

Gender Relation during the Pandemic

Musdah Mulia



Pandemic in Islamic History

- Islamic history shows that the second Caliph Umar bin Khattab firmly addressed the plague of *Tha'un Amwas* (infectious disease) that hit the province of Syria.
- Umar and his entourage who heard the news of the plague before entering the region, faced the debate of the companions: whether to continue the journey or return to Medina.
- As a leader, Umar decided not to continue the journey on the grounds: we chose one destiny from God and left the destiny of another. That is, human endeavor becomes very important in the issue of covid.
- Umar's decision was based on the Hadith of the Prophet, narrated by Bukhari: "If you hear of a plague in an area, then don't enter it. But, if an epidemic occurs where you are, don't travel. This is in line with modern medical methods.

The Attitude of Muslim Community in facing Covid 19

- First, the logical and rational of the Muslims. They are generally represented by the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. These groups select and advise the congregation to postpone congregational worship and prohibits crowds even though it is a religious event.
- The attitude of this mainstream groups are based on the view that avoiding disaster must take precedence over maslahat. Maintaining the safety of the soul (hifz al-nafs) should be prioritized over protecting religion (hifz al-din), the majority of Indonesian Muslims take this position.

The Attitude of Muslim Community in facing Covid 19

- Second, the fatalistic attitude of the Muslims. This attitude is only followed by certain groups who are different from mainstream Muslims, including followers of the Islamic sect Jemaah Tabligh, some salafi groups in certain areas. however, the group is quite disruptive to the efforts of the government and society.
- Rejecting the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council on the ability to replace congregational Friday prayers in mosques with individual zhuhur prayers at home.
- Refusing to pray at home, not praying in congregation at mosques or other places to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Refusing to wear a mask when praying and refusing to keep your distance.
- Reject the circular from NU and Muhammadiyah regarding the elimination of tarawih prayers in congregation in mosques and Eid prayers in congregation.



Second Group Reason

We fear only Allah, not the Corona virus. Allah is in control of the virus. So we don't have to panic. We just surrender to Allah. Sahih hadith in Bukhari and Muslim which reads, "There is no transmission". Those who believe in this hadith will certainly say that believing in a virus as a contagion will destroy the creed because for them there is no power or other material that can make someone sick except Allah. So disease is the will of Allah and those who get sick are a test from Allah. (Mohamed Imran Mohamed Taib, 2020).



Religious activities amid the pandemic

- The Tablighi Jamaat activity in Gowa, South Sulawesi, was attended by around 40,000 people from various countries.
- Tarawih prayer activities in congregation in various regions
- Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayer activities in several areas
- Refusal to wear masks

Impact of the pandemic on gender relations

- ▶ The gender dimension in the pandemic is closely related to education, employment, religion, social class, access to services, etc.
- ▶ The pandemic exposed gender injustice and various forms of social injustice in society.
- ▶ Covid 19 countermeasures policies change the life order of some people.
- ▶ Work from home triggers the emergence of various obstacles in public life, especially in gender relations. Women and children are vulnerable to experiencing an increase in domestic violence (KDRT) during physical distancing, which has the potential to reduce the body's immunity due to severe stress. Women are the first group to be laid off because many of them work in the informal sector.



The Meaning of Pandemic for Women

- Women get the biggest impact from the coronavirus, including daily wage earners, small business owners and those working in the informal sector.
- The differences in the needs of women and men in long and medium term recovery efforts also need to be considered.
- Women play an indispensable role in fighting the epidemic - as health care workers, as scientists and researchers, as social activists, as builders and agent of peace in society, and as caregivers. It is very important to ensure that women's voices are heard and recognized.

Increased cases of violence against women

- ▶ The Covid-19 Handling Task Force Team: increasing cases of violence against women and children.
- ▶ The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection together with Komnas Perempuan recorded an increase in cases of violence against women by 75 percent since the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ▶ From March to July 2020, the total number of cases of violence against women was 14,719. The cases were divided into three categories, personal sphere of 75.4 percent or 11,105 cases, community sphere of 24.4 percent or 3,602 cases, and state sphere 0.08 percent or 12 cases.
- ▶ The type of violence that occurred most was physical violence, reaching 5,548 cases. Then, there were 2,123 cases of psychological violence, 4,898 sexual violence cases, 1,528 cases of economic violence and 610 cases of specific violence against migrant workers and human trafficking.

The masculine dimension of handling Covid 19

- ▶ The KPPA Ministry is not part of the Covid 19 Response Task Force
- ▶ Covid 19 case data is not disclosed in the form of gender-disaggregated data
- ▶ Sexist statements by public officials regarding covid 19 and the narrative of overcoming covid always use masculine terms, such as: weapons of medical personnel, vanguard, war on corona etc.
- ▶ There are no specific policies related to reproductive health services during Covid 19

Patriarchal culture

- ▶ Patriarchal culture is evident in family life. The father is always considered the head of the family, the main breadwinner, the important decision maker regarding the needs of all family members, being authoritarian and demanding to be served, etc.
- ▶ A patriarchal culture dominates people's lives: male domination in the power structure at the village/ *kelurahan* level to the highest levels of government. Similar conditions are seen in religious and educational institutions.
- ▶ Patriarchal culture can also be seen in behaviors that emerged during a pandemic such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, child marriage, polygamy, discrimination against vulnerable groups such as disabilities and also oppressed minority groups.



Patriarchal Culture

Generally, people still view:

- Women and girls are family property or assets yet respect them as whole human beings who have thoughts and feelings.
- Wife as a *konco wingking* whose job is in the back (kitchen-well-mattress). Have not seen women as potential beings.
- Women must obey men (father, uncle, husband, brother), not yet seeing women as partners or equal partners or citizens who have rights and obligations.

Conditions of Religious Interpretation are Gender Biased

Religious interpretations, especially those related to the relationship between men and women and husband-wife relations in the household:

1. Still contains gender bias values, seeing women as sexual objects
2. Still giving privileges to men as leaders
3. Still views the issue of sexuality as a private matter
4. Still believe in the difference in status and position between men and women; and only male figures have the right to talk about religion



The structural condition has not been on the side of women

- Structurally, domestic violence is considered a husband-wife relationship problem or a private matter that cannot be intervened by the state or other people.
- In fact, the Criminal Code does not consider the problem of domestic violence as a crime or ordinary crime.
- Likewise, the 1974 Marriage Law and the 1991 Islamic Law Compilation on Marriage have not mentioned the importance of eliminating domestic violence. In fact, the two laws perpetuate the relationship of gender injustice in the family.
- This condition is very strange because the Indonesian government since 1984 has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The ratification demands harmonization of the contents of the Convention with national laws and policies in Indonesia.



Solution 1: Reconstruction of Egalitarian Culture

- Just and gender-friendly family education.
- Education that develops caring masculinities: Men are able to do domestic work well, are able to appreciate their partners, are able to care for and educate children, are able to participate in reproductive health by taking the role of doing family planning.



Solution 2: Build Women Friendly Structure

- Reform of the Marriage Law and a number of regulations and public policies that are still gender biased
- The response to covid by using a more friendly approach to women and vulnerable groups
- Increase the capacity and paradigm of public officials that are more oriented towards the welfare and benefit of the nation's citizens

Solution 3: Humanist Reinterpretation of Religion

- Teachings that prioritize love, and are accommodating to human values,
- Teachings that uphold the values of justice and equality, especially in gender relations,
- Teaching that is friendly to women, all vulnerable and oppressed groups
- Teachings that encourage the formation of a harmonious family, away from violence, discrimination and exploitation,
- Teachings that are inclusive, open, and support pluralism.

Principles of *Maqashid* Sharia

- Nourishing the soul (hifzh al-nafs). Islam maintains a person's right to live in dignity and maintain oneself in order to avoid acts of persecution in the form of harassment, murder, etc.
- Maintain reason (hifzh al-aql). Islam guarantees the right to freedom of opinion responsibly.
- Maintain property (hifzh mall). Islam guarantees a person's rights regarding wealth, property widely.
- Maintain honor (hifzh al-irdh). Islam guarantees a person's dignity. There is no reason to abuse and enslave humans.
- Maintaining offspring (hifzh al-nasl). Islam guarantees human reproductive rights, especially women so that they are not turned into reproductive machines.
- Maintain religion (hifzh al-din). Islam guarantees the rights and freedom of belief and worship with full responsibility.



Closing

Hadith of the Prophet:

"The best is religion with Allah

al-hanafiyyah al-samhah, namely a religion with the spirit of seeking broad truth, not narrow, tolerant, pluralist, not fanatical, non-violent, and not shackling the soul ”.



TERIMA KASIH

