughly to religious activities that are considered sacred, such as praying in mosques, replacing Friday prayers with midday prayers at home, postponing weddings, and so on. In Saudi Arabia, for example, to break the chain of spread and transmission of COVID-19 in their country, starting from February 27, 2020, the Saudi government has adopted a policy of suspending Umrah services for all countries in the world. After a while, the local government continued with a policy of temporarily closing two Haramain mosques, Masjid Nabawi and the Haram Mosque, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. And the latest is the policy of postponing the Hajj pilgrimage in 2020 for several countries with high confirmed cases, including Indonesia (Chopra, 2020).

As a disease classified as contagious and deadly, both Tha’un and waba’ both have the risk of being quite dangerous and threatening. Therefore, Islam strongly recommends that every individual or group be very careful by trying to distance themselves from any person, place, or object at risk of spreading. In this regard, Al-Asqalani emphasized that it is strictly prohibited to carry out activities or activities that invite crowds and gatherings in a situation like this. Even though it is in the form of religious activities. In the case of the Tha’un plague that occurred in Egypt at
the end of 833 H, the death toll was less than 40 people in the previous situation. However, after the holding of religious activities in the form of prayer together in the field, the death toll experienced a significant increase, to thousands. In addition, Islam also recommends maintaining the body’s resistance by consuming healthy foods and drinks containing nutrients to increase the body's strength. Suppose this explanation is drawn into the current realm. In that case, this precautionary attitude and self-preservation are a calcic form of contemporary health protocols that are currently popular with social distancing and physical distancing.

This is related to the maintenance of religion. However, in practice, the application of social-physical distancing is carried out by tightening religious activities that invite crowds, but that does not mean removing religious obligations that fall into primary categories such as the five daily prayers and so on (dharuriyyat). Likewise, at the hajjiyyat level, the maintenance of religion in the application of social-psychological distancing refers to efforts to distance oneself from difficulties in carrying out worship itself, such as choosing to perform obligatory prayers at home rather than doing it in congregation in mosques but with the consequence of making the virus more spread and contagious (dharuriyyat). Likewise, at the hajjiyyat level, the maintenance of religion in the application of social-psychological distancing refers to efforts to distance oneself from difficulties in carrying out worship itself, such as choosing to perform obligatory prayers at home rather than doing it in congregation in mosques but with the consequence of making the virus more spread and contagious (dharuriyyat).

Therefore, the implementation of social-physical distancing, which in practice also targets religion, such as compulsory prayers at home, replacing Friday prayers with midday prayers at home, applying a distance of 1 meter and so on, all of which are a form of compromise between maintaining religion and preserving the soul from the dangers of the virus. The deadly, both of which are equally dharuriyyat. Prayers must be dharuriyat in nature and also avoid contracting COVID19 as well as dharuriyyat. Thus, the middle way is to continue to perform obligatory prayers but utilizing social-physical distancing to avoid contracting COVID-19 so that the care of religion and soul can both be done, likewise with the maintenance of other shari’ah goals. Therefore, if we refer to this fundamental theoretical analysis, it is clear that a series of mitigation of COVID-19 through the application of social and physical distancing rules, in many aspects, is following the principle of benefit.

D. CONCLUSION

The very fast and massive spread of the COVID-19 epidemic has made the Indonesian government and the rest of the world generally have no other choice but to impose restrictions on social interaction and lockdowns. One of the things that are prohibited is huddling and gathering activities that can cause rapid transmission. In
the field of religion, this prohibition can be in the form of a prohibition on performing congregational prayers at the mosque, performing Friday prayers in congregation, recitation activities, tabligh Akbar, etc. Islam believes that carrying out religious orders, which is the means of maintaining and enforcing religion and avoiding diseases and viruses that can endanger lives, is the same. The law is balanced. Therefore, the middle way that can be taken is to continue to carry out religious worship such as prayer but still pay attention to health protocols such as maintaining distance or worshiping at home. Therefore, the implementation of PSBB by the government is not a contradictory policy and is prohibited in religion.

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