

Editorial

Ethical Dimensions of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Some Religious Studies Point of View

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Abstract

Researchers in the field of religious studies have been actively exploring the moral implications of the pandemic from various angles. They have investigated healthcare ethics, addressing issues such as the allocation of limited resources, vaccination prioritization, and the ethical responsibilities of healthcare workers. These scholars have drawn on religious ideas and values to inform ethical decision-making, emphasizing justice, equity, compassion, and solidarity. Moreover, they have examined the pandemic's impact on social justice, including access to healthcare, economic disparities, and racial and ethnic inequalities in COVID-19 outcomes. Additionally, scholars have examined the moral responsibilities of individuals and communities, exploring the ethics of behaviors like social distancing and mask-wearing, as well as the obligations of religious leaders and institutions. Through their research, religious studies scholars provide insights and frameworks for navigating the ethical challenges presented by the pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19; Emotional Well-Being; Ethical Dimensions; Moral Responsibilities; Religious Studies Scholar; Social Justice; Spiritual Well-Being

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.

Researchers in the field of religious studies have been delving into the pandemic's moral implications in a variety of different ways with some topics, including healthcare, social justice, moral responsibility, spiritual and emotional well-being. During the COVID-19 epidemic, scholars in the field of religious studies have been actively engaged in investigating the ethical dimensions of healthcare. They have investigated important ethical problems that have arisen as a result of the distribution of limited healthcare resources, the prioritizing of various groups for vaccination, and the ethical obligations of healthcare personnel. These academics have endeavored to get an understanding of how the ethical choices that are made in the setting of healthcare might be informed and shaped by religious ideas and values. They have explored the ideals of justice, equity, compassion, and solidarity in order to guide the allocation and distribution of healthcare resources. They have done this by drawing on the rich traditions and teachings of a variety of religions. This ethical discourse has helped to build rules and frameworks that make it easier for people to make decisions that are morally informed when faced with a crisis.

Researchers in the field of religious studies have acknowledged the profound significance of social justice across a variety of religious traditions. As a result, they have initiated research projects to investigate the ways in which the COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated pre-existing

inequities and injustices. These researchers have explored the effect that the epidemic has had on access to healthcare, providing light on the inequities that underprivileged people confront while attempting to obtain medical services. In addition to this, they have investigated the economic inequalities that have been made worse as a result of the crisis and have investigated the ways in which disadvantaged communities have been disproportionately affected. In addition, academics in the field of religion studies have investigated the racial and ethnic differences in the outcomes of the COVID-19 study, with the goal of comprehending the underlying systemic causes that contribute to these discrepancies. Researchers are making important contributions to a more in-depth knowledge of the ways in which the epidemic has further illuminated and exacerbated societal inequities through the work that they are doing in their studies.

During the recent COVID-19 pandemic, academics in the field of religious studies have been actively engaged in the examination of the moral responsibilities of both individuals and communities. They have investigated the ethical features of behaviors such as social distancing, wearing masks, and adhering to public health measures, assessing how these activities connect with religious teachings and ethical principles. Specifically, they have focused on how these behaviors relate to the spread of disease. In addition, academics have studied the ethical obligations of religious leaders and institutions in terms of supplying their congregations with leadership, assistance, and safety measures. These studies investigate the religious communities' moral responsibility to place public health and the well-being of others ahead of their own, while also taking into account the religious freedoms and practices that may need to be balanced. Scholars make contributions to the ethical discourse and provide important insights for individuals and religious communities to help them negotiate the issues presented by the pandemic through the research that they conduct.

Researchers in the field of religious studies have conducted a substantial amount of study to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's emotional and spiritual well-being. They have investigated how the epidemic has influenced individuals' spiritual and emotional life by causing disruptions in religious gatherings and activities, isolating people socially, and increasing their levels of fear. In addition, academics have explored the ways in which one's religious beliefs, rituals, and the support of one's community might act as sources of comfort, hope, and resilience during these trying times. These studies contribute to our understanding of the role that religion plays in promoting psychological well-being and creating resilience in the face of adversity by evaluating the experiences and coping mechanisms of persons who come from varied religious backgrounds.

Overall, religious studies scholars have made significant contributions in exploring the ethical dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic, approaching the subject from diverse perspectives. Drawing upon the deep well of ethical reflection within religious traditions, these scholars have sought to address contemporary challenges posed by the pandemic. They have examined how religious teachings and principles can guide ethical decision-making related to healthcare, resource allocation, social justice, and individual and community responsibilities. By applying insights from religious traditions, religious studies scholars offer a valuable framework for ethical analysis and provide guidance for navigating the complex moral dilemmas arising from the pandemic.

This Issue

This issue is unique in term of numbering. Traditionally, it should be number Vol. 22, No. 1. However, since the journal needs to be easier for readers to follow, this issue is numbered Vol. 21, No. 3. It means that in the next issues, Vol. 22, No. 1, will be started at February 2023. This policy on numbering the issue was based on suggestions by many experts in Indonesian context of journal policy. Furthermore, this is the first to

use full English name, *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*. This name was based on International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) provided by Pusat Nasional ISSN Indonesia on April 18, 2022 and is available at <https://issn.brin.go.id/terbit/detail/1455943284>.

This issue features fifteen articles with some authors from abroad: Egypt, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. The first article examines the ways in which diocesan priests overcame the challenges they faced while studying in seminaries by examining the temptations they faced and the ways in which they overcame them. The researchers conducted interviews with ten different priests using the transcendental phenomenology methodology. From these interviews, they were able to identify six distinct themes of temptations, some of which include family-related temptations, sexuality, divergence from the framework of the seminary, and others. The priests overcame these challenges by adopting coping mechanisms such as self-discipline, prayer, contemplation, and being faithful to the dictates of their priestly vocation. As a result, they were ultimately able to finish their seminary training and get ordained as Roman Catholic priests.

The second article takes a look at the ecotheological movement that's been taking place within the Muhammadiyah Environmental Council (MLH) as a reaction to the current state of the environment. It draws attention to the fact that the growth of ecotheology within Muslim communities such as Muhammadiyah represents a growing understanding in the Islamic world, which has traditionally been less active in addressing environmental challenges. In order to gain an understanding of the ecotheology movement within MLH, this study makes use of both descriptive and qualitative research methods. The research, which draws on liberation theology theory and ecotheology, shows how MLH's ecotheology movement is anchored in the theology of *Al-Ma'un* and has become a significant expression of religious community participation in addressing environmental concerns. Additionally, the research demonstrates how MLH's ecotheology

movement has become a significant manifestation of religious community engagement in addressing environmental concerns.

The third article investigates the difficulties encountered by Islamic Education Study Programs during the process of creating a curriculum for an International Class Program (ICP). The purpose of this study is to investigate the efforts that have been made by the State University of Surabaya, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, and the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology in Surabaya, Indonesia, to innovate and customize the curriculum for their respective Islamic Education Study Programs. The research makes use of a developmental research method to collect data through the means of visits, interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The qualitative approach and comparative analysis are both utilized in the research. The findings highlight the need for the establishment of international class programs within the Islamic Education Study Program, beginning with specialized classes, excellent classes, and international classes, with flexibility in terms of programs, curriculum, learning approaches, and multimedia applications. Specifically, the findings highlight the necessity for the establishment of international class programs within the Islamic Education Study Program.

The fourth article uses existential theory as a prism through which the narratives of 25 prophets who are referenced in the Qur'an are analyzed and discussed. The study indicates a positive correlation between the concepts of existential theory and the lives of the prophets by studying these concepts in relation to the lives of the prophets. On the other hand, no connection is formed with negative notions. For the purpose of conducting research on existential therapy within Muslim communities, it is beneficial to have an understanding of the correlation between the prophets in the Qur'an and existential philosophy. In addition, the findings of the study contribute to narrowing the gap between the opinions of Western philosophers and professionals in the

field of mental health and the Qur'an, which is considered a fundamental text in Islam.

The purpose of the fifth article was to look into the obstacles and prospects for the long-term growth of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, with a focus on establishing an effective quality and quantity management system. The study underlines the importance of assessing the success of Islamic education in combating radicalization, terrorism, and sexual harassment, as well as increasing human resources. A Scopus search returned 141 relevant papers on "Higher Education" AND "Management" AND "Islam" OR "Muslim," laying the groundwork for the investigation. According to the study, Islamic higher education's governance structure, structuralization, human resource capabilities, learning techniques, curriculum, and technological knowledge lag behind those of mainstream higher education. A fundamental hurdle to increasing the quality of Islamic higher education is a lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, both domestically and abroad. To address the study's weaknesses, future research should concentrate on exact measurements and narrower scopes to examine the governance of the Islamic higher education system within specific locations. Furthermore, comparative study across several nations will provide special insights into the issues that Islamic higher education faces in Indonesia.

Islamic legislation regarding wealth acquisition is an integral component of the Islamic economic system. The emergence of cryptocurrency as a new technological development in the global financial system has sparked debates among Islamic economists, financial experts, jurists, scholars, and institutions. The sixth paper adopts a qualitative methodology, drawing on various sources such as journal articles, textbooks, internet sources, fatāwā (verdicts) of Islamic scholars, and Islamic bodies. Through logical deduction and analysis of the Qur'ān and Ahādith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]), the paper explores the use of cryptocurrencies for wealth acquisition. It reveals that while many cryptocurrencies do not align with the Islamic

concept of wealth acquisition, there are some seemingly Shari'ah compliant cryptocurrencies. The paper concludes that there is a need for the development of Shari'ah compliant cryptocurrencies to cater to the financial activities and aspirations of Muslims and Muslim investors in their pursuit of wealth acquisition.

During the 17th century AD, the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam emerged as a prominent hub of Islamic scholarship and spirituality in the archipelago, with numerous renowned scholars in its midst. One such figure was Shaykh Abdurrauf As-Singkili, who held the position of Qadli Malikul Adil in the Kingdom. The seventh study aims to explore the specific contributions of Shaykh Abdurrauf as-Singkili to the establishment of Islamic law within the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam during this period. Through a literature study approach, analyzing Sheikh Abdurrauf as-Singkili's writings and related research, the study highlights his significant role in grounding Islamic law in Aceh as the Qadli Malikul Adil, particularly evident in his compilation of the *Mir'atu Thullab*, a comprehensive guidebook for the qadli, and his efforts to establish Aceh as an intellectual and spiritual center of Islam in the region.

The Indonesian Government has undertaken the construction of toll roads across various regions, including the 119 km Indralaya-Muara Enim intersection, aiming to enhance seamless connectivity for the community. The eighth article examines the concept of environmental change resulting from the toll road construction and its impact on the Indralaya community. Employing a qualitative approach with an inductive research type, data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus. The findings highlight the importance of environmental change based on mutual benefit, emphasizing the need for active involvement of the local community to foster favorable conditions. To minimize negative environmental impacts during development, dialogue and contributions from the surrounding community are essential. Although the construction of the Indralaya-Muara Enim toll road generally aligns with

the basic needs of maqashid sharia (ushul al khamsah), there remains a need for improved anticipation and consideration of public concerns, as evident in respondent feedback. It is crucial to adopt a structured and systematic approach to environmental changes associated with toll road construction, adhering to rules and legislation that facilitate solutions for mitigating negative impacts. This entails providing fair compensation for affected land or buildings, promptly addressing issues of air and noise pollution, and maintaining a responsive and responsible approach.

The ninth article examines the impact of local religious traditions on the shifting religious authority among young Muslims in Banten and Yogyakarta, particularly in relation to their engagement with social media activism (clicktivism). The prevalence of freedom of expression and the use of new media platforms since the fall of the New Order regime have greatly influenced the Muslim identity of youth, including issues related to local Islamic traditions. The research employed visual ethnography, observation, interviews, and focus group discussions to collect data, while employing Talal Asad's Discursive Tradition framework for analysis. The study reveals that the dissemination of information through social media has significantly influenced changes in religious practices, particularly concerning local Islamic traditions, reflecting the dynamic nature of young Muslims' discursive tradition on these platforms. Additionally, this process has led to a shift in religious authority, transitioning from a personal to an impersonal form.

Bantul Regency possesses 92.05 hectares of waqf land, distributed across 2,959 locations, with 76 percent of the land currently utilized for mosques and prayer rooms. Recognizing the potential of waqf land assets in poverty alleviation efforts, the tenth article study aims to optimize their utilization through hydroponic cultivation and biofloc simulations, develop a model for poverty alleviation based on the development of waqf land assets, and describe the implications of implementing this model. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research combines simulations and community interviews, with a particular focus on the

Sedayu and Banguntapan districts, given the high poverty rate in Bantul Regency, which stood at 138,066 individuals in 2020. The findings indicate that waqf land assets have the potential for community empowerment and can be effectively managed through the Model of Islamic Social Entrepreneurship, resulting in various implications for poverty alleviation efforts.

The eleventh article examines the challenges faced by Baha'i adherents in Indonesia in terms of societal recognition and civil rights restrictions. Focusing on the regional context of Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan, the research sheds light on the relationship between Baha'is, the majority Muslim community, and the local government. Employing a socio-legal approach, the study conducted field interviews and analyzed the data through various stages. The findings reveal that while Baha'i adherents have not achieved full recognition in Indonesian society and law, they have been well-received by the diverse and accepting people of Kubu Raya. However, the Kubu Raya Local Government has yet to fully recognize Baha'i adherents, resulting in limitations on their civil rights due to the absence of a Baha'i religion column in the government administration system.

The twelfth article evaluates the efficiency of Takaful companies in the Southeast Asia and Middle East regions from 2016 to 2020. A sample of 23 companies in Indonesia, 14 in Malaysia, three in the UAE, and 31 in Saudi Arabia was analyzed. The Stochastic Frontier Analysis (SFA) method was employed to calculate the efficiency values of Islamic insurance companies, followed by the Mann-Whitney test. The findings indicate that the median efficiency value of companies in Southeast Asia (0.26) was lower than that of the Middle East (0.32). However, the Mann-Whitney test results showed no significant difference in the median efficiency values between the two regions. This research provides novel and valuable insights into the performance of Takaful companies during the specified period and offers important implications for policymakers in understanding the efficiency conditions of Takaful companies in the

region. In particular, policymakers in Southeast Asia should focus on promoting the expansion of low-efficiency Takaful operators, with Indonesia's small Takaful companies requiring increased popularity among the public to enhance income and efficiency levels.

Since the advent of the industrial revolution, human civilization has undergone rapid changes. However, the role of theology in benefiting humanity seems to have diminished. The thirteenth explores the evolution of theology, its significance for Asian theologians, and its function in addressing human suffering during global crises. The research adopts a literature-based approach and examines various theological frameworks, such as Muangthai's Waterbuffalo Theology, Catholicism's Polulorum Progression, Choan-Seng Song, Indonesian Pluralism Theology, Secularism Theology, Liberation Theology, Indian Dalit Theology, Korean Minjung Theology, and Philippine Struggle Theology. The key finding is that theology serves as a means for individuals to seek solutions to life's challenges, including poverty, education, the economy, security, and politics. By establishing a deeper connection with God, theology offers hope and addresses human predicaments by promoting holiness, eschatological victory, and the preservation of humanity's hope amid suffering and calamity.

Indonesia and Malaysia share a common Islamic character and historical background, but the development of Islamic law, including waqf law, differs due to their distinct colonial histories. Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch, while Malaysia was colonized by the British, resulting in different systems and state administrations. The fourteenth article aims to examine the impact of positive legal frameworks on the development of productive waqf instruments in Indonesia and Malaysia, despite their differing legal systems. Using a juridical-normative approach and qualitative model, this research analyzes literature data through the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that waqf legal products have been in existence in both countries since the sultanate era, colonial era, and

independence era. In Indonesia, the focus of waqf legal products primarily revolves around immovable objects, with separate regulations governing them. However, since the introduction of the Waqf Law in 2004, the scope of waqf has expanded to include movable and productive assets in line with developments in the financial and business sectors. Similarly, in Malaysia, waqf legal products are encompassed within family law, which is regulated differently in each region, including the territories of the alliance. Productive waqf has also ventured into economic activities to fulfill its intended purpose.

The fifteenth article examines the effectiveness of counseling services provided to individuals from diverse churches and religions. The main objective is to determine whether these counselees can benefit from the counseling process. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, focusing on descriptive data obtained from the spoken words and behavior of the counselees. The study was conducted at the Yayasan Tembok Ratapan Timor in Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. The findings indicate that counselees from different churches and religions are able to resolve their issues when their potential is recognized and tapped into. The humanistic approach of Carl Rogers employed by the counselor proves highly effective in maximizing the counselees' potential. Moreover, an examination of religious theology supports the conclusion that counselees from various religions deserve to experience the love of God.

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