



THE REVIVAL OF ISLAMIC TRADITIONAL MEDICAL METHOD AMONG MUSLIM SOCIETY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: The Covid-19 Pandemic does not only affect the social life but also encourages many Muslim communities to find alternative solutions to maintain the immunity of their bodies. Consuming herbal medicines and conducting some Islamic traditional medical methods are currently back into a social trend because some people believe that the methods can ward off all forms of the disease. The focus of this research is the implementation of traditional Islamic medicine methods in West Java and aims to understand thoroughly the impact of the use of alternative medical methods in the society. This qualitative study with a field analysis approach employed observations and interviews to collect the required data. The findings show that the use of herbal medicine and traditional Islamic healing methods during Covid-19 pandemic become a new trend since people try to seek alternative ways to maintain their immunity. The religious foundation plays an important role in this situation since people find out that Islam is not only about worship but also health management; in this case, many people try to use the religious-based healing methods.

Keywords: traditional Islamic medicine methods, Islamic Preaching, Corona Virus Pandemic

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Introduction

COVID-19 PANDEMIC has lasted for more than a year with massive transmission that has not been able to cease, even many more variants appear. This is proven by the number of Covid-19 patients who are ranked 17th in the world statistics and still show

a massive spread.¹ This has a tremendous impact on society² and affects many sectors in many aspects of life.³ Various attempts to prevent the spread of this virus are not only carried out by the government alone, people are also looking for various alternative ways to improve their immune system because they are worried to be infected. One of the trusted ways to avoid the Covid-19 virus is to maintain the body's immune system⁴ because if the immune system is weakened, the ability to protect the body is reduced, so that pathogens, including viruses can grow and develop inside the body.

Numerous community efforts in preventing the transmission of this virus are not only concerned with medical aspects, but also traditional ways emerge, including both practical treatment and the consumption of natural ingredients. Medicines from natural ingredients (herbs) and religion-based medicine are alternatives for some Indonesians to maintain their immune system to face the virus. Apart from being easy to find and quite affordable, various methods of treatment and herbal medicines have been used for generation to generation and are believed to help increase the body's resistance.⁵ Especially for the Muslim community in Indonesia who strives to imitate the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad,⁶ the Muslim community sees herbs as one part that is

¹ Ilham Akhsanu Ridlo, "Tantangan Kebijakan Kesehatan Mental Indonesia Di Masa Pandemi," *Fkm.Unair.Ac.Id*; Titis Nurdiana, "Indonesia Catat Kasus Corona Tertinggi Di Asia Tenggara, Nomer 4 Di Asia, No 19 Dunia," *Kesehatan.Kontan.Co.Id*.

² Akhmad Mustofa and Nanik Suhartatik, "Meningkatkan Imunitas Tubuh Dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19 Di Karang Taruna Kedunggupit, Sidoharjo, Wonogiri, Jawa Tengah," *SELAPARANG. Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Berkemajuan* 4, no. 1 (2020): 324.

³ Akmal Yusuf Haryadi et al., "Upaya Edukasi Untuk Beradaptasi Pada Kebijakan New Normal Dan Meningkatkan Imunitas Tubuh Selama Pandemi Covid-19 Secara Online," *Jurnal Layanan Masyarakat* 4, no. 2 (2020): 442.

⁴ Yuli Widayastuti, "Curcumin, Aman Dikonsumsi Saat Pandemi Covid-19," *Litbang.Kemkes.Go.Id*.

⁵ Maria Paula Marla Nahak et al., "Penggunaan Herbal dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19: A Systematic Review," *Avicenna* 5, no. 1 (2022): 39–40; Admin, "Obat Tradisional Di Era Pandemi Covid-19," *Fk.Ugm.Ac.Id*.

⁶ Widodo Hesti Purwontoro, "Sehat Islami di Masa Pandemi," *Fpsc.Uii.Ac.Id*.

difficult to separate from the life of the Apostle, especially some of these ingredients are also mentioned in the Qur'an.

The community also began to look at several traditional medical methods such as cupping and *fashdu* (traditional Islamic healing method by sucking the blood from a vena, or it can be called "venesection"), which are listed in several Islamic histories so that these methods are increasingly being used. This is due to the widespread belief that traditional medicine can stimulate the body's immune system to continue to be in top condition without side effects. The development of this method is also motivated by public fear regarding the transmission of the virus that occurs precisely from health facilities, for example, a patient or medical staff when someone uses the public facility, thus strengthening them to use traditional treatment methods.⁷ In the use of alternative methods, the role of religious belief plays a significant role. This is marked by various full-blooded or cupping organizations that refer to religious values as the basis for their treatment. What is more, this belief is supported by social conditions that require a traditional healing method. In other words, apart from providing health assistance to the community, traditional healing methods can function as reinforcing religious values in the society.

There are several literatures used as reference in this research, for example, David R. Hodge and Aneesah Nadir, who focus on cultural changes among Muslims from ordinary therapy to therapy based on theological values. They also emphasize that these changes are a stage of re-awareness related to religious norms that are believed to be able to help various difficulties experienced by Muslims.⁸ This is confirmed by Feryad, who states that the therapeutic method can use a calming approach through

⁷ Adristy Ratna Kusumo et al., "Jamu Tradisional Indonesia: Tingkatkan Imunitas Tubuh Secara Alami Selama Pandemi," *Jurnal Layanan Masyarakat* 4, no. 2 (2020): 466.

⁸ David R Hodge et al., "Moving toward Culturally Competent Practice with Muslims: Modifying Cognitive Therapy with Islamic Tenets Moving toward Culturally Competent Practice with Muslims: Modifying Cognitive Therapy with Islamic Tenets" 53, no. 1 (2008): 31.

the newspaper media in order to provide emotional calm that can help improve psychological and physical conditions.⁹

Umar Faruk Adamu's writings in analyzing herbal ingredients contained in newspapers and hadiths was also used. Umar explains that clinical-based medicine has been studied by many scholars and one of them is Ibn Sina who wrote the Canon of Medicine. He also emphasized that the medical-related research is based on Quranic verses that mention various kinds of animals and plants so that they can be used to treat various diseases.¹⁰ In addition, this study refers to an encyclopedia written by John A. Morrow related to information on herbal ingredients that he codified based on religious literature and research by Muslim scholars.¹¹

Previous research mostly only mentioned the re-emergence of religious-based medical method due to the ineffective of conventional methods. Besides, kinds of disease discussed in those studies are non-transmissive virus. Thus, as there are not many studies regarding the pandemic and Islamic medical method, we try to scrutinize the religious beliefs underlying Islamic medical method. Other than that, our research also observes how Islamic medical methods are practiced and the impacts of those practices. The significance of this study is as a contribution to the development of religious studies that are intertwined to many aspects of discipline, including the medical.

This study uses qualitative-descriptive methods that attempt to dig deep information with interview and observation techniques. We begin this research by observing the increase in the number of traditional medicine activities in several areas of West Java such as Garut, Bandung, and Bogor. We also conducted information searches through interviews with seven practitioners and three therapists of religious-based traditional medicine from

⁹ Feryad Hussain, "'Heart-Talk': Considering the Role of the Heart in Therapy as Evidenced in the Quran and Medical Research," *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 4 (2013): 1205, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24485129>.

¹⁰ Umar Faruk Adamu, *Medicine in The Qur'an And Sunnah* (Ibadan: Safari book, 2012), 1–2.

¹¹ John Andrew Morrow, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2011), 4.

the *Ruqyah Syar'iyah Association* (ARSYI-Islamic exorcism association), the *Indonesian Totok Backs Community* (KTPI), and the *Indonesian Cupping Association* (PBI). The participation in the activities of these practitioners was undertaken five times on three months to see how the process and reactions given by the service consumers were. Furthermore, we tried to observe the activities conducted by the practitioners in order to look the differences between before treatment and after the treatment.

Canon of Medicine in Islamic Culture's View

Regarding the Canon of medicine, the first book written by Ibn Sina is General Principles of the Science of Medicine mainly focuses on knowledge of medicine which he divided into two classifications; the knowledge of the principle and the knowledge of the mode of practice, or simply 'theoretical' and 'practical'. He asserts that theory and practice are not two things to be compared or disputed, but the theory can be intrinsic of practice, on the one hand, and practice can contribute to the development of the theory. As he describes:

"... by practical aspect of medicine, we do not mean actual practice or performance of physical activities. Rather, this aspect of the medical science is something the learning of which provides opinion--an opinion which pertains to the description of the mode of practice".¹²

This demonstrates that medical practice not only can be performed by physicians, but also everyone who has proper knowledge both theoretical and practical of the medicine can perform the medical practice to heal people.

In Ibnu Sina's second Canon book, he discusses more about nature and rule of drugs. He stresses that the effectiveness of a drug depends on the condition of a patient and their environment. Also, he adds that drugs are not a single mainstay that can cure the disease or cause a patient to recover. According to him:

"As the drug has various ingredients which do not act completely on one another to make it a completely homogeneous whole, they do not as yet cohere together, nor are they united together in the sense that if any of them reaches any other part of the organ the other must reach them. Hence, if the

¹² Ibn Sina, *Canon of Medicine* (English Translation of Al-Qanun Fi'l-Tibb), 1st ed. (New Delhi: Jamia Hamdard Press, 1993), 2.

ingredients of a drug were of homogeneous potencies, their action in the body would never have been different".¹³

Since drugs contain several different substances, it can cause a secondary effect after curing the symptoms of the current disease. Thus, what Ibn Sina suggests is to remove the cause of the disease, not only to cure the symptoms that are suffered by one's body. Therefore, it is important to not fully relying upon the drugs only.

A research was held about herbal medicine, we used the theory of cultural sociology which originated from Jeffrey C. Alexander. Alexander himself developed the concept of cultural sociology with a focus on beliefs and rituals, including the embodied symbols. In this case, he examines the meaning of symbols in human life which can be an impetus to make changes after what is occurred in society.¹⁴ He also focuses on religious practices, especially on rituals, since it could impact and influence shared beliefs in society. The effective rituals can then enhance their identification with the symbolic object of communication, intensify the relationship between the symbolic object and the members with the observers, and energize as well as tighten their attachments.¹⁵ The frameworks of religious and socio-cultural foundation are important to be discussed in this study since both of them coexist and develop in society at the same time.

Theological Foundations of Islamic Medicine Methods

The theological basis in the use of the Prophet Muhammad's medicinal methods is one of the basic references for the life of the Muslim community. This is because the Apostle is believed to be a healthy person and has a balanced lifestyle. Moreover, the presence of the Prophet Muhammad on earth is mentioned by the Qur'an as a person who must always be referred to by all mankind

¹³ Ibn Sina, *Canon of Medicine* (English Translation of *Al-Qanun Fi'l-Tibb*), 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Jamia Hamdard Press, 1998), 3.

¹⁴ Jeffrey C Alexander, Philip Smith, and Matthew Norton, *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural Investigation in Social Sciences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 149.

¹⁵ Jeffrey C Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 30.

in as much as he was sent as a complement to manners (morals) which is proven by the society especially about the history of the prophet Muhammad condition. Therefore, the life of the Prophet was also a concern of Muslims as evidenced by the many reports related to the history of the Prophet's life until the end of his life.

The beliefs related to the Prophet as the most perfect social example was continued to be spread by the companions from the time of the four caliphs to the Abbasid dynasty. What is more, the territories conquered by them were not destroyed but were built to collaborate Islamic-based values and culture. At that time, the Islamic dynasty won glory in various aspects of life including the health sector.

The Islamic empire in the medieval era in its initial expansion encompassed Egypt, one of the most important center of Hellenistic learning and later on transforming to Alexandrian school which had been famous in antiquity for its study medicine. Medicine was a central part of medieval Arab – Islamic civilization since Arab and Muslim physicians also scholarships developed a large and complex medical literature exploring and synthesizing the theory and practice of medicine. This is mainly because the medical hadith were singled out from other hadith and commented upon by Muslim jurists. Furthermore, this literature became known as "prophetic medicine or Islamic medicine" which actually refers to Quranic verses and prophet Muhammad traditions.

The Muhammad traditions itself, take in several aspects including consuming herbal medicine, such as olive and honey. While there is no direct reference to medical issues but those herbs are describing in the Qur'an as "the mighty ingredient" and the Prophet Muhammad are often focused on its practical medicinal applications. Also, Abu Hurairah narrated in the hadith that the Prophet (SAW) said, "Whosoever eats honey (at least) three times every month will meet with no great affliction."

The arguments related to plants and fruits also include not only physical aspects such as increasing body immunity but also cleaning up diseases that arise due to *jinn* disorders or evil views (Al-Ayn) because many Muslim communities believe that evil

views are realities that can interfere with life.¹⁶ This belief indirectly encourages adherents of Islam to be able to consume a variety of foods recommended by religion and increase immunity with various activities exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad.

Primarily, the concept of Islamic medicine is linked deeply to the Islamic worldview which in principle has the purpose to implement medical practice and research through metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical approaches in promoting health.¹⁷ Since health is a term that cannot be separated from disease, Islamic medicine certainly also pays attention to the discussion about the disease. Therefore, it can be said that it is more preventive rather than curative. As outlined in the literature, there are five main characteristics of the philosophy of Islamic medicine as follows:

“1) Guided by fundamentals of the Islamic worldview; 2) Preventive rather than curative; 3) Holistic rather than reductionist, 4) Patient-centered rather than doctor-centered; 5) Bio-spiritual based rather than causal explanation.”¹⁸

In the third point, it can be elaborated on two points, namely conceptualization of medical phenomena and methods of treatment. With the holistic idea and other characteristics, so that the purpose can be achieved. Apart from the three approaches offered above—metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical—other two are also offered, specifically providing medical concepts and terminologies, and promoting healthy lifestyles through both the internal power of morality and external power of law.¹⁹

Historically speaking, Islamic medicine keeps on progressing even though it is not as advanced as when it was in its golden age. Many Islamic scholars developed the concept by widening the new perspective. One of the prominent literatures is *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb* by Hunain ibn Ishaq that explains the new perspective in

¹⁶ Manfred Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 5.

¹⁷ Sajjad Sadeghi, Farzaneh Ghaffari, and Mehdi Alizadeh, “Al-Masā’Il Fī Al-Tibb: Hunain Ibn Ishāq’s Historic Medical Text with a Distinctive Style of Islamic Medical Education,” *Journal of Medical Biography* 0, no. 0 (2018): 1–5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

medicine. It asserts the importance of diagnosis and prognosis of the disease in planning the treatment and introduces the methods to evaluate the effectiveness of medication by examining it on humans.²⁰ Later on, the practice of treatments using Islamic medical methods was broadly applied in many places. One of the activities narrated by many scholars is Cupping and *Ruqyah* therapy. This refers to the method of removing dirty blood that was commonly used by the companions of the prophet when they were suffering from various diseases. Meanwhile, *ruqyah* refers to cleansing the soul and disturbance of dark magic or things related to metaphysic. Until now, this prophetic medicine is widely used by the Islamic society and the Islamic scholars try to reveal the benefits of those herbs and other Islamic traditional medical methods.

The study of the re-emergence of Islamic medicine has been conducted by Salim M. Adib²¹ which he presented in his article titled From the Biomedical Model to the Islamic Alternative: A Brief Overview of Medical Practices in the Contemporary Arab World. His study shows how in the late 1960s, Islamic thinkers in Arab countries started to promote Islamic medicine, especially herbal medicine, as well as the recitation of certain verses of the Quran and faith-healing through prayers. The reason for the implementation of this traditional practice is the predominant Western biomedical method is not considered to be able to heal illness completely, since for Muslims, particularly, the emergence of disease is also related to spiritual issues. Adib has two main hypotheses of the contextual factor, the first is alternative medicine empowers post-industrial societies, and the second is the Western or "orthodox" medicine is a colonial legacy for the traditional societies. He finally elaborates the potential of Islamic medicine as an alternative method, but with certain conditions, for instance, there is a need for sponsors to establish Islamic medical centres and adequate training for those who want to learn Islamic

²⁰ Shogar Shogar and Ibrahim A, "Fundamentals of the Islamic Medical Philosophy," *IIUM Medical Journal Malaysia* 17, no. 2 (2018): 223–230.

²¹ Salim M Adib, "From the Biomedical Model to the Islamic Alternative: A Brief Overview of Medical Practices in the Contemporary Arab World," *Social Science & Medicine* 58 (2003).

medicine more competently.²² Hence, in the future, Islamic medicine is not only able to meet the spiritual needs of the patient, but also to treat the disease effectively.

The revival of Islamic Traditional Medical Methods during pandemic

The condition of the people who are still filled with fear due to the spread of the Corona virus makes them look for various alternative treatment methods to ward off and cure the virus. It is noted that several treatment methods, such as herbal consumption and *ruqyah* activities are due to the belief of some Muslims that health can be maintained if they begin to return to the prophet's way of life. This was also explained by one diabetic sufferer who explained that she began collaborating with modern medical methods she got from doctors along with *ruqyah* in order to provide peace of mind and hope that the disease she suffered could be cured.²³

In other cases, there are even some people who try to stop the medication given by doctors and switch to traditional treatments, such as massage and consumption of herbal medicine because they feel tired of modern medical methods that cannot make them recover.²⁴ In several interviews we conducted, there were some people who claimed that the treatment carried out by doctors was no more effective than the treatment of their ancestors that had been taught for a long time. Even when they were sick, they would usually only a few plants that could be consumed to cure the diseases.²⁵ The system of medicines that comes from traditional society which makes use of herbs and plants also can be taken into

²² Ibid.

²³ Interview with Mediana Wirasari, March, 02 2021.

²⁴ Interview with Eep Saepudin, Jamaludin, and Mina Marlina, April, 14 2021.

²⁵ Ingrid Hehmeyer, "Peter E. Pormann; Emilie SavageSmith: Medieval Islamic Medicine," *The History of Science Society* 98, no. 4 (2007): 827.

account as universal healthcare since its role that can fulfil the need to improve humans' health quality.²⁶

Research in the contemporary psychology of religion also demonstrates that religious commitment is not just about beliefs and practices, but also about a 'search for the sacred' in the spirituality of a faith.²⁷ This includes social beliefs about the religion traditional medical methods which could help them to cure their disease. Sometimes the "orthodox religion followers" deny the existence of other medical methods even if the methods have some benefits rather than their ways. Generally speaking, people become more aware that every individual has a right to choose medical method even if it is unconventional and related to their religion or belief because it is part of their rights to perform their religious practices.²⁸

In the case of the current pandemic, traditional medicine based on religious beliefs is starting to be a concern for many people again. This refers to the search for information related to the properties of various food ingredients and substances that can increase immunity. Many pieces of literature have proven that the nutrients and chemical components in some herbs are able to combat several types of viral strain and effective to become antiviral.²⁹ Moreover, the government continues to advise the public to consume various vitamins and minerals contained in fruits and vegetables which have been discussed in various religious literatures such as olives, honey, and figs.³⁰

Fahmi believes that people's interest in this traditional treatment method can be seen significantly when the pandemic

²⁶ Rakeshkumar P. Prajapati et al., "Prophylaxis and Treatment Aspect of COVID-19 with the Use of Indian Traditional Plant-Based Medicine: A Hypothetical Review," *Journal of Indian System of Medicine* 8 (2020): 71–72.

²⁷ Nima Ghorbani et al., "Analyzing the Spirituality of Muslim Experiential Religiousness: Relationships with Psychological Measures of Islamic Religiousness in Iran," *Archiv für Religionspsychologie / Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 35, no. 2 (2013): 234.

²⁸ Weston Dennen, "Religious Exemptions and Medicine: Understanding the Impact on Patients and Health Care Costs," *Rutgers JL & Religion* 21 (2021): 295.

²⁹ Prajapati et al., "Prophylaxis and Treatment Aspect of COVID-19 with the Use of Indian Traditional Plant-Based Medicine: A Hypothetical Review."

³⁰ Admin, "Obat Tradisional Di Era Pandemi Covid-19."

began to hit Indonesia, most of them turned to this treatment because of their fears that if they did treatment in public health facilities they would contract Covid-19, that is why they started to seek information and knowing the various properties so that it creates a sense of wanting to try to become a regular consumption, especially for olives, honey, and cinnamon.³¹ Traditional medicine is widely chosen by people who want to switch from chemical drugs to reduce the risk of side effects on their bodies. Of course, not all chemical drugs can be replaced with traditional medicine. However, Hera reasoned that she began to reduce the use of chemical drugs because most of these drugs have side effects if used regularly even if based on a doctor's prescription, this prompted her to look for natural herbal ingredients that are safe to be consumed regularly, such as honey or date juice that can be consumed every day if indeed the treatment of the disease can still be overcome with natural ingredients.³²

Faridah, one of the heart disease patient said that her heart disease required a large amount of medical expenses, so she also looked for various literature that discussed food ingredients that could cure her disease.³³ She discovers some information related to the medicinal properties of various foods and plants, encouraging people (although indirectly) to be able to consume these foods because of their desire to be able to overwhelm through the pandemic without experiencing various viruses that are currently spreading. She also believes that herbs will help her in order curing her heart disease. She got depressed on the first moment but my friend told me to watch several Islamic preaching from Zaidul Akbar and learn about some herbs. So, she consumed those Herbs."³⁴

The information related to its usefulness also proves the arguments that have been narrated by Islamic scholars as a truth that has been explained by Allah in the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad in his daily life. The existence of scientific

³¹ Interview with Fahmi Andriana (traditional therapist), April, 20th 2021

³² Interview with Hera, April, 27th 2021.

³³ Interview with Faridah, February, 07th 2021.

³⁴ Interview with Faridah, February, 07th 2021.

evidence regarding the efficacy of the foods listed in the religious propositions has an impact on the growing trend of using the Prophet Muhammad's method of treatment. Moreover, this is often echoed by some preachers, as practiced by doctor Zaidul Akbar.³⁵ He often fills in events related to Islamic studies that discuss diseases and how to deal with them with the Prophet's or Islamic treatment methods. The study filled by him also received attention from the public as evidenced by his growing followers on Instagram and YouTube. Islamic studies related to health are starting to be popular among the community, especially because people continue to strive to improve their health level when they are prone to contracting diseases from their environment. One of the followers of Zaidul's preaching said that he is more aware about herbs because they could contain several benefits to human body.

"The preaching which was held by ustاد Zaidul Akbar inspires me to maintain my body condition carefully and try to solve the disease issue from the root, not depend on chemical medicine. Also, I realise that prophet Muhammad gives us solution with herbs and natural ingredients such as honey or dates so we need to go back to prophet way of life."³⁶

Interestingly, in current situation, some traditional medicine activities are increasingly being carried out by the community such as cupping, *fashdu*, full-bloodedness, and *ruqyah*. Leni said that now many people choose traditional medicine methods, one of which is because this treatment can be done regularly without serious side effects like modern medicine.³⁷ Jamal added that there were also patients who at first just tried it because they heard about this treatment from relatives who had tried it before, until they finally felt comfortable and did it regularly.³⁸ One of the patients at the therapy house said that the comfort of taking treatment or doing therapy with traditional treatment therapists has a calming effect, especially since the treatment can be done at home, relaxing the body accompanied by chats throughout the

³⁵ Saipudin Ikhwan, "Media Baru dan Fenomena Dakwah Kontemporer di Indonesia," *Qaawwam: The Leader's Writing* 2, no. 2 (2021): 240.

³⁶ Interview with Gina Sumiati, January 15th 2021.

³⁷ Interview with Leni (cupping therapist), April, 21th 2021.

³⁸ Interview with Jamal (cupping and traditional therapist), April, 23th 2021

therapy process, giving its own satisfaction by releasing all the burdens of his mind to the therapist.³⁹

The preachers who spread a lot of information sometimes have some traditional medicine skills, such as *ruqyah* and traditional massage. This can increase public confidence that religious leaders who explain social problems can provide real solutions through food or treatment that they can do. In this sense, many religious scholars promote the method of traditional prophetic medicine to cure diseases as a way to gain a balance healthy life and at the same time can perform religious teaching.⁴⁰ Moreover, these preachers were often affiliated with several medical institutions which eventually expanded the network of these prophetic health practitioners.

One example of a prophetic medical institution that is well known among the Muslim community is the *Ruqyah Syar'i Association*, whose members consist of Muslim religious leaders. This institution also now has online service, which is an application that can accommodate community needs related to magic treatment and other negative disorders. Many of the activists of this method have filled various national television programs to introduce the *ruqyah* method to the public. Arif Rahman (leader of *Arsyi* in West Java Province) said that the needs of psychological health based on religious values are increasing since people try to find some cure for their diseases and they start to be aware of religious aspect because God could cure all diseases.⁴¹

There is a shifting of understanding of the society towards medicine from cognition as scientific knowledge to moral authority that prioritizes to protect the ill patients.⁴² In the last decade, there are also collaborative works from conventional healthcare professionals, CAM and TM workers to create

³⁹ Interview with Enung, April 26th 2021.

⁴⁰ Hesham R El-seedi et al., "AC SC," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* (2019): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jep.2019.112007>.

⁴¹ Interview with Arif Rahman Hakim, January, 15 2021.

⁴² Nicola Gale, "The Sociology of Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine," *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 6 (2014): 806.

integrative medicine.⁴³ However, the medicine scholars have an attempt to make CAM and TM as scientific that are actually not significant since CAM and TM have a different method that is more belief-based rather than scientific-based. The important point highlighted by Gale as a critical view on medical sociology is to conventionalize CAM and TM, so that can reduce the unequal access of healthcare in society.⁴⁴

In analyzing this kind of phenomenon, Alexander explicates that people start to change the traditional medical methods based on religion paradigm as theological aspect to ancestor tradition which could bring physical and psychological healthiness. This explains the shift in society from concerning more on mundane things by means and ends to communication in abstract and general forms in their lives due to social tensions.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Smelser examines the generalization of beliefs through the search for references of symbolic meanings embedded in political, economic, and emotional forms by emphasizing the importance of stimulating utopian narratives.⁴⁶

For Alexander, rituals would be more easily to find in simpler societies. He emphasizes the importance of examining how previous social and cultural structures defined the elements conceived in performance and related them to one another in various ways to see why ritual phenomena emerged in simpler societies.⁴⁷ In this case, it is necessary to examine more deeply what this simpler society means. Further, Alexander⁴⁸ elaborates briefly through the smaller landscape; the more mystical and metaphysical nature of their belief; and the more integrated nature of their social structures, institutions, and culture. In conclusion,

⁴³ Gale, "The Sociology of Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey C Alexander, *The Meaning of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2003), 186.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey C Alexander, Gary T. Marx, and Christine L. Williams, *Self, Social Structure, and Beliefs: Exploration in Sociology* (California: University of California Press, 2004), 191.

⁴⁷ Alexander, Giesen, and Mast, *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

these two characteristics determine the tendency of society to maintain rituals in their beliefs or religion as a tradition that is significant in their lives.

In the context of Covid-19, Alexander has also done an examination using a cultural approach from the phenomenon that is happening in society. He argued:

“COVID-time has been suffused with mystery, superstition, and trauma; peopled with god-like heroes; generative of myth, new interpersonal rituals, but also iconic circulations of familiar imagery; and it has been haunted by a relentless search for both the blame and the salvation of charismatic authority”.⁴⁹

In his current article, he asserts that his previous studies conveyed the amalgamation between modern and traditional in the term of ritual. He investigated several societies in the West in responding to the crises of Covid-19. His findings tell us that many modern people still embrace the traditional method of medicine based on the teaching of religions and beliefs and sometimes they even ignore the scientific method. Moreover, the authorities also play a role to support the ritual-like to fight against Covid-19 symptoms because of their distrust of scientific explanation of the virus and disease. He concludes that society does not feel satisfied with the method of scientific medicine if they do not complement it by performing a certain ritual.

Relating to the phenomenon occurred in Indonesia, Alexander's theory can also be used as a basic reference regarding why people began to refer to the use of traditional religious-based methods of treatment due to the presence of disasters that are believed to be cured if people use the treatment methods exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, the presence of a new hegemony who considers that the consumption of honey to *ruqyah* treatment is a ritual considered to be able to save them from the problems of the Covid-19 that is engulfing the global community. This belief is also reinforced by religious preachers who preach on social media and television related to Covid-19 as a

⁴⁹ Jeffrey C Alexander and Philip Smith, “COVID 19 and Symbolic Action: Global Pandemic as Code, Narrative, and Cultural Performance,” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 8 (2020): 264, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-020-00123-w>.

form of test from Allah. Therefore, the community is invited and reminded to continue to draw closer to Allah in various ways, one of which is using various kinds of treatment that have been exemplified by the Apostle.

The social unrest mentioned by Alexander pertaining to the use of religious-based health rituals is also in line with the condition of the Indonesian people who are restless regarding the pandemic in society which has not subsided after carrying out various prevention and control efforts. Therefore, strengthening ritual values and their implementation in daily life can also provide a sense of calm to the community because they have perfected various efforts that can prevent and the Covid-19 and hope it can strengthen their bound to God.

Conclusion

The massive transmission of the COVID-19 is a new challenge for modern medical health systems across the globe. Data shows that modern model of medicine alone is unable to solve the crisis in the healthcare system. At some point, because of the failure of the modern method, people then tend to choose alternative and traditional medicine according to their beliefs. Traditional medicine, including the Islamic medical method has recently become the attention of healthcare professionals and policy makers in health sector. At the global level, the World Health Organization (WHO) took charge of the development of traditional medicine. A biomedical treatment is applied on the scientific-based. Meanwhile, traditional and alternative medicine is more on social and moral-based. Our further recommendation for government and health NGO is to conduct in-depth research in integrating modern medical method and traditional medical method and gaining effective ways to overwhelm the Covid-19.

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