

Scientific Muslims versus Anti-Science Muslims Contentious Science and Religion in Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Covid 19 pandemic originally originated in Wuhan China, in a short time it spread throughout the world to Indonesia, almost all provinces and districts in Indonesia were detected by Covid-19, until now the number of positive patients has increased and claimed many lives. In the international world, in Indonesia in particular, the Covid-19 pandemic has not only become a medical problem, but has become a social, political, economic issue and debate between religion and science. The aim of this study was to see the discourses and contentious both science and religion in Covid-19 Pandemic especially in Muslim Community. This study uses a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Muslim community was divided into two groups, firstly believing that Covid-19 was a medical problem that could be explained scientifically, secondly, the Muslim community who considered Covid-19 to be a hoax and global conspiracy of big countries such as China and the United States. These two views then led to conflicts of religious and scientific discourse and became social conflicts. It can be seen from houses of worship that want to continue to perform congregational prayer rituals and the Muslim community who ask for no worship activities during the pandemic. This study found that the discourse and concept of science integration at the level of Islamic higher education has not reached religious leaders and the general public, so there is a dichotomy in addressing the problems between science and religion.

Keywords: Scientific Muslims, Anti Science Moslems, Covid 19 Pandemic, Science and religion polemics

1. INTRODUCTION

When this article was written, as of October 5, 2020, the number of positive patients with Covid-19 in the world had 38.35 million deaths, patients recovered, 26.6 million people in the world. Meanwhile in Indonesia as of October 7, 2020, 315. 714 were confirmed positive for Covid-19, while those who recovered were 240,291, and those who died were 11 thousand 742[1]. The development of the addition of positive patients, recovered, and died continues to increase.

Polarization the pattern of worship activities carried out by Muslims amid COVID-19 pandemic has changed[2]. The Covid-19 pandemic is not only a problem of disease caused by a virus. Globally, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed human behavior and lifestyle. In Indonesia it is then called the New Normal

Era. The Covid-19 pandemic in the world has raised many views of the public; some say the Covid-19 pandemic was caused by a virus engineering done by experts in Chinese or American laboratories. There are also people who say Covid-19 is just a hoax and do not trust the scientific explanations, especially medical science, This backsliding produced intensifying populist anti- scientism[3]. However, there are also groups of Muslims who believe Covid-19 can be proven scientifically.

The fragmentation of people who believe and do not believe in the Covid-19 pandemic, in the case of Indonesia has developed into social, political, economic, defense, vertical and horizontal conflicts. Ulama as epicenters of religious leader in spreading religious teachings in Muslim societies have experienced deauthorization[4]. The Covid-19 problem is getting

more complex when many scholars, religious figures, or You tube ustad propagate to the congregation and society that Covid-19 is just a global conspiracy of capitalism. This was conveyed by religious teachers such as Yahya Waloni, Tengku Zulkarnain. Meanwhile, among celebrities, the conspiracy theory is propagated by JRX, a punk musician from the band Superman is Dead. JRX then had to be arrested because it was considered to have slandered the Indonesian Doctors Association as a capitalist agent. Until now, JRX is still carrying out court processes. Ulama should play a socio-religious role, motivator, communicator and the role model (idol)[5] which is in line with scientific principles in breaking the chain of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic arrives at the same time as the month of Ramadan which further complicates things. The Indonesian Muslim communities, who are accustomed to celebrating the holy month of Ramadan, then feel they are being treated unfairly by the government, because they have limited their religious activities such as *tarawih*, Friday prayers, five daily prayers, and *Eid al-Fitri* prayers. Religious gathering events have become a hotspot for the spread of Covid-19 [6]. For the Muslim community who rejects that Covid-19 is a disease they can confidently declare that their life is in the "hands" of Allah. Allah will not possibly give disease to Muslims who want to perform worship. This community group firmly rejects the scientific explanation that has been submitted by the government, so they still want to carry out religious rituals. The decision to continue carrying out worship rituals outside the home then collides with community groups who believe that Covid-19 is a di Covid-19 disease. They must comply with the Government's appeal and the Indonesian Ulama Council's fatwa to carry out social distancing by staying at home and not performing religious rituals such as congregational prayers at mosque. In the community, the Covid-19 pandemic has sparked social tensions due to the fragmentation of Muslim views that are anti-science and Muslims who use a scientific approach.

Based on the explanation above, this research is important to do to find an explanation of how the views of Muslims who are anti-science during the Covid-19 pandemic have added to many problems, for example, the increasing spread of Covid-19, as happened to the *Jemaah tabligh* n community in Sulawesi who continues to do so large recitation in the midst of a pandemic, then created clusters of *Jemaah tabligh* when they returned to their respective areas. The argument of this article is that the issue of integration between religion and science is

still an elitist issue in universities, especially Islamic universities. The concept of integrating science and religion has not yet reached the community level so there is a dichotomous problem in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic whether it follows religion or science, in fact the two approaches can be integrated.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. Content analysis can be used for qualitative or quantitative, deductive and inductive[7]. Through content analysis, researchers can interpret text, video, and sound[8]. Researchers give meaning to the coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia which has been recorded in various media such as television, newspapers, online media and social media. Researchers collected data by reading news in print media or online media that recorded the Covid-19 pandemic. After collecting data, the researcher also made comparisons with observational data, for example how social distancing policies with restrictions on worship outside the home such as *tarawih*, *Eid al-Fitr*, Friday prayers, and five daily prayers. Then the researcher filtered the verified data to be presented, analyzed and concluded.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Covid-19 and the Anti-Chinese Narration

Covid-19 originated in Wuhan, China's Hubei province, which began to be widely reported in early December 2019, then in February 2020, Covid-19 was designated as a pandemic that was considered a threat to the global world. Then slowly Covid-19 entered Indonesia. In its development, Covid-19, which is a health issue, has entered the social, political, economic and cultural problems. In Indonesia, Covid-19 has become an anti-Chinese sentiment, because it is considered by some Muslims as the maker of Covid-19. The term "Chinese virus" racism is used by the President of the United States, Donald Trump, on the Western social media platform Twitter and its acceptance and recontextualization on Chinese social media[9].

In the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has shifted into a racist issue; many racist incidents have attacked ethnic Chinese. Discriminatory treatment was carried out against Chinese people and people who had visited China, as in the case of Indonesian students who returned home to be evacuated from Wuhan and isolated in the Riau Archipelago which received strong public protests. The anti-Chinese sentiment eventually spread to anti-

Asia[10]. In Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Vietnam, people commit racist acts by not accepting consumers who are ethnic Chinese. The negative social impact of this epidemic also creates "xenophobic sentiment" against the Chinese state and people of Chinese descent in various countries. This negative sentiment is also directed at Chinese citizens,[11] , even on social media netizens do not hesitate to voice the expulsion of ethnic Chinese in the country

Global health is under threat. Attacking and demanding a new life order surrender. Covid 19 is an acceleration of the justification for the 4.0 industrial revolution project. the world is forced to change and surrender to the arguments of digitalization and virtualization of life order. Covid 19 doesn't always talk about health. And even with the emergence of new corona news in China. To become a turning point in the struggle for the narrative of social media and other platforms and to make the media a new world ideology that changes the narrative of world life. health narratives in various national and international media are distorted with with narratives of the bad image of the "China Virus" which tones of racism and discrimination[12].

The neglect of the reconstruction of the narrative of racism and ethnic sentiment that has emerged in Europe and even Indonesia has become data reinforcing the As-China trade war. That the Chinese government's efforts through the heroic narrative to quickly deal with the corona were defeated by the issue of sentiment and racism towards China as a carrier or country Virus maker.

Clergymen decontrussed scientific arguments to become new problems amid the rapid flow of information and technology. Using the religious authority of science is considered inconsistent with his argument. So that there was a commotion and dichotomization of information between the single truth (religion) and science. In reality, religion is a direction so that science can be good for the world

The Ustads who were popularized through YouTube media such as Ustad Abdul Somad issued a statement that Covid-19 was an "army of Allah" [13] sent to punish China, which conservative Muslim groups considered had oppressed Uighur Muslims. Ustad Abdul Somad's statement then went viral and became the consumption of the congregation and his millions of followers on social media. Then the theory of "Allah's army" was reiterated by the preachers on Friday's pulpits and ustads in various recitation forums.

The clerics who narrated the Covid-19 pandemic had something to do with China, which were basically ustads who were the opposition of President Joko Widodo who were also clerics and scholars who were involved in the 212 Defend Islam Action which later joined the 212 Alumni Brotherhood (PA). This group assumes Joko Widodo's closeness with China as a source of problems that developed into the issue of China's control of economic resources, Chinese and Indonesian foreign workers leading to Communism. The issue has not yet been resolved over allegations that Covid-19 was made in China to destroy Uighur Muslims, Indonesian Muslims also reject the Covid-19 vaccine produced in China and will be tested on Muslim Indonesians, Muslims are concerned about the halal status of vaccines produced in China. The Covid-19 pandemic has become a political tool for Joko Widodo's critics with Chinese and Covid-19 narratives that are sufficient to hamper the government from carrying out work programs due to public discussions that have been enlivened by hoaxes and expanding issues.

3.2 *Restrictions on Worship Outside the Home and Religious Issues*

During the pandemic, the Government and local governments issued a social distancing policy which later became Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) which had an impact on various aspects of community life: economic, social, cultural, and religious rituals. Specifically for the issue of religious rituals, the government and the Indonesian Ulama Council have issued regulations and appealed to the public with full awareness of limiting religious activities[14].

- Not performing *tarawih* prayers in mosques and prayer rooms. The Covid-19 pandemic began to break out in the month of Ramadan. The government, the central and regional Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhamadiyah have also issued appeals and fatwas.
- Not praying the *fardhu* five times in congregation in mosques and prayer rooms. People are asked to perform the fardhu prayer in their respective homes.
- Not doing activities like Ramadan in normal times, such as: breaking fast together, *sahur* on the road, *pasar bedug*, *tadarusan*, building *sahur* on the street, and bazaar.
- Do not perform Friday prayers in the mosques. People are asked to perform Friday prayers by replacing them with Zuhur prayers. MUI,

Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah have issued fatwas related to Friday prayers which are replaced with Zuhr prayers.

- Not performing Eid al-Fitr prayers in congregation. People are asked to perform Eid al-Fitr prayers at home and have been given fatwas and technical instructions on how to perform Eid al-Fitr prayers at home. Islamic community organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have distributed instructions on various platforms: YouTube, flayer, and power points which are widely circulated digitally, so that people can hold their own prayers at home.

This historic moment (covid 19) changed the religious landscape rapidly. on how religious institutions, congregations, and individuals are affected by social change from the most intimate and personal to the most public and global[15]. Covid-19 This unprecedented period has prompted religious scholars to reflect on how to approach the strategic studies of religion in times of "social distancing", and move forward. Critical considerations include developing heuristic and innovative approaches to addressing ongoing religious change, as well as how religion continues to structure social life in various contexts.

Social and physical distancing are self-limitation and social so as to avoid viruses in the language of a known religion (waba'). Religion tells us to avoid fading like this covid virus. And arrange how to maintain and avoid it with maqashidul ashariah studies. social distancing and phsyical distancing function to present goodness and usefulness (maslahah) and to avoid bad things (mudharat)[16].

In maqashid al-shari'ah, the application of Islamic law must contain the purpose of benefit, where the benefit is measured based on three aspects; the aspect of the scope of the maslahah, the aspect of its influence, and finally the aspect of the power of argument. Although the benchmarks are different, in substance the three of them must contain guiding principles on five things, namely; protection of religion, life, descent, intelligence, and finally preservation of property.

The social distancing policy has an impact on limiting the religious rituals of the Muslim community in the month of Ramadan to create resistance. There are people who obey the appeals and fatwas of ulama as well as Islamic organizations, MUI, Muhammadiyah, and NU experiencing a convergence of religious discourse and praxis in responding to Covid-19. They work hard to make sure the religious authorities' messages are in line

with the guidelines of the health authorities[17]. However, there are also people who continue to carry out religious rituals outside the home. The public prefers to follow the pseudo-science clerics who have mastered social media, especially YouTube. Various information released by religious leaders in various online media have actually created new polemics in society[5].

There are people who continue to perform *tarawih* prayers at mosques and *mushalla*. They do various ways, for example not turning on mosque lights, not using loudspeakers. People who continue to practice *tarawih* prayers do not use the Covid-19 protocol, for example using masks, providing water and soap to wash their hands, and providing a handsanitizer.

People who do not believe that Covid-19 is a disease (pandemic) and tend to view it as a media conspiracy with an abundance of misinformation and difficult with the term infodemic.[18] Distrust tends to keep performing the five daily prayers, Friday prayers, *tarawih* prayers and Iedul Fitri prayers in congregation. The mosques are almost evenly divided in two areas, some continue to hold Friday prayers and some do not hold Friday prayers for several months. In the observations of researchers, there are still many people who perform Friday prayers, for example the people in Medan and Jambi City, the mosques managed by Muhammadiyah and the *nahdliyin* circles still hold religious rituals, such as Friday prayers and five prayers in congregation. In general, people who continue to practice this worship believe that life or life and death is in the hands of Allah, not in the corona virus. Disobedience to the edicts and fatwas of religious activities has led to a new cluster of Covid-19 spreading under the name mosque cluster.[19]

The problem with the Covid-19 pandemic and Islamic religious rituals is not only a matter of restricting worship outside the home but also other cases, as follows.

- Organizing bodies that are deemed not in accordance with sharia, there have been cases of Covid-19 female victims being bathed by men, which has led to protests from families and the Muslim community.
- Circulating videos of funeral officers for Covid-19 victims unable to perform the funeral prayers. This video was viral which then made the Muslim community increasingly sanctioned for organizing Covid-19 victims who were Muslim.
- Family organizing a corpse that is not sanctified, and there are cases where the corpse is made

ritualistic when it is buried. *Fardu khifayah*, this funeral prayer has resulted in many cases of seizing the body from the hospital by the family so that later it can organize the body normally. There was a case of the bodies of Covid-19 victims who were bathed by their families, made normal and buried normally, and later they spread Covid-19.

3.3 The Polemic of Science and Religion among Muslims during the Pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesian Muslims are divided into two attitudes, first believing that Covid-19 is God's punishment to the Chinese government that oppresses Uighur Muslims, Second who believes that the Covid-19 pandemic is a medical fact.

The first attitude shows the view of someone who is anti-religious. Who always associates all reality with hatred that is born of God. This attitude is based on the increased accessibility of the public in obtaining information from religious leaders through online media.[5] due to the ease in accessing news about the persecution and expulsion of Uighur Muslims in China that have not been verified. And the second attitude shows the existence of data and health facts that reveal the truth of Covid 19 with its spread almost all over the world. And the status was determined from endemic to pandemic.

Religious groups who ignorant (*Jahiliya*) towards Covid-19 have become a new discourse on the dichotomy of religion and religion. There is an assumption from the religious mainstream that this group does not use reason but uses its ego so that it has social implications, namely transmitting the SARS-CoV-2 virus to people nearby. In short this group is conservative and "anti-science". A different perspective is that religious groups who ignore Covid-19 use religion to protect themselves or for the sake of their survival at the existential level of repression discourse modern-capitalism. The problem is, this ignorance group discourse actually legitimizes (justifies) the Western secular political discourse which has grounded religion to 'religion' in the definition it constructs. In fact, in Islam, previous Muslim scientists lived their life of asceticism through scientific means in search of the truth of Allah which manifested itself in the universe (ayat kauniyah) Here there is a synergy and harmony between science and spiritualism, the heavenly and the secular, the transcendental and the immanent.[20]

The Indonesian Muslim community in the midst of frustration facing Covid-19, where there is no vaccine and medicine, finally have to take unseen steps, for example by making amulets. For example in Wonogiri, people are buying *azimah* of bahar root which is believed to be able to ward off Covid-19.[21] The Muslim community, some of them do their deeds by reading the holy verses of the Alquran which are considered to be able to ward off Covid 19.

The increasing spread of Covid-19 is inseparable from the propaganda of clerics or social media clerics (celebrity ustads) who have a large congregation and increasingly encourage people to become anti-science and create friction between religious discourse authorities. And gave birth to religious fragmentation. This fragmentation is indicated by the gap between the pro-active and constructive attitudes of the majority of religious leaders and organizations and the reactive and counter-productive attitudes of a few other religious.[17] leaders in the face of Covid-19, for example, Ustad Abdul Somad and Buya Yahya who firmly stated that Covid-19 is God's army, even though UAS later corrected his statement but his views were already followed by the public. A leading commentator in Indonesia, Muhammad Quraish Shihab, [22] expressed his denials against the ustads who stated that Covid-19 was Allah's army, Quraish Shihab answered not only through videos circulating on Youtube but also specifically writing a book about Covid-19 which stated that Covid- 19 is the devil. It can be seen clearly that among the popular scholars and ustads there are different views to say that Covid-19 is a scientific event or as a punishment for those who wrong doing Muslims. In summary, scholars who are on the scientific axis or scholars who pivot on conspiracy theories, pseudo science.

Problems also arise because there are still dichotomous views among scholars, ustads and medical professionals in Indonesia. In medical circles, a reductionist medical approach explains Covid-19 without a religious narrative. On the other hand, scholars and religious teachers still view Covid-19 from a textual perspective, without any scientific narrative and medical science which, if it can be explained, it is likely that the Muslim community will be more accepting, because it was delivered by an *ulama* or ustads whose statements are trusted. The problem of reductionist scientific authority then extends to society and creates factions of the Muslim community that are anti-science and science supporters. One example is when the media was

enlivened by the appearance of the Surraya Star.[23] For ulama, it is believed that it is in accordance with the Prophet's hadith which is a sign that an epidemic will end. Meanwhile, on the medical science side and pandemic experts, on the other hand, say that the Covid-19 pandemic will still last a long time and could be until 2021 or 2023.[24] There are extreme differences between religious views and medical scientific views in predicting the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. The facts summarized in this study are proof that the Indonesian Muslim community still has a dichotomous paradigm which in turn creates conflict and polemic between science and religion.

4. CONCLUSION

In the context of the discourse between science and religion, the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia has divided society into two groups: First, the Muslim community who believes that Covid-19 is a disease that can be explained scientifically. Second, among the Muslim community who believe that the Covid-19 pandemic is a hoax, is a global conspiracy and there is a role for big countries such as the United States and China to destroy the Muslim world. This fragmentation of society has created digital and real conflicts. The digital conflict is a discourse battle on social media that advocates not implementing the Covid-19 protocol, and which campaigns for the Muslim community to comply with the Covid-19 protocol. In real terms, discourse conflicts also lead to feuds, physical clashes that lead to issues of racism and religious views. This finding is the fact that the Indonesian Muslim community is still experiencing a dichotomy problem between science and religion. The concept of integration between science and religion has not yet reached the public sphere of Muslim society, but is still an elitist issue among Islamic universities.

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