

COVID-19 PHENOMENON ON PERFORMING JUMU'AH PRAYERS THROUGH BROADCAST AND LIVE STREAMING: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRAK

Jum'at adalah hari paling suci dalam seminggu dimana umat Islam diwajibkan untuk melakukan mandi besar, mengenakan pakaian bersih terbaik mereka, dan berkumpul di masjid untuk melaksanakan ibadah Sholat Jumat. Sayangnya, selama pandemic COVID-19, umat Muslim tidak dapat melakukan sholat Jumat di masjid dan diwacanakan untuk melakukannya secara virtual untuk mentaati rekomendasi pemerintah dan otoritas kesehatan. Untuk meminimalkan penyebaran virus corona (COVID-19) di masa pandemi. Ibadah virtual atau online untuk pelaksanaan shalat Jum'at merupakan salah satu dari beberapa permasalahan baru yang baru-baru ini mengemuka sebagai akibat dari pandemic COVID-19. Oleh karena itu, tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis hukum shalat jum'at yang dikerjakan secara virtual. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif penuh yang akan dianalisis secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa shalat Jumat virtual masih menjadi perdebatan di kalangan cendekiawan Muslim di seluruh dunia termasuk di Indonesia di mana beberapa dari mereka berpendapat bahwa shalat Jumat tidak dapat dilakukan secara virtual, di belakang Imam yang jauh melalui siaran langsung menurut madhhab mana pun dikarenakan jarak antar baris sepanjang bermil-mil, dengan puluhan bangunan dan jalan sebagai pemisah di antara mereka. Namun, sebagian lain berpendapat sebaliknya berdasarkan kepada *maslahat* khususnya di masa-masa pandemi seperti saat ini untuk menghindari umat Muslim dari seringnya absen untuk menghadiri ibadah shalat Jum'at.

Kata kunci: covid-19, shalat jum'at, virtual

ABSTRACT

Jumu'ah is the holiest day of the week when Muslims are required to take a bath, dress in their best clean clothes, and assemble in the mosque for Friday Prayer. Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Muslims are likely unable to conduct Friday prayer in the mosque and are advised to do otherwise virtually following the recommendations of state governments and health authorities, as well as to minimize the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Virtual or online prayer is one of several controversies which have recently been brought to the fore as a result of the recent pandemic, COVID-19. Hence, the primary objective of this research is to analyze the ruling on virtual Friday prayer. The research employed a full

qualitative, which will be analyzed descriptively. The result of the study concludes that virtual Friday prayer is still debatable among Muslim scholars around the world, including in Indonesia, where some of them argue that it is not acceptable to pray Jumu'ah distantly, in a virtual manner, behind a remote Imam by broadcast and live streaming according to any madhhab for the gap between the rows to be miles long, with tens of buildings and roads as dividers between them. Others, on the other hand, argue that in these unprecedented times, maslahat should be used to prevent Muslims from frequently missing Friday prayers.

Keywords: covid-19, friday prayer, virtual

INTRODUCTION

Prayer is among the forms of worship that aims to bring anyone closer to Allah SWT, and it is considered as among the most fundamental acts of worship in Islamic teachings. Prayer also has a special place through its practice, as this is the most vital worship above others (Al-Haqiqi, 2020) as He mentioned.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ
دُعَاءِ

Meaning: "My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and many from my descendants. Our Lord, and accept my supplication." (QS: Ibrahim: 40)

The establishment of Islam in oneself depends on one's salat performance and experience. By establishing a salat, one will always receive His blessing. Salat is also the key to opening heaven's door (Sahil,

2020). Therefore, prayer serves as a line of demarcation between Muslim and non-muslim, as expressed by the Prophet PBUH, who said that the difference between infidels and Muslims is prayer (Suparman, 2015).

On the other hand, the implementation of Friday prayers has indeed been assigned by the provisions of the pillars and criterias which are included in the Shari'ah to be done in congregation in the mosque. Congregational (Friday) prayers in the mosque contain huge rewards for a Muslim, as every step he takes before leaving the house and returning from the mosque will be recorded by the angels (Rohman, 2017). Furthermore, praying in congregation at the mosque indicates that a Muslim has followed one of His commands as explained in the al-Qur'an:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَبُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِبِينَ

Meaning: “And establish prayer and give zakāh and bow with those who bow in worship and obedience.” (QS: al-Baqarah: 43)

However, the globe is presently dealing with the issue of the spread of an extremely deadly disease, COVID-19, which can endanger the health and life of the population (Masrul, 2020). As a result, religious groups were obliged to restrict worship in traditional ways, motivating numerous groups both domestically and internationally to propose conducting Friday prayers via online such as live streaming, radio, and others (Azman, 2021).

The trend of virtual Friday prayers in the context of COVID-19 has occurred in countries other than Finland and the United States where in May 2020, some Indonesian groups used Zoom Virtual Meeting to start practicing Friday prayers virtually during pandemic time, which had been subsequently shared through various social media platforms (Firdaus, 2021). Thus, it is essential to analyze and investigate further this issue based on an Islamic perspective.

METHODS

The authors use a qualitative method which is frequently employed as the basis of research assumptions in the fields of Shari'a, social sciences, and humanities. Qualitative research is aimed at knowledge construction through the discovery and understanding of situations, both textually and contextually. Qualitative research seeks to investigate a social phenomenon arising from the cause of a case, including values and norms of society, and even problems that arise within human life. Using the qualitative method, the authors try to make a constructive, complex, detailed report, analyzing the words from the perspective of several respondents and exploratory studies on natural situations (Rukin, 2019).

In relation to the ongoing research regarding the case of performing Jumu'ah prayer virtually during COVID-19, the writer uses the literature method, and this discussion is expected to become a more constructive discipline study than previous study or research.

DISCUSSION

The Essence of Jumu'ah Prayer

Salat is a form of prayer that is used to draw oneself closer to Allah

SWT in which it is regarded as one of Islam's most significant prayers. Salat has a particular position, because it is the most essential prayer in comparison with other kind of prayers and it is also the key to unlocking the gates of heaven (Sahil, 2020). Etymologically, salat came from Arabic word that means prayer (Al Ramli, 2003), where every word uttered when performing salat is a prayer for virtue and praise (Habibah, 2013), meanwhile salat according to fuqahāis defined as:

أقوال وأفعال مفتوحة بالتكبير مختتمة بالتسليم
يتعبد بها بشرائط مخصوصة

Meaning: "Some words and actions that begin with takbir and end with salam to worship Allah SWT by meeting the predetermined conditions (Al Ramli, 2003)."

With regard to the Friday prayer, the fuqahā declared that performing Friday prayers is *fardhuain* which has been stated by Muslims based on the Quran, sunnah, and Ijmā'in which Imam al-Syafi'i described that Muslims have agreed that performing Friday prayer is obligatory as cited in the al-Qur'an (Idris, 2021).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ
فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Meaning: "O you who have believed, when the adhānis called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah, then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew." (QS: al-Jumu'ah:9)

Hadith said:

عَنْ طَارِقِ بْنِ شِهَابٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ الْجُمُعَةُ حَقٌّ وَاجِبٌ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ فِي
جَمَاعَةٍ إِلَّا أَرْبَعَةً عَبْدٌ مَمْلُوكٌ أَوْ امْرَأَةٌ أَوْ صَبِيٌّ أَوْ
مَرِيضٌ

Meaning: "Narrated Tariq ibn Shihab: The Prophet PBUH said: The Friday prayer in congregation is a necessary duty for every Muslim, with four exceptions; a slave, a woman, a boy, and a sick person (Al-Sijjānī, 1950)."

Friday is a special day where Allah bestows Friday upon the ummah of The Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which was not bestowed upon the ummahs of the previous prophets. Numerous arguments support Friday's priority. There are even some scholars who express it explicitly in works, such as a book *al-Lum'ah Fi Khasha-ish Yaum al-Jumu'ah as-Suyuthi*, written by Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi (Bih,

2021)and regarding the propositions that mention the virtues of Friday, the following are included:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ سَيِّدُ الْأَيَّامِ وَأَعْظَمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْأَضْحَى وَيَوْمِ الْفِطْرِ فِيهِ حَمْسُ خَلَالٍ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ آدَمَ وَأَهْبَطَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ آدَمَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَفِيهِ تَوَفَّى اللَّهُ آدَمَ وَفِيهِ سَاعَةٌ لَا يَسْأَلُ اللَّهُ فِيهَا الْعَبْدُ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ مَا لَمْ يَسْأَلْ حَرَامًا وَفِيهِ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ مَا مِنْ مَلَكٍ مُقَرَّبٍ وَلَا سَمَاءٍ وَلَا أَرْضٍ وَلَا رِيحٍ وَلَا جِبَالٍ وَلَا بَحْرٍ إِلَّا وَهْنٌ يُشْفِقْنَ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ

Meaning: “The Prophet PBUH said: Friday is the master of days, and the greatest of them before Allah. It is greater before Allah than the day of al-Adha and the day of al-Fitr. It has five characteristics: on this day Allah created Adam, on it He sent Adam down to the earth, on it Allah caused Adam to die, on it there is a time when a person does not ask Allah for anything but He gives it to him, so long as he does not ask for anything haraam, and on it the Hour will begin. There is no angel who is close to Allah, no heaven, no earth, no wind, no mountain and no sea that does not fear Friday (Al-Qazwini, 1460H).”

Friday has been designated by Allah SWT as a great day for Muslims, which is why it is referred to in Islam as *Sayyidul Ayyam*. It

means the head of days in a week (Bih, 2021). Muslims are required to proclaim or broadcast the predicate of greatness as one of the media for preaching the greatness of Islam. Muslims are required to pray on Fridays; otherwise, they are considered sinful. Thus, Muslims' enthusiasm for Friday prayers remains high, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, even some Muslims took the initiative to perform Friday prayers virtually or online in order to maintain the importance of Friday prayer, although there is some disagreement among Muslim scholars.

Performing Prayers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the beginning of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) in 2019 until this day, all countries, including Indonesia, have been struggling with a variety of issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to statistical data as of May 25, 2021, 168,032,095 people worldwide have been detected as COVID-19 positive, with 149,371,968 people have been recovered and 3,488,576 deaths whereas in Indonesia, a total of 1,786,187 people have been declared

positive for COVID-9, with 1,642,074 recovered and 49,627 deaths (Worldmeter, 2021). Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a broad range of effects on various spheres of human life, including economic, political, and educational sectors, as well as on the social activities of the community in conducting religious worship, such as prayers for Muslims worldwide.

The government and various religious organizations, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Muhammadiyah, NU, and others, have made various efforts in responding to questions regarding worship activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the implementation of prayer, as a result of the dangers of COVID-19. The government and various religious organizations have one voice in eliminating prayer activities, both *fardhu* and *sunnah*. This is based on the consideration of *maslahah* and *mafsadah* contained in it, as requested by Maqashid al-Syariah.

Islam is known as *al-Wasathiyyah al-Islâmiyyah* in Arabic (the religion of moderation). This means that Islam is a very moderate

religion, not overbearing in all cases, not overbearing in religion, and always providing convenience to its followers. Allah SWT desires ease for mankind and does not desire hardship, as stated in the hadith:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ، وَلَنْ يُشَادَّ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا غَلَبَهُ ،
فَسَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا، وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالْعَدْوَةِ
وَالرَّوْحَةِ وَشَيْءٍ مِنَ الدَّلْجَةِ

The Prophet PBUH said: "The religion (of Islam) is easy, and whoever makes the religion a rigour, it will overpower him. So, follow a middle course (in worship); if you can't do this, do something near to it and give glad tidings and seek help (of Allah) at morn and at dusk and some part of night (Ibn Battâl, 2003)."

The hadith demonstrates that the law revealed by Allah to the people of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH is simple and not difficult. God has taken away their burdens, and He does not force a servant to do anything unless it is in his best interests. Allah SWT says in the Qur'an:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

Meaning: “Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship”. (QS: Al-Baqarah: 185)

Allah has given a lot of *rukhsah* (relief) in the practice of worship, such as the ability to breakfast for the sick or traveller during the month of Ramadan, and the *rukhsah* of praying while sitting if he is unable to stand. The implementation of *rukhsah* can also be applied to address COVID-19 by restricting performing prayers in the mosque during the plague.

According to Maqashid al-Syariah, all activities and worship must be carried out in order to maintain the five dimensions of Maqasid (preserve religion, soul, intellect, descent, and wealth). Apart from the importance of worship, all things that can interfere with the five things must be avoided firstas preferred by one of the Islamic legal maxim principles “*Dar’u al-mafāsīd muqaddamun ‘alā jalbi al-maṣāliḥ*”. It means: rejecting badness (*mafsadat*) is prioritized over pursuing goodness (*maslahat*) (As-Sadlan, 1997).

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِهِ بَأْرَضٍ فَلَا تَقْدَمُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضِ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ

The Prophet PBUH said: "If you hear the news of an outbreak of an epidemic (plague) in a certain place, do not enter that place: and if the epidemic falls in a place while you are present in it, do not leave that place to escape from the epidemic (Khalaf, 1982).”

And hadith,

فَلَيْسَ مِنْ عَبْدٍ يَفْعُ الطَّاعُونَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي بَلَدِهِ صَابِرًا، يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُصِيبَهُ إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ، إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ الشَّهِيدِ

Meaning: "None (among the believers) remains patient in a land in which plague has broken out and considers that nothing will befall him except what Allah has ordained for him, but that Allah will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr (Al-Hamzawi, 2014).”

Hence, during the global pandemic conditions of COVID-19, a Muslim must take care of himself as best he can, as suggested in the hadith above, to combat this virus for people's safety and well-being. One of the solutions used to break COVID-19's spread and transmission chain is to maintain staying at home. As a

result, all forms of worship, including Friday prayers, must be performed at home rather than in crowded places such as mosques and other public places. This provision is expected to be used to break the COVID-19 chain in order to minimize the number of deaths.

The Pros and Cons of Performing Virtual Jum'ah Prayer During Pandemic

Holding Friday sermons and prayers online has become a debatable issue among Muslims, both in Indonesia and in Western countries, primarily where Muslim minority communities may feel isolated as a result of the prolonged lockdowns that have limited public gatherings. On the one hand, some Islamic scholars have primarily relied on the viewpoints of previous scholars about this sensitive issue. According to several of them, an unreasonable space between the lines disrupts congregational prayers (jamā'ah), concluding that there is no Jum'ah when many households pray miles apart (Hegazy, 2020).

Abdurrahman al-Jaziri in his book "al-Fiqh 'Alâal-Madzâhibal-Arba'ah" explained that according to

the four madhhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali) except for the Imam Abu Hanifah's personal view, if a man prays congregationally in a house where the imam is in the mosque but the house is separated from the mosque by a road or something similar, the congregation is invalid because it differs from place to place (Al-Jaziri, 2019). For instance, the hadith, the Prophet PBUH said: straighten your rows and keep close together, for indeed I see you from behind my back (At-Tabrizi, 2012).

According to fuqahâ, there is a condition that must be met when implementing Friday prayers, namely, *al-Ittishol al-Makaani* (continuation of the place). It means that the imam and congregation must be in the same location. This condition will not be met during Friday's virtual prayer practice where the Imam and the congregation are in separate locations. If people perform virtual Friday prayers via radio, TV, Zoom and etc, this requirement could not be fulfilled, and resulting that the prayer is not valid as conveyed by several fatwas (Hegazy, 2020). Sheikh Ibn 'Uthaimin Rahimahullah said:

لا يجوز للإنسان أن يتابع الإمام بواسطة التلفزيون ولا بواسطة الإذاعة؛ وذلك لأن من شرط المتابعة أن يكون الإنسان في المكان الذي فيه الإمام

“It is not permitted for a person to conduct a prayer either through TV or radio due to the fact that one of the requirements for following the imam in prayer is *mutaaba'ah* where that person should be present when the Imam prays.”

Sheikh ‘Abdul Aziz bin Baz said;

أما الصلاة.. مع الإمام الذي يسمعه في الإذاعة أو في التلفاز فلا، أو يراه في التلفاز فلا

“It is not permissible for him to pray with an Imam he hears on the radio or sees on TV.”

Thus, people who are watching and listening to the sermon, in their opinion, cannot offer two units of Friday prayers but should instead observe noon Dhuhr prayers and it is a *rukshah* given by Allah based on the propositions of al-Qur’an and hadith mentioned previously. Yasir Qadhi, the Fiqh Council of North America, a Muslim scholar in the United States, has recommended that: "Even if it is broadcast live, the khutbah (Friday sermon) does not take the place of a Friday sermon for those who listen to it from their

homes. This is because all legal schools agree that an unreasonable gap between the lines breaks a congregational prayer (*jamā'ah*); as a consequence, there is no *jamā'ah* when many households pray thousands of miles apart and they should conduct four rak‘at Dhuhr in lieu of regular Jum‘ah. In this matter, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Muhammadiyah, and NU all agreed with Yasir Qadhi’s viewpoint.

On the other hand, proponents of virtual prayer take a different approach to the issue. Some of them opine that virtual prayer is an urgent alternative solution for preserving the symbolic value of prayer in Muslim life in which it is the ideal way to help preserve the religion and the mosque's status in the hearts of Muslims. For instance, in his defense of the online prayer's legitimacy, Mauritanian scholar Muhammad al-Hassan Ould al-Dadaw al-Shanqt (born 1963) discusses how sound waves work to transmit the Imam's voice to his followers, having studied how microphones or radio transmit sound simultaneously to the followers. That is why his fatwa, as well as the fatwas of other muftis on the legitimacy of

virtual prayer, might have been limited to online broadcasting rather than prayer recordings (Hegazy, 2020).

Others claim that the Friday prayer obligation is divided into two parts: two prayer units and a sermon that precedes them. In most cases, people go to the masjid to offer this prayer. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has limited people's ability to perform prayers, including the jum'ah prayer in the mosque. COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that has caused a very rare emergency, the likes of which the modern world has never seen before where this disease has limited people's ability to perform prayers, including the Jum'ah prayer in the mosque. Until we return to a normal situation, we have the option of praying Friday prayers at home in accordance with an Imam who is physically thousands of miles away during the prayer's duration (Abdullah, 2021).

CONCLUSION

As we have described both opinion regarding the practice of virtual Friday prayer particularly during the emergency situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic where in

practice, we see that, even though Friday prayers are held online, a congregation can watch and hear the imam's voice via live streaming on a cellphone or laptop screen, but the imam and the congregation are separated by the walls of the house or office. Not to mention the congregation will be in a difficult situation if, while praying online on Friday, the cellphone or laptop runs out of battery, the lights go out, or the connection is lost, then, we should not need to force ourselves to do it, including online Friday prayer, but they should replace it with four rak'at Dhuhur in lieu of regular Jum'ah as a *rukhsah*.

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