

# Covid 19: Political Cooperation and Ritual Modification of Religious Worship Through Large-Scale Social Restrictions

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## Abstract

The current spread of a dangerous virus called Covid-19 has created various polemics and problems in people's lives, including political, economic, social, and religious issues in particular. For example, the polemic regarding religious worship rituals in which the case has resulted in various pros and cons reactions from among the community. People who are pro think that this is a form of prevention and anticipation of the spread of the coronavirus or Covid-19, which is currently endemic. People who oppose the suspension view maintaining religion such as prayer (Muslim) are more important than preserving soul or life. Therefore, this research aims to explain various reviews related to political cooperation in handling religious rituals during the Covid-19 period. The author's method in this study is to use full qualitative methods and documentation data associated with this research study's topic, then analyzed descriptively.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, PSBB, Politic, Religious Rituals

## INTRODUCTION

The impact of Covid 19 in several countries, as written by Bernd Bonfert, has changed the situation a lot [1]. The country's seemingly weak foundations in the face of the Covid 19 virus provide opportunities for many state leaders to take control of their economy, politics, society, and culture in ways that might not have been unthinkable a few months ago. Public spending restrictions have been lifted, community mobilization has been restricted, private hospitals have been nationalized, and religious activities have changed considerably. The state temporarily covers wages, and universal basic income schemes are being drafted. At the same time, countries also implement emergency measures to limit and monitor people's mobility. In Indonesia, although regulations related to Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) have been issued through Regulation of the Minister of Health No.9 of 2020, this PSBB can only be implemented if the local government proposes it to the minister of health. In the absence of full control of the local government in dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic and the increasing spread of the virus in the community, it has caused much turmoil in the community [2]. In many ways, the community needs to anticipate the spread of this virus so that it does not spread further. On the other hand, the government is only carrying out the appeal, which, of course, has many rights to allow this appeal to be ignored. One of the most highlighted matters in the case of the Covid 19 pandemic is religious rituals. The pandemic's major impact is changing the routine of people's religious rituals. In the past two or three months, the services were still routinely carried out in places of worship as usual, but when Covid 19 spread, everything must be adapted. Muslims are

encouraged to replace Friday prayers with zuhr prayers and pray at their respective homes. While Christians do weekly worship online and Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucius are not much different in appeals to their followers. If you expand the scale to the world, as explained by Harmeet Kaur, the Coronavirus has forced religious leaders to change religious rituals. As the coronavirus continues to spread worldwide, religious leaders in several religious traditions are modifying practices and adapting services. The church offers online worship and broadcasts on TV. Synagogues can stream readings of Esther's Scroll for Purim. Muslim Umrah services are temporarily suspended, the Kaaba is closed [3]. Let us raise our heads for a moment when we hear a lot of news and see for ourselves in several areas where the build of solidarity and cooperation between lines is increasingly stretched. The slogans to help and take care of each other, build solidarity and minimize the rapid spread of the virus make several villages apply lockdown and quarantine of local areas accompanied by some local regulations. The cooperation constructed and started to be built like this shows how cross-sector consolidation among the lower class people in several stages has begun. Unfortunately, when the lower class is increasingly active in strengthening solidarity to face the Covid 19 pandemic together, the government tends not to be serious. We can see this from the regulations, information, and education in handling this pandemic. As we know, many worship houses are still carrying out normal religious activities during this pandemic, as happened in several cities [3]. This condition causes the increase of the pandemic. Without clear rules and optimal education, the spread of the virus through places of worship is the fastest way to occur.

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The current crisis has urged local solidarity by limiting the number of crowds, the WFH appeal, and high fear and anxiety for local movements to work together to protect the community, especially those who are most vulnerable to exposure to this virus. In the beginning, when government supplies are still lacking for medical personnel and the informal sector, the collaborative movement is faster to raise donations in various sectors to ease the burden on society. Even though the government then supplies assistance through a special budget in handling Covid 19, the community's role is essential in creating collaborative movements. The cooperation built should lay the foundation for the community-based socio-economic alternative that we need in facing this pandemic, especially if the region is implementing the PSBB to reduce crowd numbers further. This established cooperation can be a crucial intangible capital where the cooperation that has been running can be cultural principal in dealing with modifying religious worship rituals [1]. This is how between sectors, both the government and the community need to work together in dealing with this pandemic.

### METHOD

This study is a systematic review, descriptive, and based on non-empirical design [4]. The collected information of scope was conducted in secondary sources of books, articles, journals, electronic sources, and theories. A review paper summarizes and synthesizes research findings on a topic selected and completed by other authors [4]–[6]. The paper review aims to find out the current state of relevant publications regarding the findings related to the chosen topic. This research is a descriptive study, an analysis that describes a phenomenon and its characteristics systematically, factually, and accurately [7]–[12]. This research uses a non-empirical design or also called theoretical research [13], which is not based on empirical evidence such as quantitative data or qualitative data but is still based on facts [14], [15]. In this study, researchers chose the topic of politics, Islam education, and Covid-19, so researchers looked for various articles that corresponded to those topics from publications published by other authors.

### DISCUSSION

#### Modification of Religious Worship Rituals in the Middle of the Covid Pandemic 19

With the WHO's health regulations as a prevention in the spread of the Covid 19 virus, many leaders of religious communities have changed the ways or rules of worshiping their religion [1]. In Islam, Muslims usually shake their hands after praying congregate in mosques, often after completing the *jama'ah* or congregation praying. In this pandemic, they do not do it. They replace it with respectful nods or warm smiles. Community members are advised to wash their hands frequently and keep their distance from others in the congregation praying. Hand sanitizers are prepared to be used when people enter and leave the mosque. Even religious recitation is carried out online. Besides, many Muslims also modify other rituals, such as *tahlil*, thanksgiving, etc., which gather many people.

Although religious regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic have been regulated through a fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council, among the public, this fatwa is not a guarantee that the implementation of religious worship rituals will be carried out as regulated. The most important thing and has often been debated until now is the

issue of Friday Prayers. As we know, that Friday Prayers are mandatory prayers that Muslim men should not abandon. As the *hadith* explained by Abu Dawud, the law of attending Friday prayers is mandatory for every Muslim, except for four people: Slaves, Women, Children, and Sick People. This is confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad in the *Hadith*, which means: Friday prayer is an obligation for every Muslim in a congregation, except (not required) for four people, namely, Slaves, Women, Children, and Sick People. . "(Narrated by Abu Daud) [16]. Being obligatory for Muslim men does not mean that the obligation is absolute without obstruction, thus obtaining relief in the implementation of Friday prayers.

In this case, the relief for not performing Friday prayers is explained to become *uzur* (obstruction) for someone not to perform Friday prayers, including 1. While on the way (Safar). 2. It is painful to go to the mosque. 3. Restrain the discharge of something from two ways (genital and rectum). 4. Worrying about his safety (terrifying fear). 5. Being assigned to maintain the operation of valuable tools. However, those who are aged so that they are allowed not to attend Friday prayers, as mentioned above, are still obliged to perform the four rakaat of zuhur prayer. The obstacle enables them not to come to the mosque on Friday. On the other hand, *uzur* is not nullifying the obligation to pray zuhr that can be done at home or work [17]. This is where the debate between the people begins, that it is a matter of keeping or replacing Friday prayers.

The limitation on performing religious rituals of worship has angered several parties in the community. Circulated chain messages as well as information from several religious leaders, are the cause. Social media content and messages that ignore government calls for distancing have been rampant. Using religious arguments, they reminded believers only to fear Allah and to flock to places of worship. In Bandung, West Java, a group of people issued an official notification of the temporary suspension of Friday prayers and congregational prayers five times a day at a mosque. The people were angry and thought that *takmir* (mosque management) feared Governor Ridwan Kamil more than Allah. Another viral video shows a middle-aged man mad at *takmir* for locking up the mosque. He even claimed that the postponement was the work of the Indonesian Communist Party or Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), which now does not exist [1], [18], [19]. This incident did not happen only once. Such turmoil spreads as quickly as messages sent via social media. Although the PSBB regulations that are enforced by the government also regulate religious worship rituals, it does not help much. Areas that do not become PSBB areas are conflict-prone. The absence of cooperation and communication between one party and another may be one of the causes.

#### The Importance of Increasing Solidarity in the Face of the Covid Pandemic 19

Whatever the reason, a "disaster" or epidemic outbreak such as Covid-19 will be easier to identify if society synergizes with the government and all nation components. It is hoped that there will be aware that this is a national problem. People must raise the strength to help each other in overcoming this epidemic. Solidarity is a feeling of mutual trust between members in a group or community [20] [21]. When people trust each other, they will become respectful and motivated to be responsible and full of care for others. We are one

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Indonesia, so whatever conditions, the government must be able to convince the public that they are the most important and foremost parties defended by the government.

The selfish is greatly unnecessary today. The government must prioritize people's safety over other interests, even though the economy. This is a moral force that the government and society have to regenerate [22]. Solidarity is the strength of Indonesia as a pluralistic nation with diverse socio-cultural powers with various binding moral values and is the reason for driving change, including building solidarity in the face of the coronavirus attack [21].

The current world population based on world population in the 2010 census reached 6.9 billion; with a Christian composition of 31 percent (Catholic and Christian), Islam with 23 percent, 16 percent of not affiliated with any religion, 15 percent of Hinduism, 7 percent of Buddhism, 6 percent of followers of local religions, 1 percent of other religions (Bahai, Tao, Jain, Shinto, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and 0.2 percent of Jews. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the current population has reached 273 million people. Its composition: Islam's followers are 87.18 percent, 6.96 percent of Christians, 2.91 percent of Catholics, 1.69 percent Hindu, 0.72 percent of Buddhist, 0.05 percent of Confucianism, and 0.13 percent other beliefs [2], [23].

Based on this data, 99 percent adhere to their respective religions or beliefs. Religious values and spirit are very dominant in coloring the behavior of daily life at home, at work, as well as in society and nation. How can this religious spirit generate energy to build Indonesian civilization for the nation's progress and state? Indonesia's progress is very likely to be realized by its people's unity, mutual support between groups, and issued regulations that can protect all community entities. There is no discrimination and intolerance based on religion, race, ethnicity, for example, whether by the political elite or by the community.

This is where the role of religion can be maximized. The trick is to urge their respective followers to be obedient to health scientists, public security experts, as well as to the authorities authorized to maintain the security, comfort, and safety of their citizens. The ulema, pastors, priests, monks, elders, religious leaders have a very big share to educate and provide examples of how to be law-abiding citizens for the benefit of all. Protecting one life is like saving all human life. This cannot be obtained suddenly if the religious leaders do not exemplify the variety model. Religion that is digital literate, as well as health literacy, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, is very much needed now and in the future, when the challenges are more and more widespread.

### **PSBB and the absence of rules for religious rituals**

As the authors discussed earlier, in the Covid 19 pandemic, the community faced extraordinary sudden changes, mainly in religious worship rituals. Changes that force people to adhere to new ways of worship in anticipation of the virus's spread have met many conflicts in the field. One of the things that the authors can see and observe from the root of this conflict is the large-scale social restriction policies that cannot be directly adaptive to be implemented and coordination between sectors and between government lines, which seems very irregular [1].

It should be noted that to limit human movement or mobilization during a pandemic, the government, through

the Minister of Health, has made regulations in the form of Large-Scale Social Restrictions. Large-Scale Social Restrictions or what is more often abbreviated as PSBB in its policy can only be enforced in an area that has previously submitted and been approved by the Ministry of Health [2], [21], [24], [25]. Concerning the rules of religious rituals, as stated in the draft Regulation of the Minister of Health No.9 of 2020 [26]:

### **Restriction of Religious Activities**

1. Religious activities are carried out at home and attended by a limited family with a distance.
2. All places of worship must be closed to the public.
3. Excluded from the guidelines in the law regulations and fatwas/views of religious institutions recognized by the government.
4. A maximum of 20 people attends a funeral for people who died, not because of Covid-19.

At first glance, it may seem that this regulation covers the basic needs of worshiping the Indonesian people and has provided opportunities for religious organizations and religious leaders to participate in discussing the PSBB in their respective regions. On the other hand, the reality is that in several regions that have implemented the PSBB, there are still many religious ritual agendas that are still running. This can be seen in a report by a news portal. In this news dated April 29, 2020, it is explained that even though the PSBB has long been enforced in the DKI Jakarta Province, which is the province with the highest distribution impact in Indonesia. At some points, there are still many mosques that continue to carry out the lowest prayer agenda. Whereas in the implementation of the PSBB in a certain area, local governments need to issue a new regulation regulating community mobilization. Whereas in the Governor Regulation Number 33 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions in Handling in the Province of DKI Jakarta, According to Article 13 of the Pergub, it is explained: religious activities are done out at home and attended by limited families. Besides that, it is done by maintaining physical distance from other people [27]. Not only that, but there is also a fatwa from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), which says tarawih prayers were held at home during the Covid 19 pandemic. Similar incidents did not only happen in Jakarta. Makassar City, which has also implemented the PSBB, experiences things that are not much different from Jakarta. In the news reported by Kompas, it was explained that within three days of PSBB implementation, there were still many mosques that continued to hold the tarawih prayer agendas at the mosque. Some even tricked the polices on guard by turning off the lights during the last praying [2].

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Making the medical and health teams at the vanguard against this virus does not mean eliminating religious figures' role. In the face of the Covid 19 pandemic,

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cooperation is very important to be encouraged together. The role of religious leaders in dealing with this condition is to make their people believe in scientific and medical science. It doesn't even stop there. We can say that the religious community's role directly impacts the spread of the virus either by inhibiting or accelerating social transmission, depending on the particular religious group that takes this into account. A scientific study of religion can help separate religion's reasons to make one kind of impact over another. On the other hand, the Ministry of Religion, as an institution with special authority as the organizer of religious activities in Indonesia needs to respond to this immediately. Regulations related to the administration of worship that are still in effect in Indonesia need to be acted upon to break the spread of the covid 19 virus chain. Of course, this authority must be balanced with intense communication with community organizations in Indonesia. The appeal made by the Ministry of Religion and various Religious Community Organizations in Indonesia is certainly not enough. If many people violate the PSBB rules, what about other regions where the local government has not applied for Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB)? The government has rules with a law that can bridge religious leaders with different views.

As we know, the standard epidemiological model of the spread of the virus does not take into account human factors such as ideology and religious values. As explained in an article written by Wildman et al., humans are complex and the way religion intertwines itself through the grid of human life is very complicated. Bringing up the values of humanity and solidarity is a public obligation. Just as health officials try to explain their recommendations, religious leaders in scientific studies of religion need to develop a religiously adapted value assessment that impacts behavior relevant to the spread of the virus. Experts need to explain where religion causes problems and find creative ways to communicate alternative thinking methods [18].

### CONCLUSION

A religious community must adapt to all changes, especially in spiritual practices, in current uncertain conditions. Apart from that, restrictions, suspension, or a prohibition on the implementation of religious worship do not mean to discredit one group. However, in current conditions where the Covid-19 outbreak is a dangerous threat to human life and soul.

Many religious communities leaders then changed religious worship methods or rules to modify religious worship rituals during the Covid 19 pandemic. There needs to be cooperation and communication between one party and another so that the Covid 19 pandemic can be resolved immediately. In addition, the importance of increasing solidarity in dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic is far more essential than a particular person or group interests. Meanwhile, restrictions on religious ritual activities have covered the basics of worshipping the Indonesian people and have provided opportunities for religious organizations and religious leaders to participate in implementing the PSBB in their respective regions.

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