

## Editorial

# A Few Preliminary Reflections on Religious Studies and Covid-19

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### Abstract

*The pandemic of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on religious studies. Numerous religious studies courses have transitioned to online learning, necessitating instructors to modify their instructional strategies and materials. Virtual worship services have become prevalent, allowing religious communities to adhere to social distancing guidelines while continuing to practice their religion. Religious studies scholars have examined the impact of the pandemic on religious beliefs and practices, including the significance of interfaith cooperation and the crisis's ethical implications. The pandemic has presented scholars, instructors, and practitioners in religious studies with both challenges and opportunities to adapt and respond to changing circumstances.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Pandemic; Religious Studies; Religious Community

The transition of religious studies courses to online learning has presented both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, instructors have had to adapt their teaching methods and materials to an online format, which can be challenging for subjects like group discussions and debates that rely heavily on face-to-face interactions. On the other hand, the transition to online learning has increased the flexibility of course schedules and enabled students and instructors to communicate across geographic boundaries. It has also created new

opportunities for remote learning and collaboration, such as online research projects and virtual guest lectures.

In addition to the modifications made to religious studies courses, the pandemic has also had a substantial impact on religious communities. The transition to virtual worship services has allowed individuals to continue participating in religious rituals and services while adhering to social distancing guidelines, but it has also emphasized the significance of community and social interaction in religious practice. In the absence of in-person gatherings, the pandemic has forced religious communities to adapt and find new methods to maintain their sense of community and connection. However, the pandemic has also presented opportunities for religious communities to collaborate and support one another across denominational and faith lines during this difficult time.

The influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on religious communities has been a primary focus of religious studies scholars. The pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to traditional religious practices and beliefs, requiring many communities to adopt new forms of worship and community. Scholars have investigated how the pandemic has affected religious beliefs and practices and how various communities have responded to the crisis. As religious communities have collaborated to respond to the pandemic, the pandemic has also highlighted the significance of interfaith communication and cooperation. The pandemic has raised ethical concerns regarding healthcare and social justice, and religious studies scholars have investigated the role of religion in addressing these issues. Thus, the pandemic has prompted scholars to reconsider their approaches to the study of religion, with a renewed emphasis on the ethical and practical aspects of religious belief and practice.

The pandemic has also had a substantial effect on religious education and instruction. Teachers and students have had to adopt

new modalities of instruction and learning as a result of the online migration of numerous religious studies courses. Numerous institutions have invested in online learning platforms and tools to facilitate virtual instruction as a result of the pandemic, highlighting the significance of technology in religious education. In addition, the pandemic has prompted academicians to reevaluate the content and methods of religious education, placing a greater emphasis on practical skills and social engagement. Thus, the pandemic has presented both challenges and opportunities for the field of religious studies, highlighting the need for scholars, educators, and practitioners to be adaptable and responsive to shifting conditions. As the pandemic continues to spread, religious studies will continue to play a crucial role in comprehending the effects of the crisis on religious communities and devising strategies to address these challenges.

### **This Issue**

This issue features ten articles, all of which are in English. This makes it special as it is the first edition to have all of its content in English. The use of English in this edition is part of the editorial team's efforts for *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama* to achieve internationalization targets. This edition also includes two articles from abroad, specifically from Turkey and Malaysia. The first article discusses how the postponement of Umrah and Hajj by Saudi Arabia as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted Indonesia's bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia and a variety of Indonesian sectors. Analyzing the impact of the postponement on the Indonesian government, Hajj and Umrah travel agents, and Indonesian pilgrims, this study employs descriptive and library research techniques and concepts from Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), foreign policy theory, and foreign policy impact theory.

The second article examines the efficacy of Yogyakarta City Government Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2014 in dealing with homeless and human rights beggars from maqasid of sharia and human rights perspective. The study concludes that while the regulation satisfies procedural requirements, it has not been completely implemented conceptually, and from a human rights standpoint, it has ensured the fulfillment of rights but requires improved implementation. The third article examines the impact of technological advancements on employee salary payments and how this has resulted in a shift in customer satisfaction levels in Sharia banks. The study sought to determine the difference in satisfaction levels between voluntary and forced customers, and discovered a significant difference between the two groups, as well as between voluntary customers who know the contract and those who don't, but no significant difference between forced customers who know the contract and those who don't.

The fourth article examines the legal impact and significance of the adoption of found children on the development of Islamic law. The maqasid of sharia approach demonstrates that found children must be safeguarded, including their rights to lineage, religion, and inheritance. In the absence of a lineage guardian, adopted children have the right to be protected by their adoptive parents. The fifth article examines the influence of Muhammad Abduh's ideas and Tafsir Al-Manar in Indonesia, specifically in Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar, using a descriptive-historical approach. The authors identify similarities in methodology and distinctions and similarities in interpretation, which have implications for comprehending the diverse Islamic community in Indonesia and the evolution of modern interpretation. The sixth article investigates the impact and difficulties of *fiqh al-muwatanah* in Indonesia, a new sociopolitical concept developed by Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) in response to the

strengthening of *takfiri* in Indonesia. The article discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the concept and its values, which include justice, harmony, and equality, and how it contributes to the formation of a tolerant society. This concept demonstrates NU's dedication to protecting the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

The seventh article identifies a lack of religious comprehension as a significant contributor to social problems such as violence, religious disunity, and tension. Focus Group Discussions were used to collect feedback from mosque committee members on the religious education curriculum of mosques in the Gombak district of Malaysia, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the findings. The study reveals that mosque committee members highlighted a number of issues, including mosque religious education structure, education resource, curriculum content, teaching and learning approaches, and anticipated outcomes, which could be used to create a more effective Mosque Religious Education Curriculum. The eighth article discusses how customary law was more applicable than Islamic law in matters of inheritance during the Dutch colonial period in the Dutch East Indies. The author examines the historical practice and concludes that customary law dominated people's lives, resulting in Dutch legal regulations that diminished the duties of the Religious Courts in resolving family and inheritance issues. As a result, based on the advice of Hurgronje, the inheritance jurisdiction of the Religious Court was transferred to the District Court, as inheritance fell under state jurisdiction and was not completely accepted by customary law.

The ninth article examines the identity and mission of Jesus in Mark 8:31-38 and how it is manifested in the lives of God's people today. The author employs Mark's narrative theology to argue that the kingdom of God is the only kingdom where everyone has access to peace and justice. Jesus' identity and mission require God's people to be willing to suffer, be rejected, and even be slain for the Father's work

and be resurrected after death, concludes the study. In order to manage the country's diverse population and prevent problems like racism and radicalism, the tenth article seeks to foster multicultural attitudes among Catholic instructors in Indonesia. The study discovered through library research that Catholic teachers are expected to be professionally and spiritually developed, and to serve as pastoral agents, educators, apostles, and catechists. Prospective Catholic teachers should study interreligious dialogue, comparative philosophy of religion, the local wisdom of Pancasila, and contextual theological studies in order to be prepared to lead in multicultural education.

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