

Consistency of Rural Muslim Communities in Maintaining Safety (*Hifdz Al-Nafs*) in Performing the Worship of Daily Prayers (*Shalat*) in the Midst of Covid-19 Outbreak

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Abstract

All this time there has been an assumption that rural communities are frequently associated as disadvantaged communities who do not have high consistency in maintaining personal safety in carrying out worship, especially when they face the potency of transmitting the covid-19 outbreak. This qualitative research uses a descriptive-analysis technique that results in the finding that when the covid-19 outbreak occurs, there is a congregation in one area in Bengkulu, Indonesia, apparently having a high consistency in maintaining personal safety in carrying out worship both at mosque and at home. The main factors that encourage the congregation to be consistent in maintaining personal safety in the worship because they have a deep awareness in carrying out Islamic religious orders, so as it has implications for mosque worshippers who then have consistency in maintaining personal safety, personal hygiene, home and mosque environment and togetherness in combating potential covid-19 transmission.

Keywords: *rural communities, mosque worshippers, personal safety, worship, and covid-19 outbreak*

1. Introduction

Villages as a legal community unit generally have a backward level due to the geographical location far from the city center which subsequently causes gaps in aspects of their lives. Data from the National Statistics Agency (BPS) until 2017 explains that rural communities have a higher level of underdevelopment than urban communities, especially in the economic sector where the number of rural poor people is greater in the national average, which is 13.47% in rural areas and 7.26% in urban areas. Likewise, Central Bengkulu district which is located in Bengkulu Province has a high poverty rate in rural areas[1-5].

However, rural communities that are synonymous with underdevelopment do not always cause their consistency to be low in maintaining personal safety and their environment. This can be seen from the implementation of religious rituals performed by rural communities carried out with due regard to government health protocols[6-7]. One village community that has consistency in maintaining personal safety from the dangers of infectious diseases is the Muslim community of Margomulya village, Pondok Kubang District, Central Bengkulu Regency.

In the implementation of the prayer service, Margomulya villagers who become pilgrims from the Nurul Huda Mosque Margomulyo village is a Muslim community that has consistency in carrying out Islamic religious rituals (QS Al-Ankabut: Verse 45) both carrying out worship (prayer) either at the mosque or at home since Bengkulu Province was designated as the covid-19 red zone (coronavirus disease 2019) on March 31, 2020 when one covid-19 patient was discovered. When an area has been considered as the red zone or high-potential distribution covid-19, the scholars through Islamic organizations Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah, and the government has suggested to eliminate the gathering of many people including the implementation of the prayer fardu 'ain (daily obligatory prayers) in the mosque or field and it is recommended to replace it with the midday prayer (Zuhr Prayer)[8-13].

So far, a number of research studies that have been conducted have two tendencies: First, research that describes the community of Pondok Kubang sub-district, Central Bengkulu Regency, which reviews budgeting,[14] creativity development,[15] Islamic cultural development,[16] business

cooperation,[17] and income rubber farmer in the village of Margomulyo.[18] Second, research that describes the fields of physical and spiritual health [19], faith[20] and covid-19[13].

From the description above, it can be argued this research argument, namely why rural Muslim communities consistently maintain personal safety (hifdz al-nafs) in the implementation of prayer in the midst of the covid-19 outbreak? From these main question, the following three research questions are formulated: First, how is the consistency of rural Muslim communities maintaining personal safety in carrying out worship in the midst of the covid-19 outbreak? Second, what are the factors that encourage the consistency of rural Muslim communities to maintain personal safety in the implementation of daily prayers in the midst of covid-19 outbreak? Third, what are the implications of the consistency of rural Muslim communities to maintain personal safety in the implementation of the daily prayers in the midst of the covid-19 outbreak?

2. Methods

Research arguments

This research is conducted in underdeveloped rural communities who became worshipers in the mosque of Margomulyo village, Pondok Kubang sub-district, Central Bengkulu regency. Moreover, this study aims to describe rural communities who generally have Islamic religious knowledge and low health awareness. Due to the low health awareness, the people are likely to have poor consistency in maintaining personal safety in the implementation of worship, while the covid-19 outbreak has a high level of power spread or transmission between humans that everyone needs to know in both cities and villages. Therefore, the researchers are keen to find out the existence of mosque worshipers in response to the development of the covid-19 outbreak when they performed worship.

Data collection

The data collection technique is done by conducting interviews with informants, field observations and examining written data related to the field. The primary data of this study was sourced from interviews with informants and observations, while secondary data was sourced from written data from books, articles, news, activity reports and others. The research informants consist of a mosque *imam* (leader), three mosque worshipers, and a head of Margomulyo Village. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observations and documentation review which took place from March 1 to April 26, 2020.

Ethical approval

The ethical committee of the state institute of Islamic College Bengkulu approved the study. Moreover, informed consent was gained from all informants. The researchers provided informants with adequate and accessible information about the study, and can, thus, make a decision as to whether or not to be involved[21].

Data analysis

The data analysis technique uses descriptive-analytical method which aims to describe and present data from observations, interviews and written data to be processed and analysed to reveal the consistency of the village community who are members of Nurul Huda Mosque congregation in maintaining personal safety in the implementation of worship when covid-19 outbreak happens.

3. Results

Consistency of rural muslim community in maintaining safety in performing the worship of daily prayers (*salat*) in the midst of covid-19 outbreak

Nurul Huda Mosque is one of the mosques located in Margomulya village, Pondok Kubang district, Bengkulu Tengah regency. Nurul Huda Mosque as a place of worship for rural Muslim communities in the region received attention thanks to the good cooperation between the mosque management and the village government so as the mosque is routinely sprayed with disinfectant every Friday prayer service. According to one of the informants, Informant A, the village Muslim community carries out Friday prayers and other worship by keeping a safe distance (physical distancing) in which the distance between worshipers is about one meter and among shafs (rows in prayer) are loosened with a break of

one shaf. They also bring their own worship equipment Prayers, such as prayer mats and turban for men and mukena (Cloak covering a woman's body worn at prayer) for women, wear masks, wash their hands with soap at the entrance of the mosque, and sit a distance of one meter when listening to Friday sermons. In terms of Friday sermons, a preacher delivers his sermon for less than 15 minutes in contrast to normal circumstances where delivering of the sermon ranges over 15 minutes.



Figure 1. Worshipers are wearing a mask.



Figure 2. Worshipers are sitting and praying in one meter away.

According to informant B, some congregation prayers choose to do midday prayer instead of Friday prayer even though the Nurul Huda mosque in Margomulyo village has not been yet categorised as the red zone but covid-19 has a high transmission potential, especially when the Bengkulu Province has been set to be a red zone since March 31, 2020. Another reason, congregation prayers prefer to perform prayers at home because of the consideration of the fatwa (a legal announcement in Islam) of the Indonesian Ulema Council No. 14 of 2020 which allows to eliminate Friday prayers, replaced with midday prayers when an area has the potential for covid-19 transmission.

Factors driving consistency in rural muslim community in maintaining personal safety in performing prayers in the middle of covid-19 outbreak.

Factors that encourage the consistency of some rural Muslim communities who become mosque worshipers continue to perform Friday prayers and other prayers in the mosque when there is an outbreak of covid-19 are as follows: First, mosque worshipers have a high enthusiasm and mosque worshipers only come from people who live nearby the mosque, although the number of worshipers who attend the mosque experiencing a decrease for 40%. Second, Friday prayer is a compulsory worship performed by every male Muslim *mukallaf* (the recipient of the task to carry out Islamic law). Third, mosque worshipers maintain a safe distance between pilgrims and between shafts (physical distancing) with each pilgrim and bring their own prayer equipment such as prayer mats or turban or mukena for women. Fourth, the prayers held at the mosque have a variety of virtues including fulfilling religious call to prayer (*adzan*) and *iqamah* (the second call to Islamic prayer given immediately before the prayer begins), praying at the beginning of time, travelling to the mosque is considered as worship, protected from shaitan, increasing a sense of solidarity and happiness, said informant C.



Figure 3. Hand washing facility



Figure 4. Covid-19 Post at the Village Entrance

Meanwhile, the consistency of some rural Muslim communities who become mosque worshippers who carry out worship at home is driven by several factors: First, the praying at home brings the mercy and compassion of Allah Almighty and strengthens the fabric of affection and harmony in domestic life. Second, the mosque congregation carries out government policies and MUI fatwas on (social distancing) by "avoiding crowds" to build a healthier and safer village or mosque environment from the potential of covid-19 transmission, said informant D.

Consistency implications of rural muslim community in maintaining personal safety in the performing of prayer in the middle of covid-19 outbreak

Implications in religious life that consistently run the prayer and other worship in the mosque as follows: First, the growing spirit of worship of pilgrims is increasing because not everyone can carry out worship when the covid-19 outbreak occurs in an area, especially *Fard* prayer (obligatory prayer) such as Friday prayers. Second, the building of mosque congregational solidarity is increasingly strong in overcoming and preventing the potential for covid-19 transmission. Fourth, the consistency of the congregation in maintaining personal safety and independence of pilgrims in bringing prayer equipment to the mosque. Fifth, the spiritual satisfaction of pilgrims said informant C.

Informant D added that Implications of consistency for rural Muslim communities who become mosque worshippers who carry out the prayers and other worship at home are: First, the development of a sense of happiness, calm and mutual love thanks to the implementation of prayer and other worship at home. Second, the establishment of social distancing in the form of social restrictions independently with awareness of performing worship at home which has supported government policies and MUI fatwas in preventing the potential transmission of covid-19 outbreak.

4. Discussion

The consistency of the Muslim community of Margomulyo village who perform prayers and other worship in the mosque by implementing government health protocols indicates that they are practicing the teachings of Islam which instructs all human beings to maintain their own safety for the safety of the community[22-24]. The behavior of the rural community basically has implemented the maqashid al-shari'ah in the form of religious orders (hifdz al-din) by performing prayers and other worship together with maintaining personal safety (hifdz al-nafs) which is an inseparable part of both. Meanwhile, the consistency of mosque worshippers who choose to perform midday prayers instead of Friday prayers shows that the existence of self-safety (hifdz al-nafs) can change the technical implementation of Friday prayers in midday prayers in a covid-19 outbreak emergency[25].

Moreover, the consistency of rural communities to perform Friday prayers and other prayers in the mosque because it is based on supporting factors that indicate that mosque worshippers perform worship in the mosque not only based on the spirit / ethos of worship without rational consideration justified by the medical, but they also carry out worship consistently by paying attention to the principle of self-safety guarantee (hifdz al-nafs) as two sides of a coin that cannot be separated from the Islamic religious command (hifdz al-nafs).

Meanwhile, the consistency of rural Muslim communities who carry out worship at home also carries out the principle of religious instruction (hifdz al-din) which at the same time also carries out the principle of self-safety guarantee (hifdz al-nafs) to avoid the social crowd (social distancing) to make a more rural environment healthier and safer from covid-19 transmission potential.

Implications in religious life for rural Muslim communities that consistently carry out prayer and other worship in the mosque can realize the spirit of worship, solidarity, consistency in maintaining personal safety (hifdz al-nafs) and spiritual satisfaction. In the life of modern society which is increasingly individualistic and decreases the spirit of worship, then the consistency of Margomulyo's rural community, even though it is classified as a disadvantaged community, should be used as an example by filling the values of Islam in their souls, so as this can build the health of the human soul which is expected to be able to face various calamities including covid-19 trials[26-28].

In the meantime, the implications of consistency for rural Muslim communities who perform prayers and other worship at home can add to the feeling of happiness and calm, the fabric of affection and harmony of domestic life, spiritual satisfaction, and run a policy of social restriction or social distancing from the crowd to prevent the spread covid-19. Spiritual satisfaction that brings happiness and calm becomes important to face of covid-19 outbreak[29].

5. Conclusions

The rural Muslim community as worshipers of the Margomulyo village mosque which has been associated as a disadvantaged community has a high consistency in maintaining personal safety in carrying out worship in the midst of covid-19 outbreak whether they carry out worship in the mosque or at home. The factors that encourage pilgrims to be consistent in maintaining personal safety are because of their awareness of the profound Islamic religious orders. The implication is that mosque worshipers have consistency in maintaining personal safety, personal hygiene, the environment of the house and mosque as well as togetherness in fighting the potential for covid-19 transmission.

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