

THE MEANING OF WORSHIP FOR RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

This research examines the meaning of worship in five religions (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) in Indonesia referring to phenomenological research. The research method used in this research is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The data collection techniques used in this research were observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. This study's informants used as research subjects were religious figures and followers of Islam, Catholic Christians, Protestant Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Confucians. This research found several ideas for worship during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, those who think there is no difference in the implementation of worship before and during the pandemic. Second, those who worship at home during the pandemic follow government regulations. Based on the opinions of informants who have explained many things regarding the implementation of worship during the pandemic, it can be concluded that several meanings of worship are worshipping with a sincere heart, purity of orientation, presenting God in the heart, praising God, listening to God's word, and being transcendental. Twenty-three informants may continue to pray at places of worship during the pandemic, and fifteen informants pray at home, according to policies issued by the government.

Keyword: Challenges; Worship; COVID_19; Phenomenological; Indonesia

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji makna ibadah pada lima agama (Islam, Kristen, Katolik, Hindu, Budha, dan Konghucu) di Indonesia mengacu pada penelitian fenomenologis. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis.

Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Informan yang dijadikan subjek penelitian dalam penelitian ini adalah tokoh agama dan pemeluk Islam, Kristen Katolik, Kristen Protestan, Budha, Hindu dan Konghucu. Penelitian ini menemukan beberapa ide ibadah di masa pandemi COVID-19. Pertama, mereka yang menilai tidak ada perbedaan pelaksanaan ibadah sebelum dan saat pandemi. Kedua, mereka yang memilih beribadah di rumah selama pandemi mengikuti aturan pemerintah. Berdasarkan pendapat para informan yang telah menjelaskan banyak hal mengenai pelaksanaan ibadah di masa pandemi, dapat disimpulkan bahwa beberapa makna ibadah adalah dalam beribadah dengan hati yang ikhlas, kemurnian orientasi, menghadirkan Tuhan dalam hati, memuji Tuhan, mendengarkan firman Tuhan, dan bersikap transendental. Dua puluh tiga informan boleh tetap melaksanakan salat di rumah ibadah selama pandemi, dan lima belas informan tetap salat di rumah, sesuai dengan kebijakan yang dikeluarkan pemerintah.

Kata Kunci : Tantangan; Ibadah; COVID_19; Fenomenologis; Indonesia

Introduction

Political, economic, social, cultural, religious, defensive, and security factors have all been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that has occurred around the world, but particularly in Indonesia (Rusdianto et al., 2022). Both the government and society have been 'forced' to change their ways ever since March 31, 2020, when the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy was first put into effect (Permadi & Sudirga, 2020). Working in new ways, staying in school but not attending classes, and practicing religion on a small scale are all good examples (Minsih et al., 2021).

Restrictions on religious activities are one of the focuses of the

PSBB policy as it is known that every religion has religious rituals, both routinely and specifically on the momentum of religious holidays (Tobroni, 2020). Some of these religious rituals are carried out individually, and some are carried out together. However, with the PSBB during the Covid-19 pandemic, religious activities were also 'forced' to adapt to new habits (Rohmah, 2021). The issuance of Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the Context of Accelerating Handling of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was followed by various new policies, one of which is the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9 of 2020 dated April 3, 2020, concerning Guidelines for Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the Context of Accelerating Handling of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) (Khasanah & Purwaningsih, 2021). Article 13 explains that the implementation of PSBB includes (a) holidays from schools and workplaces; (b) restrictions on religious activities; (c) restrictions on activities in public places or public facilities; (d) restrictions on social and cultural activities; (e) restrictions on transportation modes; and (f) restrictions on other activities related explicitly to defense and security (Ayunda et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nur (2020) analyses the opinions of leading Islamic legal scholars (fiqh) on the legality of pilgrimage. Since the presence of the deadly COVID-19 virus can cause insecurity and can threaten life, the study's findings show that the views and perspectives of scholars and fiqh experts from Islamic schools clearly explain that Hajj is not obligatory to be carried out during times of the spread of the virus. If one's spiritual well-being is compromised and they don't feel safe, then they aren't "able," which is a prerequisite for performing the required Hajj (Nur et al.,

2020). Meanwhile, the results of a research study conducted by Lukuhay (2020) show that the concept of worshipping at home as an effort to maintain social distance during the COVID-19 pandemic is the right decision and has a clear theological basis (Luhukay, 2020).(Luhukay, 2020).

Research on the experiences of young people in India in facing the pandemic was conducted by Alina Suhail et al. This study aims to obtain an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of Indian adolescents during the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on their mental health. Researchers interviewed informants semi-structuredly by telephone; then the transcripts were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The study concluded that the majority of participants reported some mental health problems. Symptoms of anxiety and depression are the most frequently complained of, accompanied by disturbed sleep patterns, body aches, and uncertainty. (Suhail et al., 2021).

Janna van Grunsven also examines mental health related to the pandemic by reviewing the symptoms of increasing digital mental health services (DMH) since the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Researchers try to identify how the DMH service can best accommodate some of the new needs that arise from its users. Using phenomenology, the researcher concludes that the loss of familiarity with the perceptual world affects the therapeutic setting. Perceptual world familiarity is not evenly distributed in that factors such as disability, gender, and race influence its strength. This must be considered when attempting to incorporate the phenomenon into or reduce it through DMH services (van Grunsven, 2021).

Meanwhile, a phenomenological study of the experience of health workers was carried out by Hotma Royani Siregar et al. The researcher selected ten informants purposively, namely the nurses at

the South Tapanuli Hospital. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed by the Collaizi method. They explored five themes, namely: (1) Motivation of volunteer nurses to provide health services during the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) voluntary nurse psychological response; (3) problems faced by volunteer nurses; (4) benefits of being a volunteer nurse during the COVID-19 pandemic; and (5) voluntary nurse expectations. The study concluded that nurses voluntarily continued to carry out their duties in providing health services during the Covid-19 pandemic even without compensation (Siregar et al., 2022).

A similar study was carried out by Eladio J, et al., with the subjects of nursing students from the University of Jaime I (Spain) who were mostly volunteers for the handling of covid. With 65 informants, it was concluded that the main feelings collected regarding mood were negative, represented by uncertainty, nervousness, and fear. This study provides an overview of final-year nursing and medical students' perceptions concerning their direct incorporation into health systems exacerbated by the global crisis (Collado-Boira et al., 2020).

Phenomenological research concerning religious life, especially worship at home as a result of the pandemic, was conducted by Hasahatan Hutahaeon, et al. Researchers conducted interviews with 100 informants from four churches. Most informants interpreted the pandemic as forcing them to worship at home as the power of God. Several informants claimed to carry out a series of rituals themselves, and most of them followed the church's guidance by live streaming. Unfortunately, this study only captures the worship experience of one religion (Christianity). Therefore, it is relevant to conduct research with subjects from various faiths (Hutahaeon et al., 2020).

This literature review presented above, is a brief overview of the results of previous research relevant to phenomenology, the phenomenon of worship in religion, and pandemics. Its relevance can be seen in study themes, research methods, and across scientific fields. In a medical context, research from a social perspective regarding the Covid-19 pandemic continues to emerge. Some of this research uses phenomenological methods, especially regarding the construction of meaning or experiences of living with a pandemic, both by medical personnel and the general public.

This research seeks to add to the treasures of the study of worship experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic by involving people from various religions, namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Research examining these different religions has not been found, so this research can be considered a novelty. First, this paper explores the literature on worship related to the phenomenological study. After that, the research method is presented. Then the case study background and an overview of stakeholders are presented. The findings and discussion are discussed in part four. Finally, this paper concludes and discusses future work.

Research Method

In this study, the constructivist paradigm was used as the theoretical framework. One could classify the constructivist paradigm as postmodern or postpositivist (Ronda, 2018). The constructivist view holds that reality itself is a product of human imagination and interaction (Gunawan, 2008).

To get to these answers, this study employed a phenomenological qualitative research strategy. Since qualitative research is also said to be an approach or search to explore and understand a central

phenomenon, it is the appropriate method to use to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of religious activities carried out by religious adherents during the COVID-19 pandemic (Susilo, 2010). Researchers can learn more about humanity's social ills thanks to qualitative research. According to Creswell, the goal of qualitative research is to gain a more in-depth understanding of social and human problems through the construction of a comprehensive holistic picture through the use of words, the reporting of in-depth perspectives of informants, and the presentation of findings in their natural context (Creswell, 2002).

Through this qualitative research, researchers are also able to see every behavior or action of the informants and observe every word they say during the interview so that researchers can analyze in depth the words and actions of the informants, focusing attention on the context that can form an understanding of the phenomena being studied being researched (Rukin, 2019). Creswell revealed that a qualitative researcher should be more open and continue to develop because the qualitative design is a design that does not have fixed rules and procedures (Creswell, 2002).

Religious leaders and adherents of Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism were interviewed for this study, with two main criteria in mind: (1) the informants were willing to provide information and share their experiences thoroughly, and (2) the information was relevant to the research questions. voluntarily and under no duress; (2) the sources are believers and leaders of various faiths, including but not limited to Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism.

The participants' and interviewees' words and actions, as well as those of religious leaders, are the study's primary research objects.

In this study, the people who are the subject of the investigation also serve as the primary source of data in the form of their own words and deeds. According to the work of Lofland and Lofland in Moleong, "the main data sources in qualitative research are words and actions," with supplementary data including documents and other sources.

This research was conducted in three provinces, namely the first in DKI Jakarta, which during the pandemic, experienced many pros and cons regarding the closure of places of worship. The second is in Central Java, precisely in Karisidenan Surakarta for Catholics and Buddhists, one of the cities with many Catholics and Buddhists, and the third is in Bali for Hindus. This research was conducted from April to September 2021.

Results and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world since early 2020 has forced people to make many changes, including in worship (religious rituals) (Syauqi, 2020). To prevent the spread of the virus, the government establishes provisions for worship, such as performing rituals at home, including in the celebration of religious holidays (Sabara, 2020). When it is possible to carry out rituals in houses of worship, health protocols must also be enforced, such as maintaining distance, wearing masks, and prohibiting shaking hands (Delima, 2022). This policy certainly received many responses, both pro and contra, from various groups and religious people.

Different perspectives are presented in this study by the religious leaders and laypeople representing six of Indonesia's major religions who participated as research informants. For three months, researchers sampled several cities across three provinces in Java: DKI

Jakarta and its environs; Bali; and Central Java. The researcher categorizes the respondents' perspectives and attitudes as follows: (1) what regular worship means to religious people during a pandemic; (2) what religious holidays mean to religious people during a pandemic; and (3) what a policy means to religious people during a pandemic.

Religious circles and their followers have different attitudes towards this policy. Some accept by complying with the policy, some refuse by continuing to worship in places of worship, and some are based on the situation and conditions. If they see the condition of the spread of the virus rising, they worship at home, but if it is sloping, they worship at the house of worship. Here, the researchers describe the results of interviews in the field regarding the opinion of informants about routine worship during the pandemic.

At the outset, some insist that religious practices were no different before and during the pandemic. That is, they don't mind if they can't perform rituals in designated worship spaces. The informant's home was so close to the mosque that he continued to go there even as the pandemic raged. Information provided by a Ustadzah at the Al-Falah Jatisampurna Mosque, a trusted source for the RSI: "We have been able to keep up our regular religious practices throughout the pandemic thanks to the proximity of our home to a mosque. Worshipping God is the same for me and my family now as it was before the pandemic." The IR informants who regularly engage in worship do so in the same way, bringing their worship implements and enacting health procedures with them regardless of whether they are at home or work. The IR source also mentioned that people "...bring their tools of worship (mukena, prayer rug), pray at home/the office."

In the view of the RSI informant, worship should still be

carried out as usual, continue to pray, and recite the Koran, even though they must follow government rules by keeping their distance during the pandemic. This is expressed to the researcher as follows: "It's the same, whether we want a pandemic or not, we as religious people continue to perform the obligatory prayers or continue to recite the Koran. It's just that during the pandemic if you want to follow the government, you are required to keep your distance, right, and whether you want to follow the government even though your heart refuses, like for example praying, you want the staff to stay close, right? It's like, for example, they're afraid to be close together, right, so let's just respect each other if it's me."

Besides RSI and HI informants, AM informants also have the same opinion. According to him, worship during the pandemic should not change anything, namely, praying five times a day and reciting the Koran. What looks different is the distance between rows during congregational prayers and restrictions on the number of congregations. His statement follows: "There is a distance between rows in congregational prayers, and Friday prayers and Eid prayers are limited. because of the distance or restrictions, in my opinion, it feels less solemn because it seems there is a lack of togetherness in the congregation." From the statement of the AM informant, we can understand that even though he prays in the mosque, he still keeps his distance, even though he feels less solemn.

All that is felt by the adherents of these Muslims is no different from that felt by adherents of other religions. Worship during the pandemic at the house of worship (church) was also carried out by the informant Romo ET and also the informant PS, because they were religious leaders in the house of worship. Fr. ET's informant is a parish priest of Saint Paul Rasul Tumbang Titi. He said that during the pandemic, worship at the church would remain open, but by

following the prokes. This is as the following expression: "During the pandemic, we continue to carry out the worship process by strictly following health protocols and continue to convey to the people directions from the diocese by continuing to apply the 5M (wearing masks, washing hands with soap and running water, maintaining distance, avoiding crowds and reducing mobility)."

Furthermore, the PS informant also did the same thing, namely continuing to worship in the church while still obeying the instructions of the Pastor's Letter from the Archdiocese of Semarang (KAS) related to health protocols. The following phrases indicate that he is still worshipping in the church: "Always refer to and obey the instructions/letters of the bishop of the Archdiocese of Semarang (KAS) regarding health protocols, and are adjusted to the policies submitted by the government. The Catholic Church of the HTB SPM Boyolali Parish as a KAS area and in a smaller scope located in the Kevikepan Surakarta area conducts face-to-face mass by making a schedule per people's circles, reducing the duration of mass and increasing the mass schedule with the aim that the capacity of the church building is utilized according to the protocol. health (25% of the total maximum capacity of 500 people)."

Then he said that the existence of this pandemic did not reduce the essence of worship, because according to him the pandemic had no impact on faith, even re-acustoming us to doing good things, such as washing our hands and covering our mouths. The following is the statement of the PS informant: "The pandemic has nothing to do with the quality of faith because this is a personal relationship with God. This pandemic has had no impact on faith, we only practice listening, seeing, and doing things that I don't usually do, for example when we talk we cover our mouths (masks) so when we communicate with each other we must also have good ears (hearing).

-good because the voice is often not clear, seeing many sick and dead people that we have never seen before, then doing anything even though it is good at this time, namely maintaining personal hygiene (diligently washing hands after touching objects), no can travel any time/ any time want to travel, and this is part of faith: that is not admitting that we are the most righteous, and the best."

Another informant who did the same was an IRS informant, a Christian. IRS informants also carry out worship at the house of worship (church). According to him, the only thing that has changed is the implementation of social distancing and following the applicable health protocols. "There are distance restrictions when worshipping in churches and the implementation of prokes."

Performing rituals in places of worship is also still carried out by some Hindus. According to Hindus who the author interviewed, worship during the pandemic and before the pandemic remained the same, some continued to worship in houses of worship (temples) and some worshiped at their respective homes. As the statement from the BD informant follows: "During the pandemic, some people still worship at temples and some stay at home, yes, I'm both. It's just that worship in this house is the problem with discipline, it depends on it."

Buddhists continue to worship in their houses of worship, one of which is the RSB informant. He said that worship during this pandemic has not changed. Sometimes he worships at home and in houses of worship (klenteng). The reason is that the RSB informant is praying in a house of worship under the auspices of the Surakarta Tridrhama Spiritual Council. As the following expression: "My worship during the pandemic hasn't changed much. Dominated by simple rituals at home and only at certain times to the temple. Activity in houses of worship during the pandemic has been greatly reduced,

in line with the government's policy of reducing crowds. In addition to regular worship at home (incidentally, there is a private altar, so worship at home is not a new thing for me), several times, I still carry out worship at the temple because of my duty as a prayer under one of the Tridharma clergy assemblies.

Religion is also socially responsible for the difficulties of life faced by the people (Abdullah, 1996). The safety of people's lives is not only determined by the frequency of worship, inner experience, the appearance of physical propriety, and the preached religious teachings. Faith manifests in authentic worship to save people in various ways. So, during this pandemic period, religions and their instruments "go down the pulpit" to be involved in people's lives. Many people feel it in the form of physical logistical assistance, health services, and psychological recovery.

The need to live togetherness is central. The expressions of the ancestors who have been ingrained in society also support this. For example, the traditional Javanese utterance (Mataram) "ana dina ana upa", in its denotative meaning is "there is a day there is rice", it implies that every day there must be fortune received by anyone; You don't have to worry too much about fortune, both for yourself and for your family. The point of this utterance is to advise people to always be optimistic in facing uncertain days. In this situation, religious teachings must be interpreted and implemented concretely.

Max Weber, in his book "The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, " said that there is a relationship between the development of society and the attitude of the community towards the meaning of work. In the context of religion, a hard work ethic is a must for every person to achieve social welfare because this is a spiritual calling for attaining the perfection of life. It is implied that Weber's view emphasizes that the source of work motivation is the

culture- religion of the community. Meanwhile, according to Taufik Abdullah in his book "Religion, Work Ethic, and Economic Development," ethos is more of an evaluative aspect that is judgmental, also supported by Franz von Magnis, that ethos has a close relationship with moral attitude, although the two are not entirely identical. The similarity lies in his attitude. Both are recognized as an absolute or mandatory attitude towards something. The difference lies in the pressure. Moral attitude emphasizes orientation to norms as standards that must be followed (Ibda, 2023). Meanwhile, the ethos emphasizes that the attitude is an attitude that is freely desired, based on self-awareness, and not because it is forced, seeking profit, or because it wants to adapt to the expectations of the community (Duras, 2023).

Conclusion

The pandemic has forced changes in religious rituals, especially regarding the place and procedures. Provisions regarding worship at home as outlined by the government are addressed in various ways. Although most of the informants accepted it, some still objected for various reasons. From a phenomenological perspective, the choice of attitude to perform rituals at home is based on past motives (because motives), namely avoiding the possibility of becoming a victim of a pandemic. At the same time, the future orientation (in order motive) is to live a quality life and get the pleasure of God.

Meanwhile, for those who continue to perform rituals in places of worship, especially for clergy, there is a reason for their reality as leading figures for the people (because of the motive). For some, the alleged conspiracy in the pandemic is also a reason not to follow the government's advice. The reason 'for' it (to motive) is to get the blessing of God's blessing. Most of the informants have magical awareness in dealing with the pandemic. The

existence of COVID-19 is God's decree as part of efforts to educate humans. In other words, humans must be able to take lessons or lessons from this pandemic.

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