

# RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND CULTURE AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: MUHAMMADIYAH'S WORSHIP GUIDANCE AND MEMBERS' RESPONSES

**Ahmad Muttaqin**

*UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

Email: ahmad.muttaqin@uin-suka.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

*How have religious organizations responded to the COVID-19 pandemic? Why have some religious organizations responded to this outbreak from a scientific perspective, but many others have not? This paper explores the Muhammadiyah's proactive role in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak through an integration-interconnection perspective of religion, science, and culture. Apart from establishing the Muhammadiyah COVID-19 Command Center (MCCC), Muhammadiyah have been actively providing religious guidance amidst the pandemic. Through a review of organizational documents and an auto-nethnography study of the responses of Muhammadiyah members and their community, this paper examines the content and process of disseminating religious guidance, as well as the responses of the organization members and society generally. The dynamics of the response of Muhammadiyah members and sympathizers to religious guidance issued by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah will be read from the perspective of the religious authority in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era. This paper underlines that the Muhammadiyah have shown efforts to integrate religion, science, and culture through MCCC to deal with the outbreak. This confirms that the Muhammadiyah movement is both rational and pro-science and serves as a shred of evidence that religious organizations can be problem solvers, although authorities are potentially challenged in the VUCA era.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic; Integration-Interconnection; Muhammadiyah; Religion; Science; Culture

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been responded to differently by various religious organizations. There are religious groups who underestimate the danger of the pandemic and consider it merely a conspiracy of certain groups to rule the world. Those who believe in these conspiracies note that they are not afraid of COVID-19, and that their faith will be able to prevent the threat of

the virus. Other groups directly undermine the calls of health experts, leaders of religious organizations at the central level, and the government. However, other religious organizations and groups are taking it seriously, and thus taking strategic steps to tackle the spread of the disease. The first two groups only realized the danger of COVID-19 after it was discovered that some of their group members were exposed, became sick, and eventually passed away. Some church and mosque congregations and members of certain religious groups are even known to be “super-spreaders” of COVID-19 due to their disregard and neglect of the threat of this pandemic.

Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organization founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 and “the most powerful Islamic reformist movement in Southeast Asia, perhaps in the world” (Peacock, 1978: 19), is one of the few faith-based organizations that took strategic, measured, and programmed steps against the COVID-19 pandemic since the very first rise in cases. In these first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia as recorded by Djelante., et.al., “Muhammadiyah has transformed itself to be one of the most agile promoters of health-based and hospital-based emergency response.” (2020: 6).

The Muhammadiyah group issued announcements, formed a task force team with corresponding programs and actions to tackle COVID-19 nationally, and actively issued religious guidance. Muhammadiyah’s organized and proactive steps were often in conflict with governmental policies which were frequently changing. For example, Muhammadiyah reminded the government not to recklessly implement the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (LSSR) easing policy merely for economic reasons. The Muhammadiyah also disagreed with the term “new normal” used by the government and offered other more appropriate terms, such as “new reality” (CNN Indonesia, 8 June 2020). The Muhammadiyah’s disagreement with government policies they considered reckless was later justified by the government (Kumparan News, 10 July 2020).

The emergency religious guidelines for the pandemic period issued by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah were often ridiculed by groups with different viewpoints. Even some members and lower-level organizational leaders denied and delegitimized these circulars and guidelines. This raises the question of how effective and influential the religious guidance of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah is; and raises concerns about the possibility of the modernist organization’s religious authority being challenged amid the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) situation.

There are countless studies on the Muhammadiyah. Based on the background of the researchers, the literature and research on Muhammadiyah can be classified into two groups. First is research and literature written by insiders

such as organization leaders, cadres, members, or sympathizers. Among those who actively write and study the Muhammadiyah and its autonomous organization, Syamsiatun from an insider perspective are Haedar Nashir, the current Chairman of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Abdul Munir Mulkhan, Amin Abdullah, Abdul Mukti, Achmad Jaenuri, Najib Burhani, Hilman Latief, Ruhaini, and more. Even though they are insiders, they do not lose their objectivity so that their work remains critical, academic, honest, and reflective. Their writings and studies on the Muhammadiyah include aspects of ideology, thought, social, history, philanthropy, education, and interactions with other groups, to religious movements at the global level. The second group of academic research has been carried out by outsiders – neither Muhammadiyah members nor leaders. Among the outsiders who studied the Muhammadiyah are Western academics or non-Indonesian citizens, such as James Peacock, Nakamura, Hyung Jum Kim, and Herman L. Beck. They study Muhammadiyah from a historical, sociological, anthropological, and religious movement perspective.

In terms of themes, studies on Muhammadiyah can be classified into several groups. Studies on Muhammadiyah ideology and thought can be found in the works of Peacock (1978), Jaenuri (1997, 2007), Abdullah (2001, 2002, 2007, 2010, 2019), and Nashir (2007, 2010, 2015a, 2015b, 2018). Whereas Nakamura (2012), Mulkhan (1990, 2000, 2010), Kim (2007), Alfian (1989), and Burhani (2005, 2019), known for their study on the history and dynamics of the Muhammadiyah movement sociologically, anthropologically, and politically. Studies on Muhammadiyah education and relations with other religious communities have been carried out by Mukti and Fajar, (2009), Mukti (2019a, 2019b) and Shihab (1998); on philanthropy of the Muhammadiyah by Latief (2012) and Nashir and Latief (2020); on Sufism and spirituality in Muhammadiyah by Masyitoh (2008), Beck (2014), and Biyanto (2017); and about gender studies and women's lense in Muhammadiyah by Syamsiatun (2007, 2008), Ruhaini (2015), and Ro'fah (2016).

There are continued studies on the Muhammadiyah through BA theses, MA theses, Ph.D. theses, legal proceedings, as well as thousands of articles in scientific journals. As an illustration of how massive the number of studies on Muhammadiyah, when the word "Muhammadiyah" is typed into the Google Scholar database, within 0.09 seconds, 81,400 entries appear. A limitation in the study is that among the existing studies on Muhammadiyah, it has been difficult to find a study on Muhammadiyah from the perspective of integration and interconnection of science in religious praxis, especially related to the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the studies on Muhammadiyah

with the integration-interconnection approach was carried out by Setiawan (2018) entitled *Pembelajaran Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyah [AIK] yang Menggembirakan (Dengan Pendekatan Integrasi-Interkoneksi)* [Learning Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah [AIK] with Fund (the Integration-Interconnection Approach), focusing on the development of AIK material in an integrative-interconnective manner between religious and general sciences at Aisyiyah University of Yogyakarta.

A study on the role of Muhammadiyah as a religious movement responding to the COVID-19 pandemic was written by Najib Burhani (2020) entitled *Comparing Tabligh Jamaat and Muhammadiyah Responses to COVID-19*. According to Burhani, Muhammadiyah is an example of a religious organization responding positively to the COVID-19 pandemic through *Jihad Kemanusiaan* (Humanitarian Jihad), which does not conflict with government policies through various efforts ranging from healthy living campaigns, religious guidance, to mobilizing all resources for its cadres, autonomous organization, and health and education institutions all actively involved in stopping the spread of the pandemic. The Muhammadiyah's proactive role is the result of an inner-worldly religious orientation. On the other hand, the Tablighi Jamaat's strict voicing against calls for restrictions on worship in mosques and religious activities that gather many people is an example of a passive and fatalistic response in response to disasters. This is one of the consequences of their *otherworldly* religious orientation.

Unlike the above studies, this paper examines the process of integration between religion, science, and culture in religious guidance and practice of the Muhammadiyah during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on three main issues. First, how has Muhammadiyah responded to the pandemic? Second, from the perspective of integration and interconnection of science, to what extent are the dialectics of religious reasoning and scientific reasoning used by the Muhammadiyah leadership in providing religious guidance during the pandemic? Finally, why did various responses emerge from members of the organization to the Central Board of Muhammadiyah's religious guidance in the pandemic era, and what are its implications moving forward for the religious authority of the ulama and Muhammadiyah leaders?

Methodologically, this paper combines document studies and auto-ethnography or auto-ethnography on the internet and social media. Data on religious views, programs, and organizational activities related to the pandemic was gathered from a study of official documents of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah and official publications: press releases, books, official web channels, social media of the organizations, and literature on

Muhammadiyah studies. Data on the responses of cadres, members, and sympathizers to the Muhammadiyah policies and programs on COVID-19 pandemic was collected by auto-nethnography method, which allowed me, as an activist and administrators in one of the Council at the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, to discern and reflex the dynamics responses in a digital space spreading across various websites and social media platforms and online chat groups. As noted by Villegas (2018), auto-nethnography allows “the researcher explores their feelings, emotions, and evocations in order to understand a cultural experience in an online community of its own people.”

The collected data was processed and analyzed using three models of integration-interconnection of religious science and culture according to Amin Abdullah’s version: semipermeable, intersubjective testability, and creative imagination (2013, 2014). To discern the dynamics of the relationship between the policies of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah and the response of its members, this study implements the perspective of the challenge of religious authority in the VUCA (Mack et al. 2016). The following sub-chapters will, in sequence, elaborate Muhammadiyah’s religious reasoning, Muhammadiyah’s religious guidance during the pandemic with analyzing integration-interconnection of science in it, the response of Muhammadiyah members, and the challenges of religious authority in the VUCA era.

## MUHAMMADIYAH RELIGIOUS REASONING

Outsider-observers on Muhammadiyah tend to be biased in evaluating Muhammadiyah. Due to its puritanical aspects in religious views and practices, Muhammadiyah is categorized as a Salafi movement, though some even call it Wahabi. In fact, referring to the official documents of the organization, Muhammadiyah is a religious movement that combines revelation and mind, both in religious thought and practice. The Principles of Beliefs and Ideals of Life (*Matan Keyakinan dan Cita-Cita Hidup [MKCH]*) of Muhammadiyah point 3, for example, clearly states that Muhammadiyah’s religious understanding is based on the Qur’an and Sunnah maqbulah using the mind, which is in line with the spirit of Islamic teachings. The 3rd item of the MKCH formula is:

“Muhammadiyah in practicing Islam is based on: (a) the Quran: The Book of Allah which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). (b) The Sunnah of the Prophet: The explanation and implementation of the teachings of the Qur’an given by the Prophet Muhammad using reasoning according to the spirit of Islamic teachings.” (Manhaj Gerakan Muhammadiyah, 2009: 51).

Based on this formula, in the view of Muhammadiyah, being religious is based not only on the arguments of religious texts in a textual and literal manner, but also on concepts of reasoning. In the final part of the MKCH point 3, it is explicitly stated: "... using reasoning according to the spirit of Islamic teachings." This phrase emphasizes that the use of the mind in religion is not solely based on speculative reasoning, but also on the logic that is in accordance with the spirit of Islamic teachings. Because Islam supports the development of science, so the logic and mind used are based on the results of scientific research.

The assertion of Muhammadiyah for appreciating science, technology, and culture in religion can also be found in the document of Muhammadiyah Members' Islamic Life Guidelines (*Pedoman Hidup Islami Warga Muhammadiyah [PHIWM]*). These guidelines provide a model for Muhammadiyah members in various life fields: personal life, family life, society, organizations, managing charity, doing business, developing professions, being part of a nation, preserving the environment, developing science and technology, and living life artistically through arts and culture.

The combination of revelation and mind in Muhammadiyah religious reasoning and practice is strengthened by its *manhaj tarjih* which combines three elements: *burhani* (religious holy text); *bayaani* (science-based empirical facts); and *irfani* (the knowledge acquired through sincerity and inspiration, that lead to pure heart and *ihsan*, as ethical considerations for humans and nature).

In practice and as a religious movement, Muhammadiyah and its various charitable enterprises are the implementers of the faith and good deeds framed in a modern organization. Through this perspective, the existing problems of worldly life are not to be avoided and shunned but should instead be approached and resolved through collective charity action. Fatwas and religious appeals issued are always viewed holistically, not only prioritizing religious reasoning (*bayani*), but also viewed from the perspective of science and technology (*burhani*), as well as *ihsan* and ethical-spiritual considerations for the sake of common benefit (*irfani*). That is why since the One Century Muhammadiyah Congress in Yogyakarta in 2010, the Muhammadiyah movement has carried the idea of *Islam Berkemajuan* (Islam with progress). In the *Pernyataan Pikiran Muhammadiyah Abad Kedua* (The Second Century Muhammadiyah Thought Statement / *azhawahir al-afkar al-muhammadiyah li al-qarni al-tsani*), which was the Decree of the One Century Muhammadiyah Congress (known also as the 46th Muhammadiyah Congress), it was stated: "Islam highly respects charity equal to faith and knowledge, so that Islam

is present in the understanding of balance and at the same time being well-established in life” (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015: 8).

Since its establishment until today, the ethos of Muhammadiyah has been the integration of faith, knowledge, and good deeds in an organization. Kyai Dahlan’s initial efforts to shift the praying line of the Grand Mosque of Kauman to be more precise in facing the Qibla by using a map, is a merely one example of the implementation of science in religion at that time. The choice of using organizational instruments as a medium for the actualization of faith based on common sense rooted in science and technology and the implementation of good deeds is respected by many. It is through this modern organization that Muhammadiyah shows its role in the fields of education, health, social services, community empowerment, disaster management, and philanthropy. Muhammadiyah’s charitable enterprises in education from kindergarten to higher education, and in health services in hundreds of clinics/hospitals around Indonesia, can be categorized as Muhammadiyah scientific charity institution because they are managed professionally whilst implementing principles of science and technology based on Islamic ethics and teachings.

#### **COVID-19 OUTBREAK RESPONSE AND GUIDANCE FOR WORSHIP DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Responding to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Muhammadiyah movement has devoted all its resources to fighting and overcoming the pandemic as a form of “*Jihad Kemanusiaan*” or Humanitarian Jihad (Muis, 2020). Through Notice Letter Number 02/MLM/I.0/H/2020 concerning the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah formed the Muhammadiyah COVID-19 Command Center (MCCC) as a task force to coordinate and implement programs and actions for handling COVID-19. The formation of the MCCC coincided with the time when the Government of Indonesia declared the Coronavirus as a national disaster, March 14, 2020, or 12 days from the first case of a positive patient in Indonesia with COVID-19 on March 2, 2020.

The MCCC is a task force team consisting of representatives from councils, centers, institutions, and autonomous organizations under Muhammadiyah such as the Public Health Advisory Council, Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), ‘Aisyiyah, LAZISMU, Council of Higher Education, Research and Development (DIKTILITBANG), Council of Primary and Secondary Education (DIKDASMEN), Majelis Tabligh, Muhammadiyah Students Association (IPM), Muhammadiyah University-Students Association (IMM), Nasyiatul ‘Aisyiyah (young women), and

Pemuda Muhammadiyah (youth), Hizbul Wathan (scout), and Tapak Suci Putera Muhammadiyah (martial arts). In addition to being created at the central level, the MCCC was also formed at the regional level which exists in 30 regions around Indonesia. MCCC also collaborates with various institutions, both national and international. The detailed progress of Muhammadiyah's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was documented by the MCCC's Information, Dissemination and Publication Team in the form of an e-book entitled *Optimis Menghadapi Pandemi COVID-19: Catatan Kajian dan Respon Muhammadiyah* [*Optimism in Facing the COVID-19 Pandemic: Notes on Muhammadiyah Studies and Responses*] (2020).

The MCCC report on December 31, 2020, or about 10 months of providing community services, they had succeeded in carrying out activities such as collecting and distributing items (Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hand sanitizers, and disinfectants; providing medical equipment and medical PPE); distributing food and groceries for negatively impacted families; promoting healthy life and socializing COVID-19 activities; producing virtual education technology and devices for online learning; hospitalizing infected patients and providing shelter for non-symptoms patients; supporting internet data packages; providing tuition waivers for university student; and more, with a total expenditure approximately IDR 308.4 billion (excluding treatment costs at Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah Hospitals). More than 28.5 million people were directly assisted because of these efforts. This activity has positioned Muhammadiyah as the most concerned organization in mitigating the COVID-19 in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of providing religious guidance during the pandemic, until the end of June 2020, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah issued several edicts, circulars, and religious guidance for specifically Muhammadiyah members in addition to the Indonesian Muslim community in general. These edicts and circulars included guidance on procedures for worship during the COVID-19 pandemic such as for worship at home, Ramadan, and Idul Fitri as well as guidance on Eid al-Adha prayer and Qurban (animal sacrifice) ritual during the pandemic. The following discussion will elaborate upon Muhammadiyah's religious guidance for worship during the emergency period of the pandemic. After detailing this guidance, at the end of the sub-discussion, an analysis of Muhammadiyah religious guidance and practice will be presented from the

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<sup>1</sup> This appreciation, for example, was made by the Development Strategy Study Institute (LKSP), a big data-based study institution to formulate development based in Jakarta, which, based on the results of its survey, stated that Muhammadiyah is the mass organization that cared the most about the Covid-19 pandemic. (see <https://lksp.or.id/kajian/survei-lksp-muhammadiyah-dan-pks-dipersepsi-lebih-peduli-saat-pandemi/>).



perspective of integration-interconnection of science.

### 1. *Praying at home and Ramadhan during the pandemic period*

Guidance for worship at home during the pandemic was first issued by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah through Edict Number 02/MLM/I.0/H/2020 concerning the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic 2019, on 19 Rajab 1441 AH / March 14, 2020 AD. The edict contains 5 points: (1) postponement of activities within the Muhammadiyah organization that involve masses or large numbers of people such as religious courses, seminars, meetings, and social activities; (2) religious worship activities; (3) educational activities should be in line with government policies; (4) the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah hospitals should prepare for COVID-19 handling, the Public Health Advisory Council (MPKU) to synergize with other majlis, institutions, autonomous organizations, and other Muhammadiyah charitable enterprises; and an assertion that the Central Board of Muhammadiyah has established the MCCC; and (5) adhere to a healthy lifestyle, and to limit travel to places with high risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The edict specifically mentions worship activities during the pandemic in point number 2, stating:

“Religious activities such as congregational prayers and Friday prayers in mosques are still carried out with the following conditions: (a). Those who are sick are advised to pray at home. (b). If deemed an emergency, Friday prayers can be replaced with dhuhur prayers at home, and congregational prayers can be performed at home.”

Point number 5 concerning the recommendation not to travel to areas that are at risk of COVID-19 transmission is accompanied by a quote from a hadith from Usamah bin Zaid, and a prohibition of residents living in the pandemic areas from leaving the area. It is also stated that the hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurairah is about the Prophet's prohibition not to mix the sick and the healthy; as well as the hadith about the prohibition of doing bad and harmful things, the narration of Ibn Majah and Ahmad bin Hambal from Abdullah bin Abbas. The hadiths quoted in the edict are the *naqli* (from the Qur'an and the prophet) argument for handling infectious disease outbreaks through regional quarantine or recently known as lock-down, *PSBB*, and other related terms.

Considering statistical data about the COVID-19 cases which continue to increase and spread to several regions in Indonesia, on March 20, 2020, the

Muhamadiyah Central Executive Board issued an appeal for Friday prayers to be replaced with *dhuhr* prayers at home, and congregational prayers at home. Circulars and appeals were also followed by various online agreement forums held by the Majlis Tarjih, Tajdis, and the Muhammadiyah charitable enterprises.

On March 24, 2020, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah issued a subsequent Circular number 02/EDR/I.0/E/2020 concerning Worship Guidelines in Emergency Conditions of COVID-19 which is equipped with attachments of worship guidance from Majlis Tarjih and Tajid. This circular is a follow-up to, and refinement of, the *Maklumat* [Declaration] of Central Board of Muhammadiyah Number 02/MLM/I.0/H/2020 concerning the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic and Circular Number 03/I.0/B/2020 concerning the Implementation of congregational obligatory and Friday Prayers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance of religious ritual during the pandemic was the result of a meeting among three main institutions in the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, they are the Tarjih and Tajdid Council, Public Health Advisory Council, and the MCCC.

In detail, the attachment to this circular contains 19 points of guidance starting from the aspect of *aqidah* [faith] in viewing and responding to COVID-19, guidance to continue making a strong effort to prevent and handle COVID-19, guidance to carry out safe religious worship in accordance with health protocols amidst a pandemic, as well as guidance to practice recommended religious rituals during pandemic time as a spiritual effort to strengthen faith and social solidarity.

Prior to discussing the 19 points of worship guidance, it is crucial to provide an explanation of the basic values of faith which are used as guidelines in making decisions about worship guidance during the pandemic period. They include, first, the belief that whatever befalls humans cannot be separated from the will of Allah, the Almighty, the Most Just, the Most Beneficent and the Most Merciful. All disasters are tests from Allah who intends wisdom behind each action. Humans should maintain good and healthy quality of the environment, avoid being destructive towards the environment, and avoid causing disease because the cosmic function of humans is to help nature to prosper.

Second, the consequence of faith in Allah in facing catastrophe humans must be optimistic and believe that with every difficulty, there must be a way out by attempting to find solutions and by continuing to believe in Allah (thus being safe from religious wrath). The third is about the nature of religion that was revealed to humans as the blessings for the universe and bringing benefits in the form of protection for humans, their religious lives, their bodies and souls,

their minds, their family institutions, and their wealth. The implementation of religious teachings during the COVID-19 pandemic must avoid any harm and difficulties in favor of prioritizing convenience and a sense of security.

The nineteen points of guidance of worship during the pandemic can be grouped into three parts. The first five points are related to theological views; aspects of faith and *aqidah* in viewing and responding to the pandemic including: (1) the belief that “the COVID-19 disaster is a test from Allah based on the attributes of the Most Beneficent and the Most Merciful of Allah, so that Muslims must face it with patience, reliance on God alone, and effort.” (2) “ COVID-19 patients who die though trying with full faith to prevent and/or treat the disease will receive rewards like those of martyrs.” (3) “Active efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are a form of worship that has the value of *jihad*, and on the other hand, deliberate actions that carry the risk of transmission are bad / wrongdoing.” (4) “Treatment as a form of effort is mandatory. Therefore, experts including the Government are obliged to make these efforts at the same time providing all the necessities related to it.” (5) “In order to avoid the adverse effects of COVID-19, various guidelines and protocols have been established by authorities, including social distancing (*at-tabāud al-ijtimāi*) and efforts to stay at home or work from home as preventive measures, while maintaining work productivity levels.”

The next seven points are about worship: 1. Explaining the law of required prayer that must be carried out under any circumstance. 2. In the context of implementing social distancing and avoiding the harm of transmission of COVID-19 3. The fardhu prayer should be carried out in respective homes, not in the public prayer room or the mosque 4. The ability to carry out prayers for the medical staff on duty 5. Friday prayers are replaced with midday prayers for four cycles in each house 6. guidance on replacing the call *hayaa ‘ala shalah with shollu fii buyutikum* or *shallu fii rilaterallikum* 7. Finally, guidance for worship in the month of Ramadan was included: guidance on evening prayers (*tarawih*) in each house, noting fasting is still mandatory except for those who are sick, clarifying that medical personnel with heavy burden of work and duties are not required to fast but are obliged to make replace it at another time, and if COVID has not gotten better before the Holy Month, Eid prayers and their sequential activities (homecoming, takbir parade, *halal bilhaalal*, etc.) shall not not held.

The next two points are about *ihsan* behavior and social solidarity which related to guidance to increase care for other people through “increasing zakat, donations and alms and maximizing distribution of items connected to prevention and control of COVID-19 and promoting good behavior (*ihsan*)

and community members helping each other (*taawun*) and especially helping vulnerable groups - distributing masks, hand sanitizers, or meeting the basic needs of directly affected families and not panic buying so essentially supplies are still available.

The next three points contain guidance on the care of the COVID-19 dead bodies, which, emphasizes its management must follow health protocols; if deemed necessary and to avoid virus exposure to the organizing staff, the corpse should not be washed, and the execution of the funeral prayer can be replaced by *ghaib* praying in each house.

The next point is about spirituality and *ihsan* by advocating “lots of *istighfar*, repentance, praying to Allah, reading the Qur’an, doing *dhikr*, sending greetings to the Prophet, and taking vows individually and with conviction and positive thinking about Allah’s provision, may Covid-19 soon be eliminated by Allah swt.”

In each prayer guidance for the COVID-19 emergency period in the attachment to the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board’s circular detailed above, it is always accompanied by logical arguments that come from the Qur’an and Hadith. This is important, emphasizing that the guidance issued is not only based on health protocol considerations, but also has grounding in authoritative, valid, and *maqbulah* [acceptable] religious arguments.

## 2. *Eid al-Adha dan Sacrificial Ritual during the Pandemic*

On June 24, 2020, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah issued Circular (*Surat Edaran*) Number 06 / EDR / I.0 / E / 2020 concerning Guidelines for Arafah Fasting, Eid Al-Adha, and the Protocols for sacrificial ritual during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guideline was issued for Eid al-Adha in 1441 AH (Friday 31 July 2020) which health experts predicted would be during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, worship activities which usually involve large mass gatherings need guidance to comply specifically with health protocols.

This guidance regulates three main things. First, about the timing of Arafah’s fasting based on the essential reckoning of the form of the hilal of *Majlis Tarjih and Tajid* - which explains that the Arafah Fasting which occurs on 9 Dzulhijah 1414 AH coincides with Thursday, July 30, 2020. The second is about the implementation of Eid al-Adha on 10 Dzulhijah which coincides with Friday, July 30, 2020 so that: (a) Eid al-Adha prayers in the field should not carried out; (2) for those who wish, Eid al-Adha prayers can be carried out in their respective homes; and (3) for those who are in a green or safe zone not

affected by COVID-19, Eid al-Adha prayers can be carried out in small fields or open spaces around homes, while still abiding by health protocols.

The third is about the sacrificial ritual (slaughter of sacrificial animals / *udhiyah*) during the pandemic which is briefly directed as follows: (1) the law of sacrifice is the sunnah of *muakkadah*; (2) during a pandemic it is more important to give alms than to slaughter a sacrificial animal; (3) those who are able to make sacrifices and help with the economic impact of the COVID can do both; (4) sacrifices should be converted in the form of funds and channeled through LazisMu to be distributed to people in need; (5) Those who will carry out sacrifice by slaughtering animals must pay attention to health protocols (Edaran PP Muhammadiyah, No: 06/EDR/I.0/E /2020).

Based on the circular of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah regarding the guidance for Eid al-Adha worship during the pandemic, the MCCC held a press conference on June 24 to inform the public about the circular and to clear up any questions. The press conference explained the technical implementation of Eid al-Adha prayers, as well as the mechanism for slaughtering and distributing sacrificial meat based on health protocols, which emphasized: (1) carrying out Eid al-Adha prayers at home with family; (2) Eid al-Adha prayers outside the home can be carried out in areas that are deemed safe by the government, or the green zone, so small groups are created and not concentrated in one place while still paying attention to health protocols; (3) calls for not holding takbir tours and trips outside the city; (4) the procedures for receiving, slaughtering and distributing sacrificial animals/meat are in accordance with health protocols such as the use of slaughterhouses, use of personal protective equipment for the committee, provision of hand sanitizers, soap, gloves, and application of the physical distancing procedure. (<https://covid19.muhammadiyah.id/tuntunan-sholat-idul-adha-di-tengah-pandemi-covid-19/>).

In the Eid al-Adha guidance and sacrificial ritual guidance above, it is clearly illustrated that the aspects of religious worship are integrated with the view of health science in this pandemic period. The integration and interconnection between religion and science, is on one hand, to ensure that religious worship activities for community members can still be carried out during the pandemic, but its implementation still considers safety and the common good through health science considerations.

Obviously, the combination of religion and science during this pandemic has created a worship practice that is different from normal times. This religious innovation is designed for a temporary period, i.e., the emergency response period, but because it is not clear when the COVID-19 pandemic will end,

gradually this new method will set new norms with potential to become newly created “culture” or a “tradition” in the way people observe religion... particularly if the pandemic continues for longer. The emergence of new innovations, which may be easily understood by leaders at the central and regional levels, often raises doubts or rejection from members and leaders at the branch and sub-branch levels.

This matter has been recognized by policy makers at the central level, so in addition to being followed up by a press statement by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah and the relevant Majlis, MCCC made a presentation material on “Sacrificial Worship Protocol”. The Central Board of Muhammadiyah also held an online public recitation with the theme “Eid al-Adha during the COVID-19 Pandemic”. Interestingly, the sources in the recitation were representatives with authority in their respective fields. The most prominent figures in this event were Prof. Dr. H. Haedar Nashir, M.Sc., Chairman of Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board who gave an iftitah speech and Prof. Dr. Abdul Mukti, M.A., General Secretary of Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board who became a keynote speaker. Another speaker was a representative of the clerical authority in Muhammadiyah, Prof. Dr. H. Syamsul Anwar, M.A., chairman of the General Assembly of *Tarjih and Tajdid* of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board, and representatives of health practitioners who are also deputy chairmen of the MCCC, dr. Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Sp.An.

In order to make religious guidance in line with health protocols, and easily understood by members of the organization and the wider community, the Library and Information Council of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah also made graphic and digital information through flyers and memes of short versions of the Eid al-Adha guidance and sacrificial rituals during the pandemic which were disseminated through the Muhammadiyah official social media channels: the Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah Facebook page, Twitter @muhammadiyah, Instagram @muhammadiyah, and the official website [www.muhammadiyah.id](http://www.muhammadiyah.id)

### 3. *Integration and Interconnection of Religion, Science and Culture in Religious Praxis*

The religious guidance during the pandemic time published by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah is an example of how religious and scientific approaches are used to solve problems at the intersection of religion and

health. Viewed from scientific integration and interconnection perspective, as developed by Amin Abdullah, integration and interconnection between religion, science, and religious praxis culture of Muhammadiyah during the emergency period of the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in three models: semipermeable, intersubjective testability, and imaginative creation.

The semipermeable model has been illustrated in the discussion processes and the birth of religious guidance during the Pandemic. Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organization that has provided organizational and religious guidance from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Board of Muhammadiyah established the MCCC, tasked with coordinating the implementation of the COVID-19 handling program and actions. The members of the MCCC are representatives of Muhammadiyah leaders from various Majlis, both directly related to health, social, and educational matters in addition to religious matters. Religious guidance discussion meetings not only involve Majlis related to religious matters, but also other Majlis that handle the fields of health, education, communication, and information as well as other related assemblies. The MCCC press release on religious guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out by involving the Health Advisory Council, the Tarjih and Tajid Majlis, and the Tabligh Majlis. If the issues are education-related, the MCCC also involves the Primary and Secondary Education Majlis and the Higher Education Research and Development Majlis. This shows the way the fields of religion and science/health greet each other, complement each other, and have dialog with each other. In turn, this semipermeable process continues to examine each other and even results in intersectional creativity as shown in the following description.

Intersubjective testability appears in the discussion and decision-making process which always considers the dimensions of religion and science. The religious and scientific perspectives are not only discussed to address the pandemic but are also used to examine each other - religious arguments are viewed from scientific considerations and scientific arguments are analyzed with religious considerations. While discussing the Eid al-Fitr Prayer 1441AH during the pandemic, one of the chairmen of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah explained the decision made initially would provide an option to pray in an open field for areas not affected by the pandemic, and the elimination of prayers in the affected areas. But considering that at that time the number of positive cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia continued to increase and there was no guarantee that there were areas or regions in Indonesia that were completely free from the spread of the new Coronavirus, finally the ability for Eid prayer in an open field was withdrawn. This decision signifies

how health science is used as a reference for religious arguments about the recommended Eid prayer in an open field in normal times.

Examples of scientific considerations examined with religious arguments are religious guidance to enter a new reality or New Habit Adaptation. Since the beginning, Muhammadiyah has reminded the government to be careful and responsible in changing the regional status from the *Pembatasan Sosia Bersaka Besar - PSBB* [Large-Scale Social Restriction - LSSR) to be looser with the term “New Normal”. The easing of the LSSR allows people to carry out socio-economic activities while still implementing strict health protocols: wearing masks, washing their hands, maintaining distance, and not creating crowding. During this ongoing pandemic, people have been encouraged to pray at home. However, along with the pressure from the community and the widespread desire of the congregation to carry out congregational and Friday prayers in-person in mosques and prayer rooms, the health-science arguments were examined with religious considerations regarding congregational prayer orders. Finally, religious guidance emerged to introduce a new reality or Adaptation of New Habits from the Central Board of Muhammadiyah which allows public prayer rooms and mosques to hold congregational and Friday prayers while implementing strict health protocols as well.

The *creative imagination* model can be found in the recommendation to convert sacrificial animals' funds to help handle COVID-19 instead, which is channeled through the Muhammadiyah Alms Agency (LazizMu). Creative imagination can also be seen in the congregational prayer guidance with a minimum distance of one meter between congregants and performing prayers wearing masks. It then became permissible to perform Friday prayer in one place into several sessions due to limited space and the large number of congregants. There are also online activities, study and recitation, online family takbir competitions, online preacher competitions, and more digital activities.

Among these progressive online worship activities organized by Muhammadiyah is an online Friday prayer through Zoom. This activity was initiated by a group of Muhammadiyah activists who came together in the Ma'arif Institute as a form of embodiment of the opinion of Ustdaz Wawan Gunawan, Lc., M.Ag., one of the members the Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, and an Associate Professor at the Sharia and Law Faculty of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta regarding this online Friday prayer during the pandemic. Ustadz Wawan's opinion regarding the argument for allowing online Friday prayers has been written firstly on his Facebook, and then republished on the IbTimes news channel since April



2020.<sup>2</sup>

This innovation of religious activities resulting from the process of integration and interconnection between religion and science in religious guidance during the COVID-19 period was originally designed for a temporary emergency. However, along with the repeated implementation, the community and members of the organization began to acclimate to the new method, which gradually has become a new culture and tradition. In the future, the use of digital technology in religion will be even more widespread as cultural shifts begin.

The integration of religious and scientific reasoning into Muhammadiyah religious guidance (as reflected in the edicts and circulars of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah) received appreciation from Mark Woodward, an American Scholar of Indonesia who has done a lot of research on Islam in Indonesia. On his Facebook page, Woodward wrote Religious Holidays in the Plague Year - Lessons from the Indonesian Muhammadiyah Movement which later went viral on multiple social media platforms. According to Woodward, the Muhammadiyah's ability to combine religious and scientific considerations to provide guidance for worship at home as well as positive religious guidance (safe, healthy, and compliant with health protocols) can be a valuable lesson for churches in the United States that have rejected calls by local authorities to temporarily close places of worship and hold mass at home. Woodward's

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<sup>2</sup> Ibtimes.id is a news and opinion channel that carries the idea of moderate Islam which is managed by Muhammadiyah youths. Although Ibtimes.id does not have a structural relationship with Muhammadiyah, its managers are Muhammadiyah activists whose ideas are in line with Muhammadiyah (progressive Islam). Wawan Gunawan has been writing opinions in the Fikih Column about online Friday prayer since April 2020, respectively: "Is it possible to perform Friday prayer in congregation online?" (12 April 2020, <https://ibtimes.id/mouldkah-shalat-jumat-berjamaah-online/>) and "Once again, No Problem with Friday Prayers Online" (4 May 2020, <https://ibtimes.id/once-again-no-problem-online-Friday-prayer/>). According to Wawan Gunawan, the implementation of online Friday prayers is a continuation of the online Eid Al-Fitr prayer, which was held on 1 Shawwal 1441 on May 24, 2020, attended by 3 families, Ustadaz Wawan who lives in Yogyakarta as a preacher and Imam, as well as two other families outside Yogyakarta. At the suggestion of the congregants, some of whom live in Jakarta, the first online Friday prayer was held on May 29, 2020. Initially there were only tens of congregants in attendance but gradually the number grew to hundreds. When I joined the Friday prayer online via Zoom on January 1, 2021, more than 150 Zoom accounts were participating, and some of the Zoom events were followed by family members totaling 2-3 worshippers. On February 16, 2021, suaramuhammadiyah.id announced the Majelis Tarjih Fatwa about online Friday prayer. One of the conclusions on the fatwa states: "As far as searching the various literatures, Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid have not found a strong argument or reason to replace Friday prayers with online Friday prayers. Therefore, without reducing respect for different opinions, Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid have not been able to accept online Friday prayers." Because the Majelis Tarjih does not recommend online Friday prayer, many congregations left WhatsApp groups. However, on Friday, March 5th, about 290 accounts still participated in the online prayer, indicating they did not obey the fatwa.

article was also published on [ibtimes.id](https://ibtimes.id).<sup>3</sup>

The positive and active role of Muhammadiyah's Humanitarian Jihad in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by integrating religion, science and culture shows that religion and religious communities can problem solve ongoing problems when working together. This can reduce the tense voice of the religiophobia group who often accuse religion, particularly Muslims, of being the culprit or the source of civilization's problems. In the conclusion of his study comparing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic between Muhammadiyah and Jamaah Tabligh, Burhani wrote, "The activities of Muhammadiyah during the pandemic challenge those who see religion as the antithesis of science" (Burhani, 2020: 8). Sukidi's opinion in the Kompas daily (02 January 2021) wrote that the proactive work of Muhammadiyah in responding to the pandemic by integrating religion (Islam) and science "is a logical consequence of Muhammadiyah's ideology which adheres to rational and pro-science Islam."

The Muhammadiyah's religious guidance during the pandemic can be said to be a total effort to overcome the COVID-19 outbreak from three perspectives: from religion, from science, and from culture. This effort is different from secular groups that only rely on a scientific perspective, or a conservative religious group that only explores religious and spiritual ways to deal with the pandemic.

## **RESPONSES OF MUHAMMADIYAH MEMBERS AND THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY DURING THE VUCA ERA**

### *1. Types of Responses*

In Ramadan of 1441 AH, in several WhatsApp groups that I personally am a part of, there were those who continued to post messages both in writing and in pictures about religious activities in their public praying rooms or mosques during the pandemic. Their message is often accompanied by the statement "fear only Allah, sickness and death have been predetermined by Allah SWT." Those who often posted prideful messages regarding the continued activity of congregational worship in places of worship, also often post news about COVID-19 from a conspiracy theory perspective. They considered appeals and laws to worship at home as a form of certain groups to silence Muslims.

At the end of Ramadan 1441 AH, social media and several WhatsApp groups affiliated to Muhammadiyah also spread memes that read "Covid-19 Loyalty

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://ibtimes.id/religious-holidays-in-the-plague-year-lessons-from-the-indonesian-muhammadiyah-movement/>.

Test” with a man’s face wearing a red beret typical of KOKAM and wearing a mask. Below the masked face were three hashtag signs that read:

#WE\_ARE\_WITH\_THE CENTRAL BOARD’S EDICT  
 #EID\_PRAYER\_AT\_HOME  
 #FIGHT\_COVID\_AND\_PREVAIL

Judging from the context of the time and its content, the meme was disseminated in response to the widespread invitation to attend the Eid al-Fitr prayer in an open field in several areas with the Muhammadiyah symbol on the flier ironically. In fact, it is clear the Central Board of Muhammadiyah has issued calls and guidance for worship during the emergency pandemic, one of which calls for Eid prayers to be performed in their respective homes and eliminating Eid prayers in an open field, mosques, and other open places where congregant groups gather.

The response of the members of the organization to the calls and guidance of worship during the pandemic period from the Central Board of Muhammadiyah can be mapped into four categories: First, the group that obeys it: *sami’na wa atha’na* (we hear, and we obey); second, the group that subtly refuses for specific reasons; third, the group that opposes and even delegitimizes the guidance, and the fourth group that adheres to creative activities that do not violate health protocols.

In general, the response of urban members of the organization and in Muhammadiyah’s charities falls into the category of the first group that obeys the Central Board of Muhammadiyah’s appeal to worship at home. Mosques and public praying affiliated to Muhammadiyah, and which are in the environment of Muhammadiyah education and health institutions do not hold congregational worship. This first group explicitly announced to the congregants that the mosques and prayer rooms were temporarily closed and called for worship to be performed at home. In addition to making announcements on social media, they also put up a memorial banner at the gate of the mosque announcing the mosque was temporarily closed to the public. To keep the mosque and prayer room alive, the call to prayer is still recited by replacing “*hayaa ‘ala shalah*” with “*shalluu fii buyuutikum*” or “*shalluu fii rihaalikum*”.

Second is the group that subtly refuses the guidance from the Central Board of Muhammadiyah. They still hold congregational worship at the mosque for various reasons, claiming that the area is still in the green zone, as there are no cases of COVID and is considered safe, for example. Another reason is that

worship still follows health protocols by not using carpets or requiring for congregants to bring their own prayer mats, congregants keeping at least a one-meter distance from each other, required mask wearing, washing hands with soap before entering the mosque, body temperature checks for congregants, no gathering or lingering in the mosque, and prohibition for the elderly and children from participating.

The third group is those who oppose and even delegitimize Muhammadiyah's guidance for worship at home. Ironically, the rejection and even "opposition" to the guidance of the Central Executive Board were sponsored by the leadership at the sub-branch or branch levels. Despite the Central Executive Board's calls for temporarily not holding congregational five-time prayers, Friday prayers, tarawih prayers and breaking the fast together in mosques or public praying rooms, some mosques and prayer rooms still are holding religious activities as usual without paying attention to health protocols. When the call forbidding Eid prayers at the mosque or in an open field, there were conflicting leaflets from Muhammadiyah Branch leaders, complete with the organization's logo, inviting congregants to attend Eid prayers in an open field.

The fourth group is those who respond positively to the Central Board of Muhammadiyah guidance that proactively and creatively creates a "new culture", combining advances in science and technology with religious activities. This group is creative in creating opportunities. When there are calls for social and physical distancing, religious activities that were used to hold offline are transformed online using various platforms such as *pengajian* online, family takbir video competition, online preacher competitions, and online Friday prayer.

The excitement of the members' response to the COVID-19 emergency prayer guidance from Central Board Muhammadiyah sometimes arises not due to inaccurate information management, not the content. This can be seen in the Qurbani worship guidance during the pandemic from the Central Board Muhammadiyah. On June 21, 2020, Online Media Tempo.co published an article entitled "Muhammadiyah: No Need to Slaughter Sacrificial Animals, Funds for Covid-19" (Tempo.Co, 21 June 2020). The news received immediate responses from sympathizers, activists, cadres and Muhammadiyah leaders, not only at the grassroots but also at the middle level. In several online communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, the news, whose title was quite provocative, especially the phrase "No Need to Slaughter Sacrificial Animals" became the theme of discussion for several days. There are those who discuss it from the perspective of fiqh of worship, not a few who discuss it from socio-economic perspectives.

Among the fiqh of worship perspective that responded to the news was the question: has Majlis Tarjih reviewed it comprehensively? Is the value of the donation service for handling COVID-19 commensurate with slaughtering Qurban animals? From a socio-economic perspective, there are concerns that the guidance to eliminate the slaughter of qurban animals will harm local breeders, as Eid al-Qurban is an annual “big harvest” for cattle and goat breeders. It is feared that the guidance will reduce the turnover of the sale of livestock.

There was also a response that by slaughtering the sacrificial animals was also part of the way Muhammadiyah members and Muslims helped reduce the impact of the pandemic, especially in terms of socio-economic and health. So far, many parties have received blessings from the economic chain of qurbani worship, not only breeders, but also professional beauticians, seasonal sacrificial animal traders, and butchers. The distribution of qurbani meat to people in need is also considered as an effort to increase gizzi and protein intake so that they have strong immune systems.

In one WhatsApp Group whose members consist of several cross-Majlis leaders at the central level, a statement emerged from members of the Community Empowerment Council (Majlis Pemberdayaan Masyarakat) which stated that the news in Tempo about slaughtering Qurban animals on Eid al-Adha during the pandemic was a form of guidance that did not favor to the fate of breeders in difficult times. One of the board members of the Cadre Education Council (Majlis Pendidikan Kader) said that what was made by the Tarjih Council was not empirical.

One of the members of the Tarjih Majlis who was in the WhatsApp group explained that the news at Tempo.co was invalid, because it did not come from the official decision of PP Muhammadiyah. In the news, it was also explained that the source was a “draft” which had not yet become an official decision. Majlis Tarjih and Tajdid have indeed discussed the guidance for Qurbani worship during the pandemic, but the final ruling has not been officially disseminated because it still must be approved at the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership level. But in essence, this member of Majlisis Tarjih explained the guidance for Qurbani worship during the pandemic refers to the guidance on Disaster Fiqh which has become the official decision of PP Muhammadiyah. The main principle is to prioritize the benefit, the good and the convenience in times of abnormal situations caused by a disaster. The COVID-19 outbreak that has hit the world is currently categorized as a non-natural disaster.

## 2. *Challenges of Religious Authority in the VUCA World.*

The various responses of community members to Muhammadiyah religious guidance during the pandemic have raised the question of how much is heard and obeyed of Muhammadiyah's fatwas and religious guidance. If the fatwa and its guidance are no longer being heard by its members, will Muhammadiyah experience degradation in terms of religious authority? Why can religious authority fade in the organizational environment known for being reformist and modern? Is such a condition of disruption triggered by VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity)? What should Muhammadiyah and similar organizations do to maintain their religious "authority" in this VUCA period?

In the past decade, in organizational and leadership studies, especially in the business sector, it is often stated we are currently in the VUCA period, a term that describes a period marked by volatile turmoil, which results in uncertainty, complex and overlapping relationship, causing ambiguity<sup>4</sup>.

One of the triggers for this VUCA situation is disruption of information, the product of technological advances. In religious life, VUCA has ushered in the emergence of a new Muslim community, which is not bound by the affiliations of schools of thought and religious organizations. Their way of observing religion is fluid, hybrid, and eclectic. They will choose which teachings and *fatwas* are more suited to their moods and situations.

Amid the VUCA situation and the strengthening of this hybrid way of observing religion, people respond by choosing which teachings and guidance are deemed suitable to their specific conditions amid the abundant religious information in the digital space. Unfortunately, the abundance of digital religious information has not been accompanied by the strengthening of digital literacy and adequate religious literacy. As a result, people tend to only draw "conclusions" or practical guidance that suits their mood, without looking in more detail at the quality of such conclusions which should come with strong evidence. In other words, residents pay more attention to the aspects of *fiqh* while are less concerned with the *ushul fiqh*.

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<sup>4</sup> "The term [VUCA] was originally coined by the American military to describe the geo-political situation at that time. However, due to the similarity in meaning, the term VUCA is now being adopted by the business world. ... More specifically, volatility means a very fast dynamic change in various aspects such as social, economic and political. Uncertainty means that it is difficult to predict issues and events that are currently happening. Complexity is the disruption and chaos that surrounds every organization. Ambiguity is defined as the heavy burden of reality and meaning that mingles from various existing conditions or a state of suspension and the clarity is questionable. " <http://binakarir.com/volatility-uncertainty-complexity-ambiguity-vuca/>. (Accessed on June 28, 2020).

This condition occurs because many members of the organization experience lack of modernism. Indications in this direction can be seen from, for example, the fact that despite the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board's circular calling for its members to pray at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, some disobey and ignore it. The reasons for disobedience to the appeal are varied. There are those who feel their area is safe from the pandemic, there also are those who feel incomplete when praying at home during Ramadan, there still are also those who view the religious arguments used as a reference by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah are less convincing, as well as other reasons that basically show "disobedience" to the organization's leadership.

Reluctance to comply with the Central Leadership's circular in some grassroots circles implies that the religious thoughts of Muhammadiyah members are quite varied. At the grassroots level, there is a trend of religion based on habits that has led to conservatism. This happens because the members of the organization focus on studying primarily studying *Fiqh* while forgetting about *Ushul Fiqih*; Stay too much following *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (collection of Tarjih's decision on religious ritual) and stripping off its *Manhaj Tarjih* (the method and paradigm of Tarjih). As a result, some members forget the *Taisir Fiqh* which provides leniency and ease of worship in abnormal situations. In fact, in religious thought, the *Majlis Tarjih and Tajdid* have provided a methodological tool that combines the *Burhani*, *Bayani*, and *Irfani* approaches so that the religiosity of Muhammadiyah members can always be in accordance with the times.

## CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah's tagline *Islam Berkemajuan* (Islam with Progress) has illustrated how they have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic: combining religious reasoning and scientific reasoning. The religious circulars and guidance issued by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah are always based on religious and health science considerations. The ad hoc institution formed to deal with COVID-19 MCCC, is filled with a team of representatives from various backgrounds such as health experts and paramedics, disaster management activists, fundraising agency representatives, public policy experts, as well as competent religious scholars and experts. This shows that scientific integration and interconnection has been practiced in Muhammadiyah religious praxis. This integration and interconnection of religion, science, and culture in the Muhammadiyah's religious guidance and praxes occurs, not only in the level of semipermeable, but also in intersubjective testability and even creative imagination. This fact confirms that Muhammadiyah is a rational and pro-

science religious movement. This finding also illustrates that the activism of religious organizations, if based on proper religious reasoning and managed “professionally” as indicated by the Muhammadiyah, can become the problem solver.

However, the difference in religious reasoning between those at the level of the central board leadership and the organization’s leaders below it and its members at the grassroots has resulted in various responses to the religious guidance during the pandemic. The emergence of voices and messages on social media that doubt the religious guidance from the central board of the organization can be an indication that the religious authority of this progressive Islamic mass organization has begun to fade. This condition occurs, for one thing, because it is triggered by the VUCA (Volatility Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity - rapid change, uncertainty, complex, ambiguity) situation currently facing society. Confronting this dilemma, all religious organizations, not only Muhammadiyah’s, need to get out of the VUCA trap with the new paradigm of VUCA (Vision, Understanding, Clarity, Adaptability/Agility), which is a clear vision for dealing with rapid changes, a comprehensive understanding of various changing situations, clarity of problems and the challenges faced, as well as the ability to be flexible in responding to various challenges.

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