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WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM COVID19 PANDEMIC: A ZOOM LENS FROM ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT BASED ON HADITH

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Received Date: 19 October 2022 • Accepted Date: 17 December 2022

Abstract

This paper examines the responses of the Movement Control Order and acceptance of the COVID-19 among the Muslims. We selected participants (Muslim) through random sampling from Universiti Utara Malaysia international students. We interviewed them and asked four questions related to the responses and reactions on issues during COVID-19. We analysed the responses and its relationship with compilation relevant Hadiths through inductive reasoning approach. Hence, we found that most of our respondents have positive attitude towards the MCO and COVID-19 which all of the actions are closely supported by the Hadith.

Keywords: Movement Control Order, COVID-19, hadith

Cite as: Mughaneswari Sahadevan, Siti Mardhiyah Binti Kamal Azhar, Nur Izzati Liyana Binti Azizan & Nor Azura A Rahman. 2021. What we can learn from Covid19 pandemic: A zoom lens from Islamic viewpoint based on Hadith. *Malaysian Journal for Islamic Studies* 6(1): 63-72.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the world was shaken with the news on novel outbreak of a virus of which is still claiming lives across the globe. Before scientists was able to identify the real root cause of the event, there are millions of lives have been taken by this vicious foe. The virus is known as Corona Virus (COVID-19) and it was first infected people in China at the end of the year 2019 (Daga et al., 2019; Woznitza et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic is known to have started in the Chinese city of Wuhan and then spread throughout the world in early 2020 (Guo et al., 2020).

Eventually in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined this virus attack as a pandemic when many countries are infected. It actually started to get worsen during the festive Chinese New Year celebration when millions of the people who visited Wuhan spread almost all over the world for various purposes (Cucinotta & Vanelli , 2020; Spinelli & Pellino, 2020). To date, COVID-19 has been spreading in 213 countries with the number of 11,949,281 positively infected, 6,849,545 people were recovered and 546,601 people died, worldwide. In Malaysia itself, there have been 8,674 infected, 8,481 people recovered and 121 died, overall (July 8th, 2020).

Subsequently, countries in the world are racing against time to contain the spread of this virus by introducing a few safety measurements like social and physical distancing, sanitizing hands frequently and wearing face masks all time when in the public places (Wilder-Smith and Freedman, 2020; Ahmed, et.al. 2018; Caley, et.al 2008). Besides that, most of the countries have imposed “authoritarian rule” like lockdown of public areas and the airports as well. This was ideas was triggered when China, Taiwan, and South Korea trailblazed the approach and found keys to containing the reverse of the adversity on public health through restrictions on normal human activities in public spaces, transportation access, state and country borders “exit and entry” permanently (Roosa K., et.al. 2020).

Moreover, people across the globe provided monetary aids for front liners and also healthcare sector. As a key step to stop the virus spreading more worse than before, those monetary aids not only for medical tools such as masks, hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 tests, medicines, but to finance hospitals and laboratories to conduct research on the virus and find a breakthrough for the vaccine (Zhang L., Liu Y., 2020).

“THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM”

There have been many studies on the impact of COVID-19, for example its influence on the world of economy (Fernandes, 2020), education (Abidah et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2020) and tourism (Gössling et al., 2020). We found scarcity in academic research especially on COVID-19 and religion issues.

What makes us to write this article? Well, COVID-19 case started in Malaysia when the Muslim people faced public outcry after a few members of people were infected from a mass gathering called as “Tabligh Jamaat” at Masjid Sri Petaling on 24th January 2020. The public started pointing fingers towards the religious groups for being irresponsible on the spread of the outbreak. This is utterly a matter of absolute frustration for some. It could be led by a common divisive act of irresponsible person(s) or be an agenda for a particular political force

to gain a vested interest. Therefore, this article is expected to contribute a better understanding on the responses and coping of the pandemic from Islamic perspectives using Hadith. We also examine how the selected Hadith reflects the real setting from the responses on the outbreak.

METHOD

This research on Hadith and COVID-19 was chosen as a topic due to one of the researcher's familiarities with Hadith. This research, particularly, will explore about Muslims and their resilience on COVID-19 through religious elements, which is believes on Hadith (part of Islamic and Faith pillars or also known as *Rukun Islam*).

The analysis of Hadith (words from the Prophet Muhammad) and interviews combined to achieve the aim of this research. As Rowley (2012: 262) highlighted the advantages of these interviews as "... are beneficial when: the study goals concentrate on information, beliefs, behaviours, values and processes." Qualitative interviews are essential to enable the researchers to engage with people who could give views on their experience from early outbreak of the COVID-19.

Therefore, we chose six Muslim participants from different countries. Out of six participants, three are from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and India and the rest are from Malaysia. With the international participants involved, thus through Skype we have been able to have a broad perspective by interviewing people in a variety of countries and get more vivid views on the matter that being discussed in the interview.

In total, we asked four main questions regarding the reaction towards the outbreak. The first question is generally about the response towards the lockdown or Movement Control Order (MCO) decision by the government. At this point, we want to know how the respondents react and analyse the action as coping mechanism which makes them resilient to the pandemic situation. Question two is also related to the early acceptance of the MCO and its relation to their plan for survival which is food. During pandemic, the effect towards food shortage and supply chain disruption had caused panic buying among citizens (Nicola et. al, 2020).

Therefore, we will analyse how respondents plan their survival during early stage of the pandemic. Next, when to MCO is implemented, all religious activities including mass gathering such as congregational prayer is not allowed. This is seen as another huge change in the society in which the most significant activity, the Friday prayer for the male Muslims is temporarily banned. In this paper, we want to examine the reactions from participants when they are not allowed to go to Friday Prayer. Finally, we want to know how the acceptance towards the new normal lifestyle among the respondents are. At this point, we try to understand the level of acceptance which each of the respondents might have.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers adapt grounded theory, thus, the data analysis included organizing, classifying, interpreting, understanding their data, noting the patterns, topics, categories, and axes (Al Eid and Arnout.,2020). For first stage, researchers conducted interviews and organized outcomes from interviews. Later, researchers extracted meanings from Hadiths and matched with interviews' outcomes and support the process of interpreting data and writing the results for

this study. We continued in this way till no new information in the data (Corbin & Strauss., 2008).

RESULTS

This section further, will discuss on the participants' responses and the supporting Hadith. We simplified our questions to get more concise result for this research. We centralised our questions based on one main theme that is the Muslims' views on COVID-19. The results of the interviews are as follows:

Question 1	What did you do when heard about the outbreak and government's decision on lockdown?
Respondent 1	<i>"I take some precautionary measures. Such as, visitors' restriction, home cleaning with Dettol etc. Even before lockdown, I start to stop people from coming to my house. I just want to protect my family from the virus". I am really terrified with the virus, sister. Hahaha...</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"I just lock myself in my house...Scary right??? But I have to do so in order to curb the spread of virus. I subscribed to Netflix, stock up my food items. Just lingering around in my house...."</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"I'm totally isolated myself from outer world. I took this opportunity to focus on my work. I enjoyed each and every days. Moreover, government asked us to stay home, aren't they???...."</i>

This question asked on the activities or responses towards the MCO implemented by the government. In Malaysia, the first MCO effectively started on 18th - till 31st March 2020. This MCO was a total lockdown for all cities including the airport. Citizens are not allowed to travel or make any social activities outside from their home unless they are work for the essential sector like hospitals. They can only do shopping for important items such as foods but limited to only one person per vehicle.

From the interview, respondents show positive reactions when they started to make self-quarantine and avoid from making contacts with others. Respondent1 restricted guests from coming to the house as to protect the whole family. Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 also made similar move when they avoid contacting others by staying at home. At this point, our respondents adhered to the MCO and fully understand that it is important to be safe and stay away from the public like suggested by the Hadith as follows.

Hadith 1
<p>❖ Usāma b. Zaid said the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:</p> <p>سَمِعْتُ أُسَامَةَ بْنَ زَيْدٍ، يُحَدِّثُ سَعْدًا، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: «إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِالطَّاعُونَ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا»</p> <p>"If you hear of a plague in a land do not enter it; and if it breaks out in the land where you stay, do not leave."</p>

From these responses, we found extra interesting activities which are somewhat new to respondents. For example, Respondent 1 started to clean the house using specific detergent to kill germs or dirt. The feeling of cleanliness is increasing from the awareness of the harmful and unseen virus. At this point, the Hadith on cleanliness as such is supporting the reaction towards the benefit of keeping a clean and tidy environment.

Hadith 2

❖ Abū Mālik al-Ash'ari reported that the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

عَنْ أَبِي مَالِكٍ الْأَشْعَرِيِّ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «الطُّهُورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ...»

“Being clean and pure is half of faith.”

The Hadith emphasize that when one person practice to keep all things surrounding, including himself in clean and tidy, it is considered as part of being a person with faith or *Imaan*. Therefore, the pandemic has a significant lesson towards Respondent 1 of keeping the house in clean and tidy environment for the whole family.

Another interesting point is when Respondent 2 mentioned that she started to subscribe Netflix (a streaming service with various use like watching movies). We found that, the action of subscribing a streaming service is as preparation for the free time she had during MCO. We assume that Respondent 2 did not have to go to work or working from home (WFH). Therefore, to kill the boredom, she chose for media and entertainment at home.

Finally, we also found interesting point from Respondent 3 when he told us that he is more focused on his work. Towards this point, the respondent is enjoying the time while staying at home and it enabled him to put more attention to the work he is doing. By saying this, we assume that the respondent was disturbed while doing his work before the MCO.

All in all, the respondents show great obedient towards the MCO which was ordered by the government, and this is supported by the Hadith as follows.

Hadith 3

❖ □ Abū Huraira reported that the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «عَلَيْكَ السَّمْعُ وَالطَّاعَةُ فِي غُسْرِكَ وَيُسْرِكَ، وَمَنْشُطِكَ وَمَكْرَهُكَ، وَأَثَرَةَ عَلَيْنِكَ»

“It is obligatory upon you to listen to and obey the authorities during prosperity and adversity; whether you are willing or unwilling, even when someone is given undue privileges over you.”

The Prophet emphasized on the obligation to obey authorities, be it either willingly, by force or even worst if you are not treated well. It is important to follow all instructions from the authorities especially in times like pandemic. As citizens, we only receive information from the media which is still shallow and at times could be fault. Hence, with the assumption that good

governance is well practiced everywhere, it is compulsory to obey the authorities for common good.

During MCO, most shops which sell garments, shoes, services for telecommunications and vehicles are closed. The only section opened is the food section. People started to feel food scarcity when more households stay at home for longer period. This feeling of food scarcity got worse when the supply chain was disrupted due to the distribution of food, import and export were also halted. We asked the respondent on their reaction towards the pattern of ‘panic buying’ during the pandemic and the responses are as follows.

Question 2	What is your view on ‘panic buying’?
Respondent 1	“Crazy people... Why wasting so much? I couldn’t believe our people still behave in that way without thinking others”
Respondent 2	“ Wasted people with bad attitude”
Respondent 3	“I don’t understand why they need so much of foods. End of the day, they are going to eat only 1/4 of what they bought. Membazir itu amalan syaitan... (wasting is the practice of Shetaan/devil)”

From our interviews, all the respondents agreed that it is not necessary to stock piling food at home during the pandemic. Respondents also agreed it will be just a waste and only people who are insane will do that. One of the respondents also mentioned that ‘panic buying’ is an attitude of ignorance when people did not think of other people who might need the item more than they did. In addition to this, the other respondents said that the ‘panic buying’ attitude is like the practice of the devils, which we assume the respondent referred to the Hadith as follows.

Hadith 4
<p>❖ Ma’mar b. ‘Abd Allāh reported Allāh’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as saying:</p> <p>عَنْ مَعْمَرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: «لَا يَحْتَكِرُ إِلَّا خَاطِيٌّ»</p> <p>“No-one hoards except for the crook.”</p>

The two questions at above are related to the early reactions when the MCO was first implemented. All respondents showed nearly similar reactions with positive receptions of the order to stay at home and agreed that there is no need to overtly stockpile the food. Hence, for the objective of this paper, we acknowledge the readiness of all respondents towards obeying the regulations during pandemic, their calmness yet full of precaution and also, they are daily well-planned for activities outside the normal lifestyle. The responses are as follows.

Question 3	Do you feel disappointed after mosques closures, cancelation of Friday Sha’laat during the pandemic?
Respondent 1	“ I cried , sister... You know that feeling while praying at mosque is different when compared praying home. But, we have no option. We must follow

	<i>our government. I use this situation to build my relationship with my family. I pray with them and taught them to read Al-Quran. There is always “hikmah” behind all events...Be positive</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“I am literally shocked...no words to express my despair on this matter... Just be patient”</i>

In the question, we asked on the new normal of lifestyle which might affect their living like when the congregational prayer is halted. We specifically refer to the Friday Prayer as to see how the respondents feel for this and we received two feedbacks. Both respondents show their frustration by crying and feeling despair. We received interesting input when one of the respondents told us that he made better bonding with the family through *jamaah* prayer at home and teaching *Al-Quran* with family members.

Moreover, the respondent also understands the challenge of the pandemic is by the Almighty when they agreed that there must be something good from it (*hikmah*) and to be patient (*sabar/redha*). The actions of being patient is reflected to the Hadith as follows.

Hadith 5	
❖	‘Uqba b. ‘Āmir said: <i>The Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to me: ‘Say.’ I said: ‘What should I say?’ He then recited Sūrat al- Ikh̄lās, Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās, and then he said:</i>
	عن عقبة بن عامر الجهني قال قال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قل: قلت وما أقول قال قل هو الله أحد قل أعوذ برب الفلق قل أعوذ برب الناس فقرأهن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم قال لم يتعوذ الناس بمثلهن أو لا يتعوذ الناس بمثلهن.
	‘People have never sought refuge in Allāh with anything like this,’ or ‘the people have never sought refuge with Allāh by anything greater than this.’

The Hadith is emphasizing to the people that Allah is the Great of all and the only protector is Him, the Almighty. The pandemic should be deemed as tests for the whole mankind and only wise man will be in calm and patient with the opportunity to ask for His forgiveness and protection. Hence, towards this point, we assume that both respondents understand the Hadith very much when they reacted cool and calmly when they were not allowed to go to Friday Prayer.

Finally, as to know the level of change and acceptance of the pandemic, we ask them how did they cope with the situation which is also known as the new normal? We want to know their perceptions and how it reflects to the believe? In this question, we received two responses as follows.

Question 4	How do you accept COVID-19 as part of your life?
Respondent 1	<i>“Honestly, I feel worried when think or talk about Covid-19, especially after I saw millions live have died. However, I accept this as a test for us and I believe I can go through this with Allah’s blessing”</i>
Respondent 2	<i>“I strongly believe there is a hidden lesson behind this pandemic. Allah is trying to teach all of us something that we forget long time ago. This</i>

*outbreak will **teach us** how to rely on God when we are going trial and tribulations. We must **always think good** with God's test"*

From the two responses received, we found similarity from which they agreed that the pandemic is a test from God to the people. We assume that both respondents are aware of the harmful virus came with its lessons for the people to go back to basics principle in life that is follow the teachings on cleanliness and discipline like in **Hadith 2**.

In the last question, we also found interesting point from a respondent that the pandemic also a sign from the Almighty for some practices that was almost forgotten. At this point, we did not have the chance to ask further to what practices that he mentioned. Therefore, we come to conclusion that due to the pandemic, the respondent might refer to the virus and its cure from the Hadith as such.

Hadith 6

❖ □ Usāma b. Sharīk narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

تداووا يا عباد الله، فإن الله لم يضع داء إلا وضع له شفاء، إلا داء واحداً: الهرم

“Servants of Allāh! Make use of medical treatment, for Allāh has not made any disease without creating a cure for it.”

Through the discussion and analysis above, Islam undoubtedly never permits its followers to be ignorant. As a human, we should also note that diseases do not know your culture, status, gender, race, or religion. If it was supposed to happen, it would be happened or in Arabic language pronounce as "*kun faya kun*". The compilation of Hadith at above reminds to humankind that the pandemic is not only a test but also some other greater things to ponder among them. Among all, the best is to recall the objective of living in this world. In addition, we must help each other in all difficulties, as this what all religions have emphasized to their followers. Islam teach their followers to be kind towards everyone, then why we must be harsh towards them. We hope this research will be an eye-opener for everyone and provide better understanding on Islam and their followers which testifies in two of the Hadith as below.

Hadith 7

❖ □ ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar reported that the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، قال: «المسلم أخو المسلم، لا يظلمه ولا يسلمه، من كان في حاجة أخيه كان الله في حاجته، ومن فرج عن مسلم كربة، فرج الله عنه بها كربة من كرب يوم القيامة، ومن ستر مسلماً ستره الله يوم القيامة».

“Whoever fulfils the needs of his brother, Allāh will fulfil his needs; whoever removes the troubles of his brother, Allāh will remove some of his troubles on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever conceals the shortcomings of a Muslim, Allāh will conceal his shortcomings on the Day of Resurrection.”

CONCLUSION

In the Hadith, it emphasizes the need of each of us to take care of each other, helping each other and not being selfish. This reflects the situation during the pandemic like when ‘panic buying’ happened in the society. The people should think of others who are in need rather than simply buying without priority to the actual needs. Another reminder to this Hadith which reflects the society is to secrete any shameful of your acquaintances for that is the best to do. For instance, when a friend is tested as positive COVID-19 or maybe just took the test yet to know the result, it will be a stigma to others to know this. The people might discriminate or isolate the person who is still under investigation or who already tested as positive. Therefore, it is our responsibility to keep the news to ourselves and be careful with the contact for temporary. The Hadith encourages the people to help them (but with extra careful) and keep the news so that they will not be ashamed by others.

To that extend, we hope that this paper is sufficient for the awareness of the responses on COVID-19 outbreak and how the Muslims reacted towards it. In future research, we would like to interview more respondents for the awareness of COVID-19 during early MCO. We also hope that we could extend the research among the person under investigation and who tested as positive COVID-19.

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