Polarization of the Muslim Community Towards Government Policies in Overcoming the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia

Ahmad Zain Sarnoto
Institut PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Lamya Hayatina
STAI Fatahillah Serpong, Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia

Abstract---The purpose of this paper is to analyses the phenomenon of Muslims responding to government policies in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is a review of the polarization of Muslims towards government policies to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a change in the lifestyle of the Indonesian ʻMuslim community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and one of them can be seen from their worship practices. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as a religious authority has issued a fatwa that supports the government program in preventing the transmission of COVID-19. However, polarization occurred among the people, giving rise to new social categories that tended to be opposed to pro-government people. The methodology used is a religious sociology approach. The conclusion of this analysis is that Muslims are polarized in accepting government policies, namely; 1) irrational-passive groups, those whose views are not based on scientific logic and do not provide solutions in preventing the COVID-19 pandemic, 2) active-hating groups but the arguments given tend to be irrational, 3) rational groups, but some are semi-rational and support government policies, 4) rational groups but shy in presenting their arguments, and 5) rational-active groups supporting government policies.

Keywords---COVID-19, government policy, pandemic, polarization.

Introduction

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, especially Muslim are different, research conducted by Hasan Basri in Ciamis-West Java-Indonesia shows that there are at least five groups of Muslim in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, namely; irrational-passive groups, those whose views are not based on

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scientific logic and do not provide solutions in preventing the COVID-19 pandemic, second, active-hating groups but the arguments given lead to irrational, third, rational groups, but some are semi-active rational and support government policies, fourth, rational groups but shy in presenting their arguments, and fifth, rational-active groups supporting government policies. Of all these groups are influenced by several things including; educational background (Bisri, 2020).

Several major Islamic organizations in Indonesia share the same opinion, especially in limiting their religious activities. Of course, these religious organizations at the same time, they issue fatwas which are supported by various arguments (Almuttaqi, 2020; Amel, 2020). Every mass of organization has a mass base in society. At this level, most of them follow the policies and legal fatwas issued by mass organizations and their ulama figures. At this level of society, few people have deviant and different behavior from the mainstream. To anticipate the spread of the virus, most of the organizations and their supporters have completely restricted religious activities, such as closing mosques and stopping congregational prayers that cause crowds. Only a few people force themselves to remain active in worship gatherings as before the COVID-19 pandemic (Hidayaturrahman et al., 2021).

The same experience happened abroad. For example, looking at the behavioral response of Americans, the source of obedience to government programs is born from religious teachings. However, when religious people politicize this situation, they tend to neglect health protocol (Boguszewski et al., 2020; Hackett, 1990). American society can be grouped into two types: first, those who are in the category of left ideology. This first group emphasizes more careful behavior. Second, those who are on the right (religious), tend to ignore the precautions recommended by the medical and government. Further, this right group in ignoring health protocol is driven by its political alignments. They show loyalty to Trump, as a supporter of Christian nationalism (Maduro, 2005; Pabbajah et al., 2020). They still love to eat in restaurants, visit family/friends, hang out with more than 10 people, and dont wear masks or wash their hands. Such actions are based on religious arguments, such as the conception that Americans choices are under Gods protection, so do not believe in the news. Christian nationalism is different from religiosity it self, because pure religiosity (without political interest) becomes the main driver of being more active in preventing (Perry et al., 2020).

Various efforts have been made to overcome the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic by various authorities in Indonesia, starting from the government and religious leaders, they have both tried to urge citizens or religious communities to take steps and preventive measures against COVID-19. However, it is not the same response which authority is most effective and gains public compliance. In addition, although the community has complied with government policies and ulama's fatwas, not all citizens respect the legitimacy of the authorities, because some citizens obey only because they are afraid of the legal sanctions imposed (Perry et al., 2020; Pirutinsky et al., 2020). Compliance is more due to the partnership factor. If these factors are different, they can affect the behavior of residents in maintaining health differently. In the case of the Malawians, for example, individuals tend to say they comply with precautions only when the

costs are low and the expected benefits are high (Roberts & Yamane, 2015; Sulkowski & Ignatowski, 2020). Malawians view traditional authorities as legitimate directives and have the ability to monitor and sanction non-compliance, but they appear to be more likely to comply with hospital chiefs directives out of respect for the professional expertise of these medical personnel. Authority influence on religious people in the eyes of the religious community is far below the level of authority of medical personnel (Kao et al., 2021).

The loss of influence and authority of religious leaders in the eyes of the Indonesian people, is exacerbated by the behavior of religious leaders it self as well as medical personnel, as an authoritative source in providing prevention guidance to the community (Wildman et al., 2020). The most recent case is about the halal use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. For example, the East Java Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board (PWNU) called the AstraZeneca brand vaccine holy and halal for use. Chairman of the East Java PWNU KH Marzuki Mustamar said, "The results of the study of the AstraZeneca vaccine are sacred and halal, even though there are elements of pork in the manufacturing process". However, at the same time, LPPOM MUI proved that the COVID-19 vaccine produced by AstraZeneca in the production process uses trypsin. It was this scientific study that finally made the Fatwa Commission hearing determine that the vaccine is haram, but it can still be used because it is an emergency. AstraZeneca said that the process did not contain pork. LPPOM MUI through scientific studies found that it exists (Laurencin & Walker, 2020; Ihrig & Moe, 2004).

Method

This research is a type of library research, which involves a step-by-step process of gathering information. The type of information needed is how the Muslim community responds to the application of health protocols during the pandemic as a form of government public policy and to the fatwas of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI). To find relevant sources, this study uses a library search strategy, which includes: books, periodicals, newspapers, government documents, biographical sources, videos, reference books, expert views, special archives/collections, and internet sources (Richardson, 2019).

This study uses a sociological approach to religion. This approach is considered appropriate because although religion is something that is individual because religious beliefs can be very personal, but at the same time religion is also a social institution. Religion is also a universal culture found in all social communities. Religious life is a form of sociological study, in society it is found that the religious behavior of Indonesian Muslim in adapting to the pandemic is not the same. Some of them have their own way of responding to government policies, some support the fatwas of ulama and government policies, but others are against it (Cumming, 2007; Kooraki et al., 2020). This research examines how they make their own choices.

Therefore, rational theory is used in order to assist the analysis of this research data. The theory talks about how individuals and communities decide which religious beliefs they follow. For example, how does one choose which ulema, fatwas, and policies to follow (Arafah et al., 2021; Danchikov et al., 2021). This

theory also assumes that a person is self-serving, although not necessarily selfish, and that makes a rational choice that is expected to maximize positive outcomes and minimize negative impacts (Young, 2016).

Discussion

Polarization of Muslim community views

With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Indonesia, people have to follow health protocols and adjust certain community-based rituals to home-based. This has been the starting point of change in the Muslim religious activities. In the fiqh literature, this form of leniency in worship is referred to as rukhsah, which literally means relief or leniency. However, the community is still not fully acquainted with the rules of Usul Fiqh al-masyaqqoh al-tajlibu al-taisyiir, that is an emergency brings convenience (Nishiura et al., 2020; Long et al., 2020). The public is new to the term emergency, but the term emergency is too narrow in meaning, which is only limited to things that threaten life, for example the absence of food to sustain life. In practice, al-masyaqqah must be adapted to conditions and situations. There are at least two conditions, namely al-masyaqqah al-Azhimmah, and al-masyaqqah al-Khafifah. Therefore, when fatwa institutions such as 'the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issue regulations, people's responses vary. Some agree and some disagree. Those who agree respond positively to MUI efforts, but those who do not agree express their refusal, both openly and secretly (Sahari, 2020).

The MUI has tried to issue a fatwa containing the temporary abolition of worship in mosques as true rukhsah in carrying out religious law. Ideally, Muslims have been burdened with the obligation to obey leaders and scholars, especially in critical conditions for the prevention and handling of the pandemic. However, it is evident in the society, the apathy of some circles, especially towards the MUI fatwa, has emerged. They reject opinions that allow not to perform Friday prayers and oppose officials who prohibit congregational worship in mosques, even though the ulema's fatwas and state policies have been based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, opinions of scholars, and include Maqashid Syariah (the aim of enforcing the law). People still do not want to obey the leader even though their legal fatwa does not conflict with the Shari'a, even to save human souls. The leader's policies and sharia fatwas are both aimed at the benefit of the people, both benefits that have been determined in religion and the general benefit (Syamsuddin, 2020).

In addition to the pros and cons of the fatwas ulema related to the guidelines for the implementation of worship, there are also pros and cons responding to fatwas that are not related to the worship, for example regarding vaccination. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has issued a fatwa regarding the halal production of Sinovac (Khan & Smith, 2020; Wolf, 2003). The halal fatwa for the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Sinovac is based on the MUI fatwa no. 2 of 2021 by using three fiqh rules, namely al-dhararu yuzal (adversity must be eliminated), al-daf'u awla min al-raf'i (prevention is more important than eliminating) and yahtamil al-dharar al-khos lidaf'iy al-dhorar al-am (bearing/bearing a certain harm in order to prevent the occurrence of eventual harm). The use of these three rules has been assessed as accurate and relevant. The health workers who are

Muslim are also aware of the consideration of the principles of fiqh in the MUI fatwa. The side effects of vaccines that have been feared by some people have not been experienced significantly by health workers who have been vaccinated. This increases the level of accuracy of the fiqh rules used by MUI in considering the arguments in its fatwa (Turnip, 2021).

However, even though this ulema's fatwa supports government policies in order to accelerate the handling of the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia, many people give different views in various media. For example, on Twitter, the public response to the vaccination program was positive and some were negative. People who give a positive response to the discourse of vaccination (30%) and negative responses (26%). The words that most often appear and show negative sentiments are in the form of public talk about the vaccine controversy which is considered hasty, halal certification of vaccines and public doubts about the quality of the vaccine to be used (Rachman & Pramana, 2020). When the halal vaccine is out, the pros and cons of this society do not end, sources of opposition can also be grouped into two kinds; First, medical experts. In a webinar about knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccine for health workers held by the Alumni Association of Padjadjaran University, Head of the Immunization Task Force of the Indonesian Pediatrician Association, Cissy B. Kartasasmita, revealed various reasons behind the doctor refusal. As many as 30 percent of health workers refused and said they were not sure about the safety of the Sinovac vaccine (Sitanggang et al., 2021). Second, intellectuals and religious people. The scholars are said to continue to encourage the public to facilitate the implementation of worship activities. Opposition religious groups are underestimated because they make simple observations without in-depth knowledge (Notonegoro, 2020).

The opposition of some Muslims to the government public policies and the fatwas of the authority of religious institutions, triggers another social unrest, namely the spread of Islamophobia that continues to emerge in public spaces. Islam is considered a source of viruses; even social media has gone viral a hashtag #coronajihad. The purpose of this hashtag is to force oneself to continue to carry out religious rituals as usual, by ignoring the rules of social distancing. This has fuelled anti-Islamic propaganda and conspiracies, which are not directly related to the coronavirus. At the beginning of the spread of COVID-19, the media, council members, and certain elements created the issue of Islamophobia which triggered panic and division within the Muslim community in particular and the nation in general. This propaganda links the spread of the virus to the behavior of Muslim. The media is busy displaying photos of Muslim who are praying and Muslim women who wear hijab who do their daily routines. These photos indirectly carry a subtle message that connect the behavior of Muslim and the massive transmission of COVID-19 infection. Anti-Islamic parties continue to shoot the issue of COVID-19 at Muslim as the originator of the spread of the virus (Bakry, et al., 2020).

Some of the public rejection of religious fatwas and government policies is reasonable. For example, when MUI issued fatwa Number 14 of 2020, public perception was quite varied. Even though the people arguments are both based on religious fervour, they produce contradictory practical outputs. Furthermore, the cause of these differences are differences in needs and other factors that are

subjective, depending on the personality of each person. The public perception that agrees with the MUI fact and government policies, turns out to be more because it leads to a theological value system that favours the principle of maqasid shariah. Maqashid Shari at carries the spirit of horizontal relations, the relationship between humans and humans. Meanwhile, the public perception that tends to reject the MUI fatwa and government policies is more directed to the theological-normative value system they hold. These normative values are based on the vertical relationship between humans and God (Imaduddin, 2020).

The polarization that occurs in society, in fact, cannot be separated from their learning environment. Their environment, the religious teachers they follow, contribute to the creation of a society way of life and mindset (Sarnoto & Romli, 2019). Therefore, this environment is the most dominant factor influencing the worldview of the community in obeying government regulations and authoritative ulema's fatwas. However, the problems in society will get worse if the government regulations themselves have aggravated the environment. One of the things that can be highlighted here is the government's lack of clarity and indecisiveness in implementing health protocol, as well as in imposing sanctions on violators. All of this worsens the social environment (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2003; Lippi et al., 2020).

Unclear government regulation

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Corona virus was a global pandemic, the Indonesian government has also stated that the Corona virus problem has become a non-natural national disaster. The Central and Regional Governments and their staff work hand in hand to carry out several tactical steps as an effort to prevent the spread in the community. Starting from the ministerial level to the heads of provinces, districts, and even city governments. Local governments carry out many communication strategies to their respective local communities through coercive, informative, channelling, educative, persuasive and redundant techniques in packaging messages in the form of instructions, appeals to the community to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in their respective regions. However, there is still no coercion technique to the stage of imposing sanctions for a deterrent effect for violators. The central government also has not maximized their role in using a comprehensive communication strategy for all local governments. There is no national command from the central government and is known to be slow in preventing the transmission of COVID-19 as a global disaster (Zahrotunnimah, 2020). In addition, the problem that occurs is that the coordination between the center and the regions is not optimal, which has an impact on the spread of the virus (Juaningsih et al., 2020).

Experts say that the problem with the government in Indonesia is a legal issue that is not firm and clear yet. Even though COVID-19 has been referred to as an infectious disease, which has the potential to cause a public health crisis, preventive measures against this type of infectious disease are not carried out as quickly as possible. Indonesia as a state of law, prevention of infectious diseases has not formed a rule or regulation yet. Dalinama Telaumbanua suggested that there are five (5) government regulations that 'must be enacted in order to tackle

and prevent the threat of the COVID-19 infectious disease and 11 health ministerial regulations that must be enacted. The two types of regulations are considered very useful by Dalinama Telaumbanua in anticipating the health crisis. With these two rules, legal certainty in preventing the spread of COVID-19 becomes clearer (Telaumbanua, 2020).

Even though many regulations were issued by the government in the future, experts said that negative narratives spread faster and the response from the government was slow. This was proven when COVID-19 had not entered yet and was just approaching Indonesia, the negative narrative conveyed by the government elites tended to say that there was no crisis whatsoever, so that negative views slowed down decision making. In addition, there is weak coordination, especially between the central government and local governments. This coordination is unequal and causes uncertainty in controlling the Coronavirus. This is exacerbated by the ignorance and disobedience of citizens to the government's instructions which are considered slow and unequal. As a result, the handling effort was stopped, because it was not supported by the wider community (Agustino, 2020).

State delegitimization and religious rationalization

A man in Situbondo, East Java, suddenly went viral, for refusing to close a mosque during the implementation of Emergency PPKM. The man is M Kholil, an advocate from Mangaran, Situbondo. According to Kholil, he actually strongly agrees with the implementation of the Emergency PPKM, because this pandemic has indeed become more rampant lately. However, there was only one point in the circular that he disagreed with. In the fourth point circular, Kholil admitted that he strongly refused. This is because mosques do not have a major contribution to the transmission and spread of COVID-19, especially in Situbondo. If the Regional Secretary regulations are still forced to be implemented, the community threatens to be ready for war.

The delegitimization of the state in Indonesia during this pandemic has become a very crucial issue, considering that those who refuse come from all levels of society, from citizens to the elite, even religious leaders themselves. For example, personally, based on videos circulating on social media, Ustaz Abdul Somad (UAS) did not agree that the mosque was closed during the Java-Bali Emergency PPKM. UAS then alludes to other open public places. In fact, according to him, gathering in the mosque is not too dangerous. Because, during worship, people only stay for 5 to 10 minutes. Not for hours or long. UAS said, forbidding people to go to the mosque, but in the mall, in the market they are left alone. Where is your heart?. Institutionally, the West Sumatran Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) refuses to close or eliminate activities at mosques even though they are in the COVID-19 red zone. However, the chairman of MUI Cholil Nafis asked the West Sumatra MUI to follow the central decision.

The rejection of the closure of mosques does not only occur among the public, scientists and religious people, it also comes from politicians. Yandri Susanto, Chairman of Commission VIII of the DPR does not agree with the government's decision to close mosques and other worship places, he asks that during this

Emergency PPKM there is no forced disbandment or closure of worship places. According to him, mosques can remain open by implementing strict health protocols.

The occurrence of delegitimacy in a country because of these problems nation and state are unable to solve in a short time (Gautama, 2000). In other words, if the religious practices of the Indonesian Muslim community still do not comply with health protocols during the pandemic, then the state has been delegitimized in citizens view. Or when the application of a law no longer fulfils the principle of justice values created by the state through its law enforcement officers, so that people demand the value of justice, then the state is delegitimize (Arief, 2007). As a result, religious rationalization among the Indonesian people can be an entry point for efforts to delegitimize the state, especially if you see religious enthusiasm being defended by every element of society, from the ordinary class to the elite, from legal advocates to politicians.

Conclusion

The lifestyle of the Indonesian Muslim community during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown striking changes, and one of them can be seen from their worship practices. MUI as a religious authority has issued a fatwa that supports government programs to handle and prevent the transmission of COVID-19. However, polarization occurs among the people, giving rise to new social categories that tend to be opposed to pro-government groups.

The existence of community rejection of course has a strong rational background and argument based on critical analysis. Some groups refuse because they think the government is not firm in applying the rule of law, and some because it is purely a theological belief factor. The government's indecision has been going on since the beginning of the announcement of positive cases, where the president's policy to announce the first case did not involve expert consideration. In fact, previously, government elites tended to ignore and underestimate the COVID-19 issue, which was considered a pandemic by the world health organization, WHO. Polarization in society occurs at every level, whether at the level of society, intellectuals, medical experts, religious people, and politicians. This polarization delegitimizes state authority on the one hand, and represents social disintegration which leads to conflict. So, the religious practices and lifestyles of religious people in Indonesia are not uniform, and they remain that way to this day.

The findings of this study contribute to social studies and public policy, especially the theory of rational action and social conflict, which are both used as the main approach. This research has methodological limitations, namely the inability to touch the dialogical realm, which brings together various parties to dialogue together, in order to create social integration in various social layers. Subsequent research is recommended to examine efforts to dialogue between various parties that have tended to be sharply polarized, so that it is not wrong to take a public policy.

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