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THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA AND MUHAMMADIYYAH LEADERS IN FACING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstrak

Kata Kunci:
Nadhlatul
Ulama,
Muhammadiyah,
Covid-19,
Perspektif
Teologis,
Takdir

Studi tentang pandangan teologis para pemuka agama terhadap pandemi Covid-19 merupakan sesuatu yang sangat penting untuk dilakukan guna mencegah penularan Covid-19. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan perspektif teologis terkait takdir (al-qada' dan al-qadar) para tokoh agama dari NU dan Muhammadiyah di Indonesia pada masa pandemi Covid-19. Berdasarkan analisis kuantitatif-deskriptif terhadap data yang diperoleh melalui kuesioner semi terbuka yang telah divalidasi dan didistribusikan melalui google form, dengan jumlah responden 175 pemuka agama yang tersebar di pulau Jawa, Sumatera, Sulawesi, dan Kalimantan, hasil studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pandangan teologis para pemuka agama Indonesia terhadap pandemi Covid-19 cenderung mengikuti ajaran teologi Ahlul-sunnah wal Jama'ah tentang takdir, sebagaimana pandangan al-Ghazali, al-Baqilani, al-Juwaini dan ulama lain yang memiliki pandangan sejenis. Selain itu, hasil studi ini juga mengukuhkan bahwa NU dan Muhammadiyah merupakan dua organisasi moderat dalam aspek takdir. Mayoritas pemuka agama NU dan Muhammadiyah memiliki pandangan teologis, bahwa pandemi Covid-19 adalah cobaan dan ujian dari Tuhan, sementara sebagian lainnya meyakini bahwa itu adalah siksaan dan hukuman Tuhan.

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Abstract

Keywords:

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Muhammadiyah,
Covid-19,
Theological
perspective,
Destiny

The study on the theological perspective of religious leaders upon the Covid-19 pandemic is essential to prevent the Covid-19 transmission. This study aims to portray the theological perspective related to the fate and destiny (al-qada' and al-qadar) of NU and Muhammadiyah leaders in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study employed a quantitative-descriptive analysis. The data were collected through the validated and distributed semi-open questionnaires using a google form to the 175 respondents living in Java, Sumatera, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. This study reveals that the theological perspective of Indonesia's religious leaders upon the Covid-19 pandemic follows Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah theology teaching on fate proposed by al-Ghazali, al-Baqilani, al-Juwaini, and other scholars who have similar views. Moreover, this study also affirms that NU and Muhammadiyah as moderate organizations in the aspect of fate and destiny. Most NU and Muhammadiyah religious leaders have theological views stating that the Covid-19 pandemic is God's ordeal and test, while others believe it is God's torment and punishment.

Introduction

In the recent era of disruption, everything intense transforms to be weak expeditiously, and vice versa. The Covid-19 pandemic has even accelerated that transformation in the economy, society, education, and religion. In the religious area, a rapid shift occurs in all religions globally, including Islam, Christian, Buddhist, and other faiths. Several social distancing were reported in the United States of America. Similarly, the same phenomena also occurred in some churches in Indonesia.¹ Meanwhile, for the Muslim community in Saudi Arabia, the pandemic has originated their new religious rituals arrangement, including the rituals of hajj and umrah, since 2020.² In Indonesia, Indonesia Ulama Council (MUI) has enacted a fatwa concerning compliance to follow health protocols to avoid the covid-19. While the Indonesian government has

¹ Abdon Arnolus Amtiran, "Pandemi Covid-19 Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Polarisasi Mazhab Teologi Di Indonesia," *MAGNUM OPUS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Kepemimpinan Kristen* 1, no. 2 (2020): 64–71, <https://doi.org/10.52220/magnum.v1i2.49>.

² Shahul H. Ebrahim dan Ziad A. Memish, "COVID-19: Preparing for Superspreader Potential among Umrah Pilgrims to Saudi Arabia," *Lancet (London, England)* 395, no. 10227 (2020): e48, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(20\)30466-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(20)30466-9); Anwar M. Hashem Abdullah A. Algaissi, Naif Khalaf Alharbi, Mazen Hassanain, "Preparedness and Response to COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia: Building on Mers Experience," *Journal of Infection and Public Health* 13, no. 6 (2020): 834–38, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiph.2020.04.016>.

also issued instruction of the Head of Indonesia Police Force on the conformity towards government policies related to covid-19 prevention. The worship and any other religious rituals in all places of worship that provoked mass regulation should follow the social distancing protocols.³ One of these rules saw in the Circular Letter of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 15 of 2020, concerning guidelines for organizing religious activities in houses of worship during a pandemic.

As the two socio-religious organizations with the most significant number of adherents, Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) and Muhammadiyah's theological perspectives on preventing Covid-19 transmission become essential. Those perspectives outlined since religious doctrines about faith and belief remain the most substantial factors affecting the devotees' behavior.⁴ Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) has also authorized a recommendation for religious figures relating to the stance and moves to counter the Covid-19 pandemic.⁵ In this context, theology associates with the faith and belief tightly held by a devotee. Therefore, the death and the struggles to protect themselves from the Covid-19 virus are connected to the theology discourse resided in the adherents' and religious figures' thoughts. Consequently, this study describes the theological perspective from those two organizations, as discussed by the Muslim theologian in the emergence of Islamic sects, such as *Jahmiyyah*, *Qadariyyah*, *Mu'tazila*, and *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*. A study conducted by Rusyana et al. has identified the compliance of NU and Muhammadiyah

³ Ayi Yunus Rusyana, "Fatwa Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Di Saat Pandemi Covid-19 Di Indonesia Dan Mesir," *Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati*, 2020.

⁴ Nicolette V. Roman, Thuli G. Mthembu dan Mujeeb Hoosen, "Spiritual Care—'A Deeper Immunity'—A Response to Covid-19 Pandemic," *African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine* 12, no. 1 (2020): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.4102/phcfm.v12i1.2456>; Amtiran, "Andemi Covid-19 Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Polarisasi Mazhab Teologi Di Indonesia"; David DeFranza, Mike Lindow, Kevin Harrison, Arul Mishra Himansu Mishra, "Religion and Reactance to COVID-19 Mitigation Guidelines," *American Psychologist* 76, no. 5 (2020): 744–754, <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000717>.

⁵ Jeff Clyde G. Corpuz, "COVID-19: Spiritual Interventions for the Living and the Dead," *Journal of Public Health* 43, no. 2 (2021): 244–45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdaa167>.

towards the fatwa enacted by MUI on the prevention of covid-19 transmission.⁶ Studies involving these organizations are alluring since they frequently have contrasting views in many religious aspects, such as in *taqlid* toward *madhhab*; the determination of *Eid Al-Fitr*, *Eid al-Adha*, and the beginning of Ramadan; details on the worship rituals, along with the details of theology schools.

As explained in its foundation, NU's Islamic theology perspective is governed by the theology sects *Ash'ariyyah* and *Maturid'iyyah*. Historically, these theology schools take the moderate position on the differences among *Jahmiyyah* and *Qadariyyah* on Allah's *al-qada'* and *al-qadar*. In contrast, Muhammadiyah was born from the spirit of eliminating *takhayul* (superstition), *bid'ah* (heresy), and *churafat* (animism and dynamism). Thus, Muhammadiyah adopts puritan theology like the theology from the movement led by Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridla in Mesir.⁷

Many studies on the role of religious leaders in dealing with COVID-19 were carried out from various religious perspectives.⁸ It is believed that the involvement of religious leaders in this matter cannot be separated from their theological understanding of religion.⁹ In our

⁶ Rusyana, "Fatwa Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Di Saat Pandemi Covid-19 Di Indonesia Dan Mesir."

⁷ Isa Anshori dan Arfan Mu'ammam Muhammad, "Muhammadiyah Cosmopolitan from Teoanthropocentris toward World Citizenship," *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 5 (2020): 1523–28; Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Muhammadiyah," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3rd Edn. Leiden: Brill*, 2019; Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Lakum Dinukum Wa-Liya Dini: The Muhammadiyah's Stance towards Interfaith Relations," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (2011): 329–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2011.586512>.

⁸ Michelle Ann Miller Riyanti Djalante, Laely Nurhidayah, Hoang Van Minh, Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong, Yodi Mahendradhata, Angelo Trias, Jonatan Lassa, "COVID-19 and ASEAN Responses: Comparative Policy Analysis," *Progress in Disaster Science* 8 (2020): 1–12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2020.100129>. Waleed Aljabr Zulqarnain Baloch, Zhongren Ma, Yunpeng Ji, Mohsen Ghanbari, Qiuwei Pan, "Unique Challenges to Control the Spread of COVID-19 in the Middle East," *Journal of Infection and Public Health* 13, no. 9 (2020): 1247–50, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiph.2020.06.034>.

⁹ Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi Suyadi, Zalik Nuryana, "The Fiqh of Disaster: The Mitigation of Covid-19 in the Perspective of Islamic Education-Neuroscience," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 51 (2020): 1–9, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101848>.

academic questing, studies on the theological aspects that influence the patterns of thinking and acting of religious leaders have not received attention, except in Christianity.¹⁰ In this position, this study was conducted on religious leaders from the most prominent Islamic organizations in Indonesia which are NU and Muhammadiyah. Thus, this study attempts to complement the previous findings related to the religious leaders' responses on the Covid-19. The analysis of NU and Muhammadiyah as described above is interesting to study academically because the Indonesian Muslim community belongs to the category of the religious society;¹¹ they still consider religious leaders as role models, especially in the matters of worship. In fact, in a study, it was stated that 80.2% of the Indonesian Muslim community made religion the main foothold for a "life guide" in everyday life.¹²

This study concerns on the theological perspectives of NU and Muhammadiyah in facing the Covid-19. This research formulation is divided into three scopes of research, *first*, the conception of fate and death; *second*, Covid-19 as chastisement and test; and *third*, the struggle to avoid covid-19

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive method, wherein the data obtained through a questionnaire consisting of semi-open questions distributed through google form. The questionnaire subsisted nine items designed to reveal the respondents' profile and theological perspective related to the covid-19 and its handling. Except for the respondents'

¹⁰ Christopher A. Beeley dan Joseph H. Britton, "Introduction: Toward a Theology of Leadership," *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 1 (2009): 3; Yohan Go, David Schnasa Jacobsen, dan Duse Lee, "Introduction to the Essays of the Consultation on Preaching and Postcolonial Theology," *Homiletic* 40, no. 1 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.15695/hmltc.v40i1.4116>; Adibah Abdul Rahim dan Nadzrah Ahmad, "The Critique of Feminism on Traditional Christian Theology: An Analysis from Qur'anic Perspective," *Ulum Islamiyyah* 27 (2019): 26–33, <https://doi.org/10.33102/uij.vol27no1.86>.

¹¹ Najwa Abdullah dan Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "Slamisation in the Indonesian Media Spaces New Sites for a Conservative Push," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 3 (2018): 214–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2018.1525894>.

¹² Robin Bush dan Budhy Munawar-Rachman, "NU and Muhammadiyah: Majority Views on Religious Minorities in Indonesia," dalam *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia* (ISEAS Publishing, 2014), 16–50.

profiles, each of them had four alternative answers and one open response to accommodate perspectives outside of the provided alternative.

All items had been validated through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the experts before the questionnaire was disseminated. The respondents were 175 NU and Muhammadiyah religious figures or leaders, some of them served in the organizational structure, and some did not. They were mainly from Java, while the others came from Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. The distribution of the survey was carried out between March-April 2020.

The obtained data were analyzed using the simple descriptive quantitative method by calculating the answer percentage on each item. The analysis sought to identify the respondents' theological perspective on Covid-19 and related handling from government and relevant organizations. The analysis process adopted al-qada' and al-qadar perspectives.

The Respondents' Profile

The analysis results on respondents' profiles show that most respondents are male (77.1%), while the remaining are female (22.9%). Most of them have high educational backgrounds. 88.6% of the respondents have graduated from university, with 34.3% having bachelor and master degrees, while 20% have doctoral degrees. The remaining 11.4% of the respondents are junior and senior high school graduates. For their organization affiliation, 52.6% (92 people) and 47.4% (83 people) of the respondents come from NU and Muhammadiyah, as presented in Figure (1). Therefore, the religious figures in NU and Muhammadiyah are primarily well-educated. People with formal education mostly have rational thoughts. That rationality affects their perspectives, behaviors, and responses towards the Covid-19.

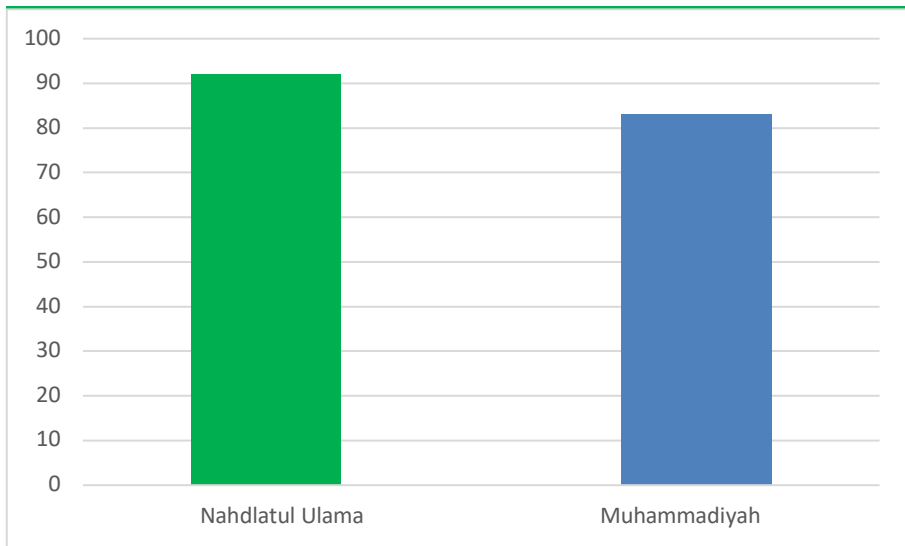


Figure (1). Respondents' Religious Organization Affiliation.

The Respondents' Understanding on Covid-19

According to the analysis results, almost all respondents (78.9%) recognize covid-19, 11.4% highly understand Covid-19, and 8.6% have limited knowledge of Covid-19.

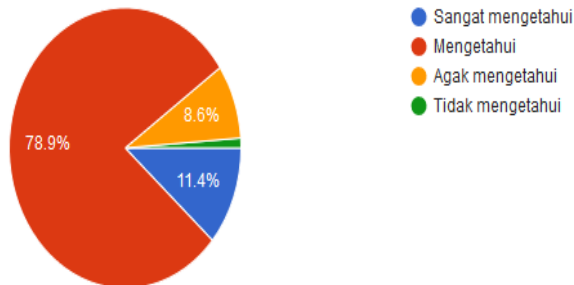


Figure (2). Respondents' Understanding of Covid-19

Respondents' expansive knowledge of Covid-19 represents their great concern about it. More than 90% of the respondents admit that they always amend their knowledge on Covid-19. They access the updated information from social media (58.3%), television (29.7%), and other sources, such as magazines, YouTube, radio, and so forth. Concerning that obtained information, the respondents argue that they frequently (28%),

always (26%), if needed (22.9%), and rarely (20.6%) clarify the information to the resources.

The Respondents' Theological Attitude towards Covid-19

Most of the respondents respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, theologically, while a small number respond politically. 68.6% of the respondents regard the Covid-19 pandemic as a test from Allah the Almighty, 5.7% of them see it as a fate, and 4% consider it a torment. Meanwhile, the remaining 14% of respondents perceive it politically as a manipulation created by a particular country or organization. Besides, the respondents also demonstrate a wise and religious attitude. 56.6% of the respondents mention that they can face the pandemic calmly, 21.1% feel normal during the pandemic, while only 14.9% admit their fear of the pandemic, as illustrated in Figure (3).

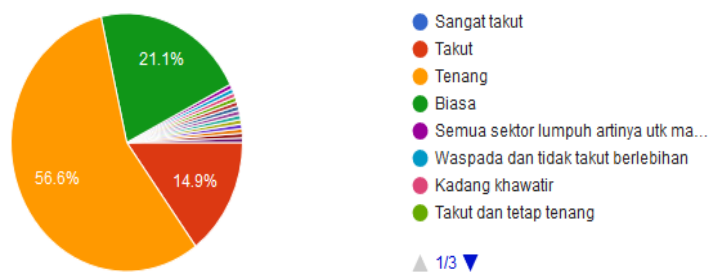


Figure (3). Respondents' Attitude toward the Covid-19 Pandemic

In line with their attitudes, the respondents' actions in responding Covid-19 pandemic are dominated by praying and maintaining their health (73%). At the same time, 9.2%, 5.2%, 5.2%, and 8% of the respondents explain that they maximally protect themselves, do their regular activity, resign (*tawakkal*) to Allah the Almighty, and do such other measures during the Covid-19 pandemic respectively. Additionally, 52% of the respondents also acknowledge that the statement saying 'we have to fear Allah the Almighty, instead of Covid-19, so that 'we have to still pray in mosque' is incorrect. However, 19.8%, 10.5%, and 2.3% of respondents

tend to agree.

Concerning the contribution to counter Covid-19, most of the respondents argue that they actively assist the prevention of Covid-19 transmission by advocating society to pray and maintaining their health (50%), asking them to conform to government policy (33.3%), and other measures (12.7%. 28%, 38.3%, and 32.6% of them also argue that they always, occasionally, and if necessary, convey their obtained Covid-19 related information to society. Only 1.1% of the respondents have never extended their gathered information to society.

The Theological Perspective of NU and Muhammadiyah

NU and Muhammadiyah are the two most numerous socio-religious organizations in Indonesia. They are frequently placed in the same position, even if they have differences. Both claim to follow the theology schools of *Ahlus Sunnah was Jamaah* and the science of *kalām*, but they frequently have discrepancies.¹³ They are also prominent for their moderate (*wasthiyyah*) side in performing religious practices while respecting diversity.¹⁴ As the devotee of *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, it is thought-provoking to place NU and Muhammadiyah in a parallel position since *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah* aroused from two extreme sects, *Jahmiyyah* and *Qadariyyah*, with a significant contrast in perceiving *al-qada'* and *al-qadar*. It is positioned in the middle of Khawarij and Mu'tazila in reacting to some issues related to *kalam* science theology.

In advancing its theological-political view within history, Muhammadiyah acknowledges Indonesia as a legitimate nation that has implemented sharia values. The discerns Muhammadiyah from Salafi and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) support a caliphate system in Indonesia¹⁵

¹³ Masdar Hilmy, "Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism? A Reexamination on the Moderate Vision of Muhammadiyah and NU," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 7, no. 1 (2013): 24–48, <https://dx.doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2013.7.1.24-48>.

¹⁴ Zakiya Darajat, "Muhammadiyah dan NU: Penjaga Moderatisme Islam di Indonesia," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 81–96, <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.001.1.05>.

¹⁵ Azyumardi Azra, *Tinjauan Teologis-Historis, Dalam Rekonstruksi Gerakan AL-A'RAF*— Vol. XVIII, No. 1, June 2021

Therefore, studies on Muhammadiyah theological perspective become highly contextual, particularly the research associated with fate, death, and pandemic. Moreover, they become more circumstantial if those aspects affect the organization's attitude towards the related government policies.

A study carried out by Yusuf concluded that the NU's theology perspective represented in Javanese Islamic boarding schools shows a similar philosophy with *Asy'ariyah* and *Maturid'iyyah* science of *kalam* in some of the complex issues. At the same time, it has also been influenced and filtrated by the theological perspective from other sects.¹⁶ Commonly, NU's theology tends to be more adjacent to *Asy'ariyah* than *Maturid'iyyah* since many more NU writers come from *Asy'ariyah* than *Maturid'iyyah*, such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Baqilani, and Al-Juwaini. The domination from *Asy'ariyah* figures is known to be broader than *Maturid'iyyah* figures.¹⁷ *Asy'ariyah* belie that all good and evil come from Allah the Almighty. They reject the theological perspective from *Mu'tazilah* that all humans have the free will to do everything they desire. *Mu'tazilah* advances in the era of the Abbasid Caliphate and has a highly similar theology perspective with *Qadariyyah*.

Historically, *Qadariyyah* shaped an advanced theology branch related to fate and destiny (*al-qada'* and *al-qadar*, known as *Jahmiyyah*). Meanwhile, as the name suggested, *Qadariyyah* is supposed to indicate its reliance on *al-qadar* (destiny), but in contrast to that, the *Qadariyyah* deny Allah's fate for the phenomena and behavior caused by a human.¹⁸ NU places the theology schools of *Asy'ariyah* and *Maturid'iyyah* as its foundation. This idea from a theologian, Abul Hasan al-Asy'ari, explains that Allah the Almighty

Muhammadiyah Pada Era Multiperadaban (Yogyakarta: UII Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Moh. Asror Yusuf, "Pandangan Teologis Santri Di Pesantren Jawa Timur," *Al-Tabrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 2 (2016): 377–95, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21154/al-tahrir.v12i2.64>.

¹⁷ Mujamil Qomar, "Implementasi Aswaja dalam Perspektif NU di Tengah Kehidupan Masyarakat," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, no. 01 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2014.2.01>.

¹⁸ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Selamatkan Islam Dari Muslim Puritan* (Penerbit Serambi, 2006).

has created the good and the bad for all humans and other living creatures. Besides, Imam al-Asy'ari also accentuates that badness is Allah's creature that is also prohibited.¹⁹ NU aspires to place both *Asy'ariyah* and *Maturid'iyyah* theology, representing *Ablus Sunnah wal Jamaah* with a moderate position among the theology branches in that period. However, a study suggests that the objective has not been realized.²⁰ That study describes that the fate in *Asy'ariyah Maturid'iyyah* emphasizes that humans have the free will to do good or evil deeds and are responsible for the consequences. In that study, Qaim argues that NU fails to reflect that idea in its regeneration process. In its regeneration, NU clarifies that humans have no choices in their lives and should surrender to Allah's fate.

Many religious discourses from NU and Muhammadiyah discuss that Allah the Almighty always provides the best part for His devotees so that phenomena that occur to humans should be the best for them.²¹ This narrative reiterated to calm those who have been a victim of the disaster. This perspective reflects Mu'tazila's theological perspective explaining that Allah the almighty always arranges the best thing for His adherents (*ash-shalih wal ashlah*) because His fate always carries wisdom.²² In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, this perspective provokes the idea that Allah the almighty gives this pandemic as the best part for humans and His wisdom.

The Fate and Death

A hadith that explains the assurance of a human's age, partner, and fortune from Allah the Almighty has become prominent in NU community. A hadith undeniably describes those three aspects that have

¹⁹ Abul Hasan Al-Asy'ari, *Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'Ah* (Mesir: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 2000).

²⁰ Suis Qa'im, "Genealogi Teologi Nahdlatul Ulama," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 6, no. 2 (2014): 361–74, <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2012.6.2.361-374>.

²¹ Anshori dan Muhammad, "Muhammadiyah Cosmopolitan from Teoanthropocentris toward World Citizenship," n.d.

²² Imam As-Sasyrastani, *Nihayah Al-Iqdam Fi Ilm Al-Kalam* (Mesir: Dar al-Fikr, 1999).

been decided by Allah the Almighty since humans are in their mother's womb. In that famous hadith from Bukhari, it is mentioned that human creation starts in the form of *nuthfah* (sperm) for 40 days, then shifts into *alaqah* (something that sticks) for 40 days and *mudlgbah* (a lump of meat) for another 40 days before Allah the Almighty instructs the angel to give a living spirit while writing the fortune, age, and the deed of the baby of being the heaven or hell occupant.²³ The hadith does not explain of the human's partner assurance, but the doctrine of every human best partner is in the hand of Allah the Almighty has become prominent.

That hadith has inspired a long argument between Muslim theologians or the experts of *kalam* science in comprehending and explaining *al-qada'* and *al-qadar*, which also belong to the sixth Islamic pillar of faith. Questions on the purpose of good deeds concern the hadith mentioning that Allah the Almighty has decided the inhabitants of hell and heaven. No matter how many good deeds are completed by a devotee, if he or she has been selected as the occupant of hell, then he or she will remain to go to hell. In contrast, people with various evil deeds can still get to heaven if they have been decided as the inhabitant of heaven. Consequently, many theologians employ other postulates to establish the theology perspective on *al-qada'* and *al-qadar* that ignite different theological sects, such as *Jahmiyyah*, *Qadariyyah*, *Maturid'iyyah*, *Asy'ariyyah*.²⁴

Commonly, every living creature with strong feelings, including humans, fears death. Therefore, many people attempt to protect themselves from the Covid-19 virus by social distancing, stop attending congregational praying, and other activities that potentially cause the Covid-19 transmission. However, other people perceive those preventive measures as prioritizing the fear of death over the fear of Allah the Almighty, and they even bring up the theological perspective of being *shirk*

²³ Muhammad Syarifuddin An-Nawawi, *Al-Arbain an-Nawawiyah* (Semarang: Maktabah Hidayah, 2000).

²⁴ Umar Sulaiman Al-Ashqar, *Al-Aqidah Fi Dlau Al-Kitab Wa as-Sunnah* (Oman: Darun Nafais, 2005).

of Allah the Almighty. Undoubtedly, that idea is counter-productive towards national and international government suggestions to end Covid-19 transmission.

Death is one of the disputed aspects in the viewpoint of *al-qada'* and *al-qadar*, including the ones caused by the virus. Within the history, Umar ibn al-Khattab and other companions of Prophet Muhammad had also argued on Allah's faith in the pandemic and how to counter it. During that moment, Umar withdrew his religious entourage to a safer place to avoid the virus transmission, but Abu Ubaidah denied that statement due to his belief that death is part of Allah's fate. Then, Umar replied with another argumentation related to fate.²⁵ Similarly, Covid-19 is also inflicted by a virus that infects the respiratory tract, causing many deaths.

In NU community, no one has ever denied that death is part of Allah's fate, but they believe that they should not fear the death caused by Covid-19. They have no fear of pandemics. The responses from NU figures reveal that 70% of them admit that people should not be afraid of the pandemic and maintain the congregational prayer. As death is part of Allah's plan, they should only fear Allah the Almighty.

Death is Allah's fate, but humans should still struggle to preserve their health to keep living. That struggle includes the attempt to get medicine whenever they get sick. From the Islamic theology perspective, many Ulama debate the idea of death, illness, and medical treatment. Mufti Saudi Syaikh Bin Baz explains that Moslem Ulama has different views upon seeking medical treatment. Some of them classified it as obligatory, optional, halal, and others prioritize not seeking treatment in the time of illness.²⁶ Thus, these results indicate the various relationship among fate, death, sickness, and pandemic. A perspective highlights that death is part of the unavoidable fate (humans cannot prevent Covid-19 transmission, others accentuate that human should maintain their faith in

²⁵ Al-Imam Al-Baihaqi, "As-Sunan Al-Kubra," dalam *VII* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1999).

²⁶ Bin Baz, "Hukm Al-Tadawi Min Al-Amradl," *binbaz.org.sa.fatwas*, (2020).

Allah the Almighty during a pandemic or not, while the other emphasize the inseparable relationship between death and fate.

In addition, the theological perspective of Muhammadiyah is related to the renewal theology of Muhammad Abduh and his students. In the fate aspect, Muhammad Abduh tends to prevent differences among *Qadariyyah* and *Jahmiyyah*, stating that the *Qadariyyah* theology perspective is a deceiving thought, while *Jahmiyyah's* mindset destroys the sharia foundation.²⁷ Muhammadiyah views fate as the almighty Allah's field, while humans have to keep attempting to attain the almighty Allah's blessed, while the fortune human obtained is the award from Allah the Almighty. Humans have the right and obligation to make efforts (*kasb*) for their lives, but once a thing occurs in their lives, that becomes Allah the almighty's doing (*khalq*).²⁸

Therefore, Muhammadiyah carries a relatively more rational theology perspective on fate and death and the obligation to seek medical health in times of need. Muhammadiyah positions health as a priority that is equal to education. It underlies the establishment of Muhammadiyah hospitals that becomes a monumental movement in its early days, linear to the aids distributed to the orphans and the poor. Currently, its medical business has advanced rapidly.²⁹ Consequently, the responses from Muhammadiyah figures also demonstrate no perspective that places fear of Allah the Almighty higher than the fear of Covid-19. Therefore, the theology that says fate denies struggle (similar to Jahmiyyah theology) is more probable detected and relevant to NU than Muhammadiyah.

The Covid-19 as Chastisement and Test

The emergence of Covid-19 from the non-Muslim majority area of Wuhan, China, has issued various theological perspectives. One

²⁷ Muhammad Abduh, *Risalah Al-Ta'ubid* (Mesir: Hai'ah Ammah, 2000).

²⁸ Agus Miswanto, *Al-Bidayah Fi Al-Aqidah Al-Muhammadiyah* (Magelang: Pasca UM Magelang, 2017).

²⁹ LPI PP Muhammadiyah, *Profil 1 Abad Muhammadiyah* (Yogyakarta: PP Muhammadiyah, 2010).

perspective mentions that Covid-19 is a form of torment from Allah the Almighty, primarily for those who have opposed His command and infringed His prohibitions. Many people presume that the virus appears in Wuhan since the people do not consider halal foods and consume haram animals to face the virus as Allah's torment, through the bats.³⁰ The same viewpoint has also been detected in the theological perspective of other religions, such as Christian. The churches see Covid-19 as God's test or as the sign of the closer proximity to the day when God gives His aid in the Day of Judgment.³¹

The idea of Covid-19 is that Allah's torment has developed among the ordinary society, primarily spread by the missionary, while some academicians also justify the perspective in their subconscious. Tahir argues that 2020 is full of tests from God, marked by the emergence of the Covid-19 virus from Wuhan to Iran and the whole world.³² The dichotomous idea of reward and punishment has advanced among religious teachings, including in Islam. Many verses in Al-Qur'an and hadiths utilize this dichotomous view; people with good deeds receive a reward, while people with wickedness attain torment. This idea was used by many missionaries to persuade people to improve themselves, especially in the pandemic.

The perspective that sees the Covid-19 pandemic as torment from Allah the Almighty stands only in a short period. Once the virus infected people in Muslim majority countries, such as Indonesia, the perspective shifted into Covid-19 was Allah's chastisement for all Muslims. In other words, the viewpoint on Covid-19 transformed from Allah's torment into

³⁰ Yuliana, "Corona Virus Diseases (Covid -19); Sebuah Tinjauan Literatur," *Wellness and Healthy Magazine Volume 2*, no. February (2020): 124–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvzxxb18.12>.

³¹ Fransiskus Irwan Widjaja, "Menstimulasi Praktik Gereja Rumah Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19," *Kurios (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen)* 6, no. 1 (2020): 127–39, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v6i1.166>.

³² Muhammad Tahir, "Nalar Agama Dan Pandemi Covid-19," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Problematika Sosial Pandemi Covid-19 "Membangun Optimisme di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19"* (2020): 102–108.

His test for all humans. The perspective transition went rapidly, primarily when many religious leaders passed away due to Covid-19. The death of many Muslim figures or Ulama becomes the test from Allah the Almighty to preserve Islam accurately.

The perspective of Covid-19 being Allah's test has been detected in both NU and Muhammadiyah communities, as expressed in the respondents' responses. Meanwhile, some NU religious figures argue that this Covid-19 is a chastisement from Allah the Almighty for the sinful devotees who have not performed the proper repentance. In contrast, that view has not been detected by the Muhammadiyah respondents. However, the idea of the Covid-19 as God's torment remains to exist. The difference is only that the chastisement also goes to the righteous people. People obtain the legitimate reason from theological perspectives, such as the Al-Qur'an verse that says, "And beware of a punishment which shall not visit the wrongdoers among you exclusively and know that Allah the Almighty is severe in retribution."³³

The view places Covid-19 as chastisement inspired various arguments and attitudes.³⁴ This view is assumed to be the reason for rejection encountered by Covid-19 survivors. People are afraid to catch the transmission from the survivors. They also presume that those who died due to Covid-19 were contaminated and enjoyed consuming haram foods. Even if these research results suggest that a minimum number of Muhammadiyah and NU figures believed in that view, this view was developed among the NU and Muhammadiyah community.

The Struggle to Avoid Covid-19

Along with discussing the connection between fate and death, the last theology-related issue is the struggle to avoid Covid-19. The relevant *kalam* science literature is also still associated with the debate among

³³ Kementerian Agama RI, *Terjemah Al-Quran Karim* (Jakarta: Kemenag RI, 1998).

³⁴ Syukri Al Fauzi Harlis Yurnalis, "COVID-19: Pespektive Kalam Dalam Takdir Antara Qadariyah Jabariyah Dan Tawakal," *Jurnal Al-Aqidah: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah Filsafat* 12, no. 1 (2020): 77–89, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15548/ja.v12i1.1569>.

Qadariyyah and *Jahmiyyah* sects. In the *Qadariyyah* perspective, people's struggle is their only fate's determinant since human carry out their activities without God's intervention. In contrast, *Jahmiyyah* sees struggles as futile acts since things occur following God's fate, so that human struggles are unnecessary. Meanwhile, in the perspective of *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, human struggles are the determinant of them attaining rewards or after-life torment. Human's will and struggle adhere to Allah's wish and fate.³⁵

In Muhammadiyah theology, every human action occurs following the almighty Allah's fate, as explained in Al-Qur'an verses of ash-Shaffat: 96 and QS. al-Qashash: 68. Muhammadiyah theology considers that humans only have two choices of struggling and Allah's fate. Thus, human action seen from their struggle is *kas*, while Allah's destiny is called the creation (*khalq*). As described in the Al-Qur'an surah ash-Shaffat: 96. In Muhammadiyah perspective, each human plays their role while enjoying the fortune provided by Allah the Almighty (including their life, health, and safety).³⁶

On the other hand, NU states that they pursue *Ash'ariyyah* and *Maturidiyyah* school of thought, classifying human deeds into *ikhtiari* (human deeds based on their desire) and *idltirari* (human deeds based on Allah's fate). The difference between those deeds is that human beings accounted for the *ikhtiari*, but not the *idltirari*. All human actions are Allah's creation, but the sinful and disobedience only belongs to a human, not Allah the Almighty.³⁷ Someone who does not avoid the virus belongs to *ikhtiari*, but that stays dangerous and equals evil acts. Another theological perspective that is connected to fate and struggle is surrendering to Allah the Almighty. The regular narrative among society before the pandemic says that human has to struggle but should let fate

³⁵ Abdul Muhsin bin Hamad Al-Badr, *Qathf Al-Jani Al-Dani Syarkh Muqaddimah Al-Qairawaniy* (Kairo: Maktabah Syamilah, 2010).

³⁶ Miswanto, *Al-Bidayah Fi Al-Aqidah Al-Muhammadiyah*.

³⁷ Sayyid Husain, *Al-Hushun Al-Hamidiyyah* (Semarang: Maktabah Al-Hidayah, 2014).

decides the final result. This idea is encountered among both Muhammadiyah and NU community. However, this pandemic situation has changed NU and Muhammadiyah's perspective in facing the Covid-19.

The analysis results demonstrate that NU figures (83% of the respondents) believe that the struggle to avoid viruses and stay safe during the pandemic are obligatory. It represents human attempts before they surrender to Allah the Almighty. The battle consists of maintaining their body health and hygiene by frequently washing hands and wearing a mask.

This study also emphasizes the propriety between NU perspectives and *Asy'ariyyah Maturid'iyyah* or *Ablus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, concerning Allah's fate and creation. It also denies the presumption or finding, mentioning that NU regeneration only prioritizes the submission to Allah the Almighty. In other words, NU theology perspective is adjacent to *Asy'ariyyah* and *Maturid'iyyah*. The data show a relatively similar theological perspective in Muhammadiyah community. Besides, the struggle in Muhammadiyah also includes reducing the activities outside people's houses and implementing social distancing. By limiting outside activity, the Covid-19 transmission is also expected to get lower.

Some of NU leaders still accept the idea of surrendering to Allah the Almighty in facing the Covid-19. Their limited number still should be considered. These people keep asking for protection from Covid-19 to Allah the Almighty. However, the people's struggle is not linear to resist surrendering to Allah. Thus, people struggling to protect themselves from the virus still place the final result within Allah's fate. This study seeks to associate surrendering to Allah the Almighty with the meaning of resignation, which can be implied as surrender to Allah the Almighty after completing the struggles and prayers. Most of NU figures admit that they always carry out this struggle of praying. They even carry an annual praying to avoid disasters or pandemics, such as prayers upon the prophet. Praying becomes the first form of struggle mentioned by NU and Muhammadiyah figures. Both organizations carry it out, but they practice relatively

different prayers.

The contrast can be identified from the different theological perspectives of the two organizations. In NU community, the prayers always involve *tawasul* prayer adopted from the ones used by Prophet Muhammad and saint people or the messenger of Allah the Almighty. An example of that prayer is the *tawasul* to be protected from a pandemic or *thaun li kbamsatun* involving the *tawasul* mentioning Prophet Muhammad and his family. In contrast, Muhammadiyah theology perspective rejects this *tawasul* practice. One of Muhammadiyah pillars even mentions the eradication of *tawasul* and *keburafat* (superstition). Those two elements are perceived to be one of the prohibited aspects of Islam.

Muhammadiyah figures also describe that one of the forms of the struggle is by protecting themselves maximally while still practicing the other forms of struggles, such as praying. This idea is presumed to emerge due to logic reflecting the confidence of human efforts while also believing in Allah's fate, the goodness or sickness. This theology perspective adjures to *Qadariyyah* viewpoint, mentioning that phenomena occur due to human endeavor, not Allah's work. Besides, it can also be associated with the implementation of *Ablus Sunnah wal Jamaah*'s viewpoint that positions human free will in doing good or evil deeds.

Conclusion

This study indicates that the theological perspective of religious figures, both NU and Muhammadiyah follows *Ablus Sunnah wal Jamaah*, symbolized by *Asy'ariyyah* and developed by its successors; al-Ghazali, al-Baqilani, and al-Juwaini. This study also re-emphasizes the religious figures of NU and Muhammadiyah as the most substantial socio-religious organization in Indonesia with a moderate perspective for the aspect of fate. Both organizations are distant from the *Qadariyyah* sect that has override fate in all phenomena that occur to humans. Meanwhile, they are also far from the *Jahmiyyah* theological perspective that prioritizes fate for the phenomena that happen to humans. The relation among these

organizations represents a minimum difference in emphasizing the relevance of effort (*kash*) suggested by each religious figure. Muhammadiyah's pillars of struggle in providing healthcare services affect their viewpoint in considering the death caused by Covid-19. Muhammadiyah places seeking medical assistance as an obligation, as equal to protecting themselves from death.

During this Covid-19 pandemic, religious figures of NU and Muhammadiyah theology also possess similarities. They formerly regarded Covid-19 as torment or chastisement. Then, their perspective shifted into seeing this pandemic as a trial for righteous or evil people. Concerning making an effort, they prioritize praying as the most frequently practiced form of struggle, along with maintaining health. The slight differences in the struggle performed by NU and Muhammadiyah community can be seen in adopting the practice of *tawasul*. This finding shows that, theologically, NU and Muhammadiyah religious leaders have many similarities. Hence, it is an asset to build the synergy of these two organizations in developing the life order of the Indonesian people, most of whom are Muslims, for the better.

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