

## Editorial

# How Religious Leaders around the World Are Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

*The Covid-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges for religious leaders around the world, who must balance the need to protect public health with spiritual and emotional needs. Despite these obstacles, religious leaders have risen to the occasion and implemented protective measures for their communities, including social isolation and vaccination encouragement. Through online counseling, virtual gatherings, and practical assistance, they have also provided spiritual and emotional support. Lessons learned include the significance of adapting to new technologies, putting public health and safety first, and the vital role of religious institutions in providing community and social support during times of crisis.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Pandemic; Religious Leaders; Response

Significant shifts have occurred in religious groups on every continent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The response of religious leaders to the epidemic has been met with unprecedented difficulties, one of which is the requirement to strike a balance between the spiritual requirements of their communities and the requirement to safeguard public health. In this editorial, we will investigate how religious leaders all across the world are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the triumphs and problems that they have encountered, and we will highlight some of the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences.

The requirement for religious leaders to adjust to new practices of their faith has been one of the most significant obstacles that they have faced. In order to prevent the virus from spreading further, the governments of numerous countries have imposed regulations that prohibit public meetings of any kind, including religious services. Online services, social media, and other types of virtual interaction are some examples of the new ways that religious leaders have been forced to discover new ways to connect with the people they serve. This represents a huge transition for many different religious traditions, which have traditionally placed a large amount of importance on being part of a physical community and interacting with others.

In spite of these difficulties, religious leaders all over the world have risen to the occasion and put in place a variety of safeguards to protect their congregations against the virus. During services, several places of worship have begun requiring guests to wear masks and increasing the amount of physical space that exists between worshippers. These are just two examples of the many social distance policies that have been introduced by religious organizations. A number of religious leaders have both encouraged the people in their

communities to get vaccinated against the virus and tried to debunk myths and misunderstandings around the vaccination.

In addition to these initiatives, religious leaders have also played an essential role in the provision of spiritual and emotional support to the communities in which they serve during the pandemic. This has included organizing virtual gatherings and prayer groups, in addition to providing online counseling and support services. In many instances, religious leaders have also made efforts to provide practical help to those people who have been impacted by the pandemic. For example, they may have provided individuals in need with food and other critical goods.

In spite of these attempts, the response of religious leaders to the COVID-19 pandemic has also been met with opposition and criticism. Several people have accused religious leaders of not taking the threat posed by the virus seriously enough, as well as of disregarding the advice of public health officials by continuing to organize big meetings. Others have leveled criticism at religious leaders for their alleged role in the dissemination of false information and conspiracy theories concerning the virus and the vaccination.

In spite of these obstacles, there are significant things that may be picked up from the way religious leaders responded to the pandemic. One thing that can be learned from this experience is how critical it is to remain flexible in the face of ever-evolving threats and to seek out novel approaches to maintaining connections with communities. Another thing that may be learned from this is how important it is to put public health and safety first, even when there are tremendous emotional and spiritual needs to be met. In conclusion, the response of religious leaders illustrates not just the significance of social and communal assistance during times of crisis, but also the vital role that religious organizations may play in giving this support.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 epidemic has provided tremendous issues for religious leaders all over the world. These leaders are tasked with navigating the need to strike a balance between the protection of public health and the fulfillment of spiritual and emotional needs. The response of religious leaders to the pandemic has been met with a number of challenges and critiques; yet, there are valuable lessons that may be gained from their experiences. It is vital that religious leaders continue to adapt to the changing epidemic and develop new methods to support their congregations, while simultaneously emphasizing public health and safety. This is because the pandemic is continuing to evolve.

### **This Issue**

This issue features ten articles with some authors from abroad: Malaysia, India, Nigeria, and Australia. Using a qualitative research design and case study methodology, the first study examines how social media influences the perception of religious moderation among millennials. The research demonstrates that religious moderation can be internalized via social media intermediaries such as videos, articles, and persuasion techniques. The findings of this study indicate that the distribution of religious materials that address contemporary issues can enhance the implementation of religious moderation among the millennial generation without compromising the essence of religious education. In order to examine the efficacy of religious moderation in dealing with pluralism in Indonesia, additional research is advised.

The second study sought to analyze the cognitive process of Islamic bank customers regarding usury and the differences between Muslim and non-Muslim bank customers' perspectives on usury practice in the bank. Interviews with twenty customers of Bank Syariah Indonesia Manado, ten Muslims and ten non-Muslims, revealed that only four of ten Muslim participants became customers

of the Islamic bank due to their belief in the bank's usury-free status. In addition, all customers agreed that loan sharks' lending practices should be classified as usury, whereas not all customers viewed the current banking industry's lending practices as usury. The third research aims to create a learning taxonomy for Islamic education that accommodates emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects, based on neuro-theology, neuro-philosophy, and neuro-education. Hierarchical thinking in Islamic education was found to have relevance to six brain components, which can be narratively synthesized into a learning taxonomy. The brain components and hierarchical thinking were integrated and synthesized through a systematic review. This study shows the potential for future theoretical discourse on the development of learning taxonomy in Islamic education.

The fourth article presents a literature review on the environmental responses of non-Islamic religions in Indonesia. The study examines Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism and concludes that these religions respond to the crisis by emphasizing environmental conservation, safeguarding the environment, glorifying God's creations, and emphasizing the value of beauty and aesthetics. The research emphasizes the significance of theo-ecology and moral teachings in addressing environmental issues and promoting sustainable practices. The study's primary data came from articles published in scientific periodicals, and it was conducted online. The fifth article qualitatively analyzes the process of national fiqh actualization and its role in shaping an attitude of religious moderation in Indonesia. The study concludes that national fiqh seeks to build a nationalist humanistic paradigm to reduce differences and has an orientation to unity and integrity in maintaining national sovereignty wrapped with nationalism. The actualization of national fiqh is crucial in building Indonesia's religious moderation by

appreciating the teachings of Islam in a complex and contextualist manner, strengthened by cultivating moderate, fair, tolerant, humanist, ethical, religious, and nationalist attitudes.

The sixth article presents a discussion on the significance of cultural awareness for medical professionals who treat Muslim patients, particularly within the framework of Islamic medical ethics. The doctrine of monotheism stands at the heart of Islam, and the religion's divine law is intended to govern every facet of human existence. A "consensus decree" that includes a varied representation and a transparent decision-making process is frequently chosen when it comes to making decisions on medical care. This research identifies fundamental concepts in Islamic medical ethics, with the goal of assisting medical professionals in developing a deeper understanding of Muslim patients' cultural contexts and providing treatment that is more sensitive to such contexts. The seventh article offers a solution for the problem of developing students' piety through the use of blended learning by mixing online and offline teaching methods. The strategy places an emphasis on active participation from students as well as the use of digital tools like YouTube, Google Classroom, and Interactive Mentimeter. The study finds that collaborative and contextual learning meets students' needs in developing piety and contributing to Islamic civilization in the future. The study links blended learning media with the development of piety among students in the Chemical Analysis department. Classroom action research and literature studies are used to make this connection.

The eighth article investigates the extent of religious interactions and the relationship between devotees of various faiths in Osogbo. Despite the open relationship between people of diverse faiths, the study is historical and descriptive, revealing that the actions and inactions of people of other faiths in Osogbo pose a threat to social cohesion in the community. The article suggests that followers of the

three religions engage in discussion and mutual understanding in order to achieve peaceful coexistence within the community. Using a normative-juridical research approach, the ninth article examines Baitul Maal Wa Tamwil's bankruptcy settlement from the perspectives of both positive law in Indonesia and Islamic law. According to the study, the major cause of bankruptcy was a variety of internal issues, such as limits in material legislation, human resources, legal culture, and supporting infrastructure. The ideal solution would be a new bankruptcy regulation that would incorporate the different provisions that are still scattered across several existing laws and regulations.

The ninth article looks at Muhammad Umer Chapra, a notable scholar in Islamic economics, and his writings, which include *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective* and "The Islamic Vision of Development in the Light of Maqid Al-Sharh." The study examines whether Chapra's thesis is consistent with the concepts of maqashid al shariah proposed by other Muslim thinkers, as well as the five fiqh legal maxims. The study results reveal that Chapra's ideas are consistent with maqashid al shariah and the five fiqh legal maxims.

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