

***Sunnatullah* as a Basis for Interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith about Covid-19 on Indonesian Social Media**

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Abstract: *Sunnatullah* (Causality Law) as the basis of interpretation is intended to make its concept as a limitation (*taqyîd*) from the generality or absoluteness of the al-Qur'an and Hadith texts. For example, the texts that talk about the implementation of congregational prayers, Friday prayers, other worship suggestions related to the crowd, are restricted by the rules (*sunnatullah*) of social distancing taken from the understanding of other religious texts. The massive number of people who state they should not be afraid of Covid19 and should only fear Allah is evidence of the lack of use of the concept of *sunnatullah* as the basis for interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith. Qualitative research using field-library and ethnographic research methods find that it is necessary to understand religious texts coupled with an understanding of the social sciences and humanities, especially the concept of *sunnatullah*. This research is intended to contribute to proper comprehension in understanding the Qur'an and Hadith so that there will be no contradiction in its interpretation with social, economic, political and health realities.

Keywords: covid19; social-humanities; interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith; pandemic; *sunnatullah*

A. Introduction

The study of the Qur'an that is forced to be related to the Covid19 issue is widely circulating nowadays. As an example, there is a unique interpretation of the word *an-Nâqûr* in QS. Al-Muddatstsir: 8. Some social media users, especially Facebook and YouTube associate the word *nâqûr* with covid19. According to them, the Qur'an has provided an overview of the causes, the place where it occurs, how long it will occur and how to handle this virus.¹

¹ Al-Mokare, *Corona Huwa An-Naqur Madzkur Bi al-Qur'an Wa Hadza Ad-Dalil*, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlksRvCluFs>> [accessed 24 April 2020].

Some argue that the appeal to the people to stay at home due to Covid19 has been hinted at QS. Al-Ahzâb: 33 which state *waqarna fi buyûtikunna* (and stay in your houses). Even though it is clear that the context of this verse is an order for the wives of the Prophet and Muslim women to stay at home, not to leave the house, and not to do things that do not reflect a good woman's attitude.²

Others said that Covid19 is stated in QS. *Al-Muddatstsir*: 27-30 which presents the context of the *saqar* hell. It is the fiery hell, sparing no disbelievers, making the face of the beholder pale and it has nineteen entrances to it. This is how people associate the word "19" with the Covid. There are also several other irrational and asserting verses of the Qur'an associated with this pandemic.³

Ironically, there are many hoaxes based on the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths. It was as if the perpetrators were God's spokesmen. There have been many *dâr al-iftâ'* (fatwa institutions) rejecting such statements. It is because the words and sentences of the Al-Qur'an have particular meanings and contexts that must be understood properly.⁴ However, like a snowball, those statements kept rolling from time to time, from human to human, especially in this digital era, where people get information easier. If this spreads rowdily and without comparative study, the spirit of Islamic moderation will then become a *priority* now.⁵

So, it is necessary to have a clear paradigm in understanding the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths. A favourable attitude will be gained when a person has a good and correct understanding of the Qur'an. Making *sunnatullah* a paradigm of thinking is one of many efforts to make a correct understanding of this matter since it is impossible that social issues cannot be approached by it her social issues.⁶

² Buya Yahya, *Corona Sudah Disebutkan Dalam QS Al Ahzab 33, Benarkah? | Buya Yahya Menjawab*, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_r8Fy_XIL3A> [accessed 24 April 2020].

³ Abduddaim Al-Kahil, *Hal Dzakaro Al-Qur'an Virus Covid19 Fi Qoulihi 'Alaiha Tis'ata Asyar*, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfdn18ayF1o>> [accessed 24 April 2020].

⁴ Ahmad Atabik, 'Teori Makna dalam Struktur Linguistik Arab Perspektif Mufasir Masa Klasik', *Jurnal THEOLOGIA*, 31.1 (2020), 65 (p. 66) <<https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2020.31.1.5631>>.

⁵ Muhammad Ainun Najib and Ahmad Khoiril Fata, 'Islam Wasatiah dan Kontestasi Wacana Moderatisme Islam di Indonesia', *Jurnal THEOLOGIA*, 31.1 (2020), 115 (p. 116) <<https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2020.31.1.5764>>.

⁶ Rasyid Kuhus, *Ilmu As-Sunan al-Ilahiyah Min al-Wa'yi Ila at-Ta'sis al-Ilmi* (Uni Emirat: Markaz Jam'atu al-Majid, 2015), p. 15.

Thousands of *Tablighi Jama'ah* in Malaysia, almost all of whom are exposed to Covid19, gathering for *zikir*, congregating to pray and intending to practice the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith for the prosperity of mosques are real examples of understanding religious texts that are not based on the *sunnatullah*. Religious texts cannot and should not be understood partially only. It means that when religion tells us to fulfil the teachings of *sunnatullah* (social law) related to health during the pandemic using social distancing, then anyone should not confront it with other texts that allow gathering with merits as an excuse.

There are many studies related to the Qur'an and hadith and the treatment for illness/disease. For example, Masyithah's research entitled *Ayat-Ayat al-Qur'an Dalam Sufi Healing Method: An Alternative Medicine for AIDS Patients by Muhammad Zuhri*. However, this research did not discuss the Covid19 that becomes the focus of the discussion of this study. The study only observes how the verses of the Qur'an were used by M Zuhri in his medical practice.⁷

Another study entitled *Epidemic in al-Qur'an (A Study of Tafsir Maudhû'i with Ilmi Style)* was written by Husnul Hakim. This study discusses the contagious plague from the perspective of the verses of the Qur'an. The author stated that the epidemic is not a punishment from Allah to humans but it is a natural law (natural cycle) that Allah has given to humans and it needs to be handled properly and knowledgeably. This previous study is similar to this present study. The different point this previous study had was that this did not see the *sunnatullah* as an analysis towards the Covid19 case.⁸

Furthermore, there is also research entitled *The Concept of Tafakkur in the Qur'an in Respond to the Covid-19* written by Indriya. This previous study observed more at the educational values that need to be instilled in dealing with Covid19 which is taken from the verses of the Qur'an. The researcher stated four important values need to be considered, they are; regional quarantine, being kind, being patient and praying to Allah SWT. The researcher did not discuss *sunnatullah* specifically in the verses of the al-Qur'an about covid19.⁹

⁷ Masyithah Mardhatillah, 'Ayat-Ayat al-Qur'an dalam Sufi Healing Method; Pengobatan Alternatif Penderita AIDS ala Muhammad Zuhri', 16.1 (2015), 15 (pp. 107-8).

⁸ Husnul Hakim, 'EPIDEMI DALAM ALQURAN (SUATU KAJIAN TAFSIR MAUDHU'I DENGAN CORAK ILMU)', 2018, 16 (p. 126).

⁹ Indriya, 'Konsep Tafakur Dalam Alquran Dalam Menyikapi Coronavirus Covid-19', *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-i*, 7.3 (2020), 14 (p. 211).

In addition, the study entitled the Policy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Manage Infectious Disease Outbreaks and Its Implementation in the Context of Coping with the Coronavirus Covid-19 by Mukharom and Havis Aravik. The researchers stated that, at the time of the Prophet, there were policies in dealing with infectious diseases. It was locking some areas that nowadays is better known as lockdown, regional quarantine and social distancing.¹⁰ There is also a similar study with the title Corona Virus Disease (Covid 19) Outbreak in Islamic View.¹¹ This previous article does not mention anything about the *sunnatullah* study.

A study entitled Did the Quran Mention COVID-19 Pandemic? The Medical and Sanitary Prophylaxis of this Disease, written by Khenenou et al, observed more closely at the verses of the Qur'an which promise to provide solutions to any problems in this world. They combine medical science that measles and strengthening antibodies are one of the Qur'an efforts to ward off Covid19.¹² This study also did not discuss *sunnatullah* at all.

So, the novelty in this study appears in positioning *sunnatullah* as a religious paradigm, and not only as a theme for discussion of the Qur'an alone. Thus, the research question in this research is formulated as follows: How is *sunnatullah* as a religious paradigm used in understanding the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet PBUH regarding the handling of Covid19 on Indonesian social media? Why is there a need for a *sunnatullah* paradigm for interpreting the Qur'an and hadith in its relevance to the handling of covid19?

This study surely contributes to providing scientific knowledge and enhances correct understanding in social interaction and interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths. This was done to support the joint movement against Covid19, so that there is no impression that religious actors become opponents on the grounds of religious texts when they do not thoroughly understand the Qur'an and hadiths.

¹⁰ Mukharom dan Havis Aravik, 'Kebijakan Nabi Muhamad Saw Menangani Wabah Penyakit Menular Dan Implementasinya Dalam Konteks Menanggulangi Coronavirus Covid-19', *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-i*, 7.3 (2020), 16 (pp. 230–39).

¹¹ Eman Supriatna, 'WABAH CORONA VIRUS DISEASE (COVID 19) DALAM PANDANGAN ISLAM', *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-i*, 7.6 (2020), p. 2.

¹² T Khenenou, S Laabed, and O Laabed, 'Did the Quran Mention COVID-19 Pandemic? Medical and Sanitary Prophylaxis of This Disease', 3 (p. 376).

B. Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative and library-field methods. This is because the study is not only about the theory in the book, but also observes the field data which focuses more on social media, especially YouTube, which contains a lot of fatwa content and statements related to the Qur'an and Covid19. Descriptive analysis was used as a research method to see what the Qur'an and the hadiths about the plague are, how the responses of Indonesian ulama publicized on YouTube is seeing the current social developments and their relation to *sunnatullah*.

The analysis also appears in this study's point of view in observing the arguments for the importance of interpreting the Al-Qur'an and Hadith based on this *sunnatullah*. The content of the analysis used is discourse analysis. The researcher described the importance of *sunnatullah* as a basis for interpretation. This study is more towards ethnography, especially the study of human culture, social and spiritual responses. This science aims to describe the state of society.¹³ In this case, the researcher wanted to see how the social responsibility of the Indonesian ulama on social media in interpreting the Qur'an and hadith about the Covid19 outbreak.

C. Discussion and Results

Sunnatullah as a paradigm means that the readers of al-Qur'an and hadith should not read the text as it is outwardly. They must otherwise also look at the context by paying attention to what Allah The Almighty created and ordered the Prophet to spread to mankind. Therefore, it does not only talk about any themes of social law that Allah the Almighty has given to His creatures. However it is more than that, *sunnatullah* is a tool for understanding other texts related to it.¹⁴

Sunnatullah has formed its knowledge and studies as Rasyid Rida stated that it can be called *al-Ilmu al-ijtimâ'i* (social science) or *sunnah ilâhiyyah ijtimâ'iyah* (God's rules about social). This terminology has a structured and independent scientific basis, starting from its epistemology, ontology and axiology. Among the

¹³ Bayu Indra Pratama, *Etnografi Dunia Maya Internet* (Surabaya: Universitas Brawijaya Press, 2017), p. 11.

¹⁴ Rasyid Kuhus Rasyid Kuhus, 'As-Sunan al-Ilahiyah Ilmun Min Ulum al-Islam', *Ad-Da'i*, 44.3 (2019), p. 13.

ulama who were concerned about studying this was Shaykh Rasyid Kuhûs. He stated that the history of *sunnatullah* was started from the prophetic period which was continued by his friends, *tabi'in* (the Prophet's followers) and some *ulama* afterwards.¹⁵

Sunnatullah's performance in understanding the text is by *takhsis* (giving special meaning) for general pronunciation, *taqyîd* (restriction) for absolute words or even *nasakh* (cancelling) certain texts that are considered contrary to the spirit of *sunnatullah* itself. Thus, the position of *sunnatullah* in understanding the text is almost in line with *maslahat mursalah* (goodness which has no particular argument). Conversely, it could also be included in the discussion of *maqôsid asy-syar'ah* (sharia principles) which can be related to the *maslahat mursalah*.¹⁶

Sunnatullah needs interpreters, especially *ijtimâ'i* or socio-religious characteristics. Abduh said that one of the requirements for the interpreter to reveal the side of the guidance of the Qur'an is to understand this knowledge. It is because, the Qur'an often alludes to social problems, the lessons of people in the past, the beginning of conflicts and how to handle them and other social issues that cannot be resolved except by understanding Allah's tendency towards His creatures'.¹⁷

There is a difference between *sunnatullah ijtimâ'iyyah* (social law) and *sunnah kauniyyah* (natural law). Both are indeed under God's power, but the first term refers to matters relating to social issues. On the other hand, the second is more related to the laws of physics, gravity, and the solar system with all its dimensions, the law of Archimedes and others.¹⁸ Therefore, the analysis used in this study is *sunnatullah* with the meaning of social law.

Sunnatullah has the principle of *takhfîf* (remembrance), *yusr* (easing), *tadarruj* (gradual), *rof'ul haroj* (eliminating difficulties), repentance, a system of ritual purity, the perfection of pleasure, supporting truth and destroying evil, making scientific arguments, showing stories past and help the oppressed. Those

¹⁵ Rasyid Kuhus Rasyid Kuhus, p. 13.

¹⁶ Rasyid Kuhus, *Ilmu As-Sunan al-Ilahiyah Min al-Wa'yi Ila at-Ta'sis al-Ilmi*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsir Al-Mannar* (Beirut: Dâr Syuruq, 1999), pp. 3–10.

¹⁸ Mukhamad Sa'id Romadhon Al-Bouthi, *Sunnatullah Fi Ibadih* (Bairut: Dar al-kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001), p. 3.

all are concerned with the rules of cause and effect (*sunnatu al-asbâb*), the law of change (*sunnatu at-taghyîr*) and the necessity of differences (*sunnatu al-ikhtilâf*) in their distribution.¹⁹

Sunnatullah as a method and paradigm of thinking is expected to be able to stem the mistakes of the al-Qur'an readers, especially those related to social issues. The end of the study is trying to get out of the pure text loop. So, there is no mere theoretical scientific study, but more than that there must be an application afterwards. The study should not only be embedded in the text but must also be able to see the wisdom behind it, the purpose of its syllabus and the lessons that must be done in understanding it.²⁰

There are numerous verses of the al-Qur'an and the hadith that talk about the handling of the plague. Al-Baqarah [2]: 195 explains the importance of protecting oneself from destruction. Asy-Syûrâ: 30 explains that calamity/misfortune (plague, disease and virus) is due to human actions themselves. The hadith said that the manifestation of *thâ'ûn* (plague) was due to *fâhisyah* (heinous act) that spread.²¹

Some commentators said that the plague (infectious disease) was caused by genies. It is based on Shad: 41. This is in line with the hadith of the Holy Prophet that *thâ'ûn* was due to *wakhzu al-jin* (prickling genie) to humans.²² It means that the disturbance committed was done by the genie to mankind. So, it is not purely because of human error.

Al-Baqarah: 243 mentions the story of the Israeli Family (Bani Israel) who ran away from an area because they were afraid of dying. Al-Qurthubi tells that they fled from the *thâ'ûn*. The hadiths also state that wherever an area is affected by a plague, the people of that area is forbidden to go out. It is because people who die there are called *shahîd* and they will get a reward for it.²³ The Qur'an verses and hadiths also indicate the prohibition to leave the epidemic area. When we

¹⁹ Rasyid Kuhus, *Ilmu As-Sunan al-Ilahiyah Min al-Wa'yi Ila at-Ta'asis al-Ilmi*, pp. 20–50.

²⁰ Rasyid Kuhus Rasyid Kuhus, p. 16.

²¹ Muhammad bin Yazid al-Quzwaini Ibnu Majah, *Sunan Ibnu Majah* (Mesir: Dar ar-Risalah al-Alamiyyah, 2009), p. 1332.

²² Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad Ahmad* (Bairut: Darul Kutub, 2010), p. 595.

²³ Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jâmi' Li Ahkâmi al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1964), p. 39.

refer to contemporary terminology, it will be called isolation, quarantine and lockdown.

Asy-Syûrâ: 30 explains that calamity/misfortune (infectious disease) is due to human actions themselves (by design and by accident). This is also confirmed by Ar-Rûm: 41 which states that the damage to the earth and the oceans is due to human behaviour. The *ulama* state that the term calamity here means *balâ'* (big test) which kills lives and consumes property.²⁴

Al-Baqarah: 155-157 gives the understanding that Allah will test mankind with fear, hunger, and loss of wealth, fruit and death. These are all tests so that mankind will get closer to Him.²⁵ Al-An'am: 43 also mentions the importance of *tadharru'* (returning to humility) to Allah, the Almighty, when there is *al-ba'su* (troublesome matter). One of which is the existence of this plague.

Researchers got data about Prof. Quraish Syihâb regarding covid19 which led to the emergence of many *ulama fatwas* regarding the prohibition of *shalat jama'ah* (congregational prayer) and Friday prayers. He stated that it is not only about protecting human souls and lives, but also for the sake of maintaining common health.²⁶ So, among the *uzurs* (conditions recognized by Islam as an exemption from religious obligations), that prevents *jama'ah* and Friday prayer is maintaining health. Yet we should not fear losing human life.

On another occasion, Prof. Quraish also mentioned that Covid19 was a disease that comes from an act of satan (Shâd: 41). So, covid19 is not God's army (sent by Allah) (Quraish Shihab, 2020). He also explained the importance of correct understanding in religion, such as what covid19 is, how to do social distancing, what the advice given by religion is, *uzur* in congregational and Friday prayers because of the plague, the human side that needs to be highlighted so that there is no events of the expulsion of corpses (happened in many places in Indonesia when the people in a place refuses a corpse of a person who died from covid19) and other correct understandings.²⁷

²⁴ Ali bin Muhamad al-Bagdadi Al-Mawardi, *An-Nukat Wa al-Uyun* (Bairut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2011), p. 204.

²⁵ Fakhr al-Din Ar-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghaib* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2015), p. 128.

²⁶ Quraish Shihab, 'Wabah Corona, Wajibkah Jumatan Dan Salat Di Masjid? | Shihab & Shihab - YouTube', 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMzf05f-9Cl>> [accessed 26 April 2020].

²⁷ Quraish Shihab, 'Setop Stigma Corona: Pandemi COVID-19, Quraish Shihab: Tonjolkan Kemanusiaan (Part 7) | Mata Najwa - YouTube', 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P90SiulRwYQ&t=372s>> [accessed 26 April 2020].

Uzma (Ustadz Zulkifli Muhamad Ali) commented on a phenomenon when there were more than a thousand *Jama'ah Tabligh* exposed to Covid19 when they held *dhikr* together. He assumed that this happened because they did not understand *sunnatullah* about the plague. He argued that breaking the *sunnatullah* is immoral since it causes the loss of Allah's help. He quoted Âli Imrân: 31 which ordered people to follow Rasulullah PBUH who advised to escape from infectious diseases.²⁸

Prof. Quraish mentioned the importance of knowing the social laws (*sunnatullâh*) so that we do not fall into a fatalistic concept. For example, there is a concept that Allah will not change a people's fate unless they change their mentality, attitudes and efforts. By knowing *sunnatullâh*, mankind will strive for a reason of acquiring things.²⁹

The researchers want to see how some Indonesian *ulama* provide statements about the interpretation of the Qur'an and the hadith based on *sunnatullah* in their relevance to Covid19. The *ulama* have different points of view and thinking. Some are strict in responding to religious texts about dealing with the plague, and there are some who are flexible and moderate. The *ulama* whom the researchers observed from the YouTube social media were Prof. Quraish Shihab is an expert on Indonesian interpretation, Ustadz Zulkifli Mukhamad as an expert on the end-time and MUI as a representative of Indonesian *ulama*.

Firstly, Prof. Quraish Shihab states that covid19 is not a punishment from God, but a warning that brings grace. This virus reminds anyone not to be arrogant before God. His grace will lead mankind to be more self-reflective so that they will do their best, such as being tested by following religious rules and guidelines. Religion demands humankind to maintain its soul and health.³⁰

The meaning of *sunnatullah* used by Prof. Quraish is not textual. He uses symbolic language about the demands of religion, telling people to maintain their

²⁸ Uzma, '1500 Jamaah Tabligh Tertular Virus Padahal Ahli Dzikir? Menentang Rasulullah? QnA UZMA Ust. Zulkifli - YouTube', 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qL5yQZu7SYY&t=467s>> [accessed 23 April 2020].

²⁹ Qurais Shihab, 'Cahaya Hati Metrotv, 16 Juni 2017 - YouTube', 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky-kNxTB_LQ> [accessed 26 April 2020].

³⁰ Indosiar, 'Quraish Shihab: Virus Corona Melanda Dunia, Jangan Anggap Sebagai Siksa Ilahi, Tetapi.... - YouTube', 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ri8U9obwFlw>> [accessed 23 April 2020].

health and soul. These can be interpreted as guidance to pay attention to *sunnatullah* in facing global pandemic. It is because one of the principles of *sunnatullah* mentioned that someone should not be burdensome to themselves or even others.³¹

Prof. Quraish also explained that Covid19 was not an *azab* (punishment), because *azab* is painful and it would not befall faithful people. Therefore God can't punish faithful people who seek God's forgiveness (*istigfâr*), as stated in Al-Anfal: 33. However, covid19 is a calamity. This statement is based on An-Nisâ': 79 that explains what comes to people of good is from Allah but what comes to people of evil is from their conduct. Calamity is a test. A test that does not only apply to unbelievers but also the test also befalls the believers, as stated in Al-Anfal: 25. He also cited several hadiths which state that the prophets, messengers and lovers of Allah can also be tested.³²

Based on the previous explanation, Prof. Quraish applied the logic of *sunnatullah* in interpreting the verses of the al-Qur'an. Precisely, it is *sunnatu al-asbâb* (law of cause and effect) and *sunnatu al-balâ'* (the inevitability of God's test). Regarding causality, Prof. Quraish explained that the cause of Covid19 was human acts. Covid19 is also caused by human development and awareness to care for others, to share, and to provide advice and humanitarian assistance.³³

Regarding *sunnatu al-asbâb*, the *ulama* explained that Allah the Almighty presented us with a well-controlled and structured expanse of the universe, and all of it was created by God within six days, as it is stated in Al-A'râf: 54, Yûnus: 3, Hûd: 7, al-Furqân: 59, As-Sajdah: 4, Qâf: 38 and Al-Hadîd: 4. All of them was made to teach mankind about the importance of the process and carrying out the system of cause and effect. Allah the Almighty also ordered to carry out the system in Al-Kahfi: 84-92 (Ash-Shawi, 2013, p. 1331).

At-Taubah: 105 commands people do *amal* (make efforts) and Allah Almighty, the prophets and the believers will later judge the work. Al-Mulk: 15

³¹ Rasyid Kuhus Rasyid Kuhus, p. 15.

³² Indosiar, 'CORONA MUSIBAH ATAU AZAB?!! Begini Penjelasan Dari Ustadz M. Quraish Shihab - LIDA 2020 DIRUMAH SAJA', *Vidio*, 2020 <<https://www.vidio.com/watch/1931143-corona-musibah-atau-azab-begini-penjelasan-dari-ustadz-m-quraish-shihab-lida-2020-dirumah-saja>> [accessed 23 April 2020].

³³ Indosiar, 'Quraish Shihab: Virus Corona Melanda Dunia, Jangan Anggap Sebagai Siksa Ilahi, Tetapi.... - YouTube'.

orders people to go along the earth to gain their prosperity. Maryam: 25 explains God's command to Maryam to shake the palm tree to bring down the fruit. The Holy Prophet also gave an example of this *sunnatu al-asbâb*. The Uhud war is clear evidence. The Prophet arranged a strategy, divided the troop and conditioned the heroes when he faced the Uhud war.³⁴

In the context of Covid19, the effort of handling and reducing the severity of the transmission, *sunnatu al-asbâb* is very important and needs to be promoted. Prof. Quraish stated many ulama appealed to the people to carry out social distancing in their interactions. The majority of the *ulama* also agreed to assume covid19 as *uzur* that allowed them not to perform Friday prayers and congregational prayers in several mosques³⁵, as is recommended by the MUI.³⁶

This *sunnatu al-asbâb* paradigm is very important in the midst of this obscure COVID19 pandemic. Such understanding will reject the fatalistic understandings and attitudes, such as the *Jabbariyyah mazhab* which states that everything is from Allah the Almighty and humans do not need to bother with any means and reasons.³⁷ If this speculation is allowed to continue, it could raise a riot and a big problem that could threaten fellow citizens. It is because they don't want to consider the system of cause-effect and carry out *ikhthiyar* (endeavour). Therefore, infection is prone to happen. It is very important to have an awareness of balance living to maintain health and a good lifestyle.³⁸

When further analyzed, the researchers also found that *sunnatu al-ibtîlâ'* (the inevitability of the test) is included in this *sunnatu al-asbâb*. It is because, within a test for believers, there is also cause-and-effect, as was explained by Prof. Quraish.³⁹ Allah the Almighty had explained a lot about *sunnatu al-ibtîlâ'*, such as

³⁴ Rasyid Kuhus, *As-Sunan al-Ilahiyah Fi as-Sirah an-Nabawiyah* (Bairut: Darul Kutub, 2017), p. 51.

³⁵ Kabar Akhir Zaman, 'Sholat Dirumah Ketika Wabah' Begini Pendapat Para Ulama - YouTube', 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSlJMicpg1o>> [accessed 23 April 2020].

³⁶ Muhamad Agus Mushodiq and Ali Imron, 'Peran Majelis Ulama Indonesia Dalam Mitigasi Pandemi Covid-19 (Tinjauan Tindakan Sosial Dan Dominasi Kekuasaan Max Weber)', *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-i*, 7.5 (2020), 403 (p. 2).

³⁷ Nur Hidayah, 'Dari Jabariyah, Ke Qadariyah, Hingga Islam Progresif: Respons Muslim Atas Wabah Corona Di Indonesia', *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-i*, 7.6 (2020), p. 3.

³⁸ Jane M Lim and others, 'Population Anxiety and Positive Behaviour Change during the COVID-19 Epidemic: Cross-Sectional Surveys in Singapore, China and Italy', *MedRxiv*, 2020, p. 3.

³⁹ Indosiar, 'CORONA MUSIBAH ATAU AZAB?'

in Al-Baqarah: 155, Muhamad: 31, Al-Baqarah: 214 and QS. Al-'Ankabût: 2-3. Even the Holy Prophet explained that the prophets and messengers were the ones who experienced tougher tests among the believers.⁴⁰

In facing *sunnatu al-ibtîlâ'*, Allah the Almighty explains the rules in the Al-An'am: 34 and QS. Âli 'Imrân: 200 in which He told mankind to be patient when experiencing the test. Being patient means always doing good deeds ⁴¹ and surviving based on knowledge and other positive actions.⁴² In its relevance to Covid19, being patient means staying at home, working from home, social distancing, always washing hands, maintaining cleanliness, increasing self-immunity and being willing to share with others.

Another rule in *sunnatu al-ibtîlâ'* is praying. Allah the Almighty mentioned it in An-Naml: 62, Ghâfir: 60 and QS. Al-Baqarah: 186. Prayer can be interpreted as high hopes for the grace of Allah the Almighty. This means that the only reason for someone praying is bearing hope that God will grant it.⁴³ This positive and hopeful attitude needs to be done a lot in the midst of a global pandemic. It is the hope that Covid19 will quickly vanish. That kind of attitude can increase the body's immunity so that someone doesn't get sick easily.

Secondly, Ustadz Zulkifli argued that the reason why thousands of *Jama'ah Tabligh* was exposed to Covid19 even though they were doing *dhikr* together was that they did not obey Allah's rule called *sunnatullah*. They did not carry out social distancing in the midst of this global pandemic. It is also the same as doing immoral conduct towards the Prophet as well. It is because the Prophet ordered people to avoid being with other people who are exposed to infectious diseases.⁴⁴

The term immoral used by Ustadz Zulkifli copied the word stated in the Âli 'Imrân: 152 which mentions that some of the companions carried out immoral conducts to the Prophet who had told them to stay on the slopes of Mount Uhud and not to go down even though there was booty. However, they did not follow these orders. Their conduct was called immorality. Therefore, the meaning of

⁴⁰ Ahmad bin Hambal, p. 78.

⁴¹ Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauzi, *Ar-Ruh* (Bairut: Darul Kutub Ilmiyyah, 2011), p. 241.

⁴² Raghîb Al-Isfahani, *Mu'jam al-Mufradat Fi Gharibil Qur'an* (Mesir: Mushtafa al-bab al Halabi wa Auladuhu, 1961), p. 474.

⁴³ Thawil Az-Zabidi, *Sunnatullah Fi Al-Fitnati Wa al-Ibtîlâ'i Wa Atsaruhu al-'Aqdi* (Bairut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2018), p. 98.

⁴⁴ Uzma.

immoral conduct is the act of refusing to stay on the slope.⁴⁵ The relevance of the previous verse is that if people do not follow the system of causality in winning the war, their conduct are called immoral. Then people who are reluctant to follow the causality of the Covid19 outbreak can also be called immoral too.

Third, MUI (Indonesian *Ulama* Council) stated that this pandemic is a test that could bring a blessing, such as increasing the quality of the family and the opportunity to care for others. Worship in the midst of this pandemic has also changed the rule of *fiqh* that *taghayyarot al-ahhkâm bi taghayyur al-azminati wa al-amkinati* (laws can change conditionally) therefore there are changes in worship as well.⁴⁶

The change meant by MUI is that the activities during Ramadan this year are different. *Jama'ah*, *tarawih* prayer, *i'tikaf*, *majlis ta'lim* and other similar acts of worship must be changed. They were previously done in the mosque are now done at home. Staying at home with your family is also known as worship. They cite a hadith that states that *sunnah* prayer is better at home.⁴⁷

imâthotu al-adzâ (eliminating road disturbances) is considered as alms that the prophet calls a branch of faith⁴⁸, they also call staying at home as an effort to reduce the spread of this global pandemic. Then, they also said that *zakat mâl* (property) may be accelerated even though it has not reached one year.⁴⁹ It is also highly recommended to help those who have difficulty getting livelihood in the midst of the global epidemic.

Researchers see that MUI emphasizes *sunnatu at-taghyîr* (the inevitability of change), that everything in this universe must change. Regarding this rule, Allah the Almighty had stated in Al-Anfâl: 53 dan Ar-Ra'd: 11. The verse explains that the change in the blessing that experienced by humans is due to their own conduct. It means that this verse is indirectly telling them to try their utmost to persistently and effortfully get out of bad calamities. They should not only depend

⁴⁵ Ar-Razi, p. 388.

⁴⁶ KompasTv, [FULL] *Penjelasan MUI Tentang Panduan Ramadan Di Tengah Pandemi Corona*, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzklC_16z8k> [accessed 23 April 2020].

⁴⁷ Muhamad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' as-Sahih al-Musnad al-Muttasil Ila Rasulillah* (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 2011), p. 1128.

⁴⁸ Al-Naysaburi Muslim, *Al-Jami' al-Shahih* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001), p. 63.

⁴⁹ Sulaiman Al-Jamal, *Hasyiyah Ala Fathi Al-Wahhab* (Bairut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2015), pp. 297-98.

on the direct and fatalistic of being *tawakkal* (surrender fully waiting for the result from God) to Allah the Almighty.⁵⁰

The researcher got several scientific arguments about the importance of using *sunnatullah* for interpreting the verses of the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet so that the readers do not fall into the wrong understanding. This further will result in fatal attitudes such as being hostile and resisting the rules established by the government and health institutions. Some of the things that the researchers found were as follows;

First, the understanding of religious texts becomes good and correct by strengthening the *sunnatullah* paradigm. It means that understanding is the core attitude of a Muslim in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic. If someone understands them correctly and well, then he will not cause try to maintain his attitude, especially regarding the rules that have been declared by the government on the recommendation of health institutions and the authorities.

The case of more than a thousand *Tablighi Jama'ahs in Malaysia exposed to Covid19 after conducting mujâhadah and prays* to Allah the Almighty is an example of the absence of proper understanding in interpreting al-Qur'an and hadith texts. The Prophet's advice to ask for help patiently and pray in the congregation (together) is true. However, the context of the al-Qur'an verses and hadiths must be understood properly. The socio-medical law (*sunnatuttib*) mentions the importance of social distancing in the midst of a pandemic outbreak. So, this *sunnatullah* must be heeded and carried out properly.

Ustadz Zulkifli said that people who do not heed government regulations by refusing to maintain social distancing and health protocols are considered immoral. They are similar to people who do not carry out the orders of Allah the Almighty and the orders of the Holy Prophet. To better understand *Uzma's fatwa*, the researchers compared the stories mentioned by several *ulama*.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqallani described that when a plague hit Egypt, several *ulama* gathered to read the *Sahih al-Bukhâri* to be free from the global pandemic. However, what happened after they finished reading and returned to their homes, it was not a way out that they got, but thousands of people died. Then Ibn Hajar

⁵⁰ Yusuf Jabir, *Manhaj Al-Qur'an Fi at-Taghyir al-Fardi* (Amerika Serikat: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2015), pp. 29-30.

commented that it all happened because they did not follow the Prophet's orders, to run away from people affected by *judzâm* (lepra) disease.

The Uhud field case should be a lesson for all people. *Sunnatullah fin nashri* (socio-political law) for the victory of the war was well noticed by the Prophet. Therefore, he advised some of the wing troops on the slopes of Mount Uhud to not go down to the hill. However, they disobeyed the order and went down to scramble for the booty. Then, what happened? They all lost in the field because of this immoral conduct. They did not follow the Prophet's orders.

Sunnatullah-based interpretation will also provide reasoning to think in *tawassuth* (moderation) about religion. A moderate attitude is so important that someone does not get caught up in the pure text or is too rational to leave the text altogether. The solution to this problem is to understand the concept of *sunnatullah*.

Wasathiyah (moderate attitude) can be cultivated with morals, manners, *tazkiyatu an-nufûs* (mental cleansing of oneself) and the most important thing is knowledge. It is because knowledge is the only way to get a good understanding and therefore the truth. It is stated in Al-Hajj: 54. The explanation is people who are given knowledge can eventually understand the truth.

Secondly, the *sunnatullah* paradigm equates religious texts with social, medical, economic and other humanities issues. The impression of being rigid in religion does not exist. This kind of reason is in line with the spirit of seeking convenience in religion. Imam al-Qarrafi argues that when a religious person is only subject to the text alone, he is falling into a real heresy.

Umar bin Khattab displayed this kind of attitude in facing pandemics, such as when he and his entourage from Medina headed for Sham. On the way, he was intercepted by Abu Ubaidah, Mu'adz bin Jabal who had been living in Syam for a long time. They reported that there was *tha'un* striking in that area. Therefore, the Prophet's companions had different arguments towards this matter.

Some friends argued that Umar and his entourage should return to Medina and not continue their trip to Syam which was hit by a pandemic. On the other hand, the other companions of the Prophet argued that they should still go to Syam because all of these destinies had been outlined by Allah the Almighty. Therefore they should not worry and be afraid of everything that will happen.

Umar bin Khattab chose to discontinue his journey to Syam and preferred to go back to Medina. The interesting thing that happened was when Abu Ubaidah asked him whether Umar ran away from Allah's destiny. Umar bin Khattab replied that it was true that he was running from Allah's destiny. However, he also ran to another destiny that Allah has given for him. So, he did not confront the hadith with the existing social reality at that time.

Third, the *sunnatullah* reasoning will provide an accurate description of the definition in religious texts. It does not tend to be determinant or fatalistic. For example, there is an understanding that Muslims should not be afraid of Covid19. We have to be afraid of Allah the Almighty, instead of being afraid of disease. At first glance, this understanding seems correct. However, if left unchecked, it will become a big snowball rolling social issue afterwards. This issue will be included in the previous third discussion, which is the need for a balance between religious texts and socio-medical issues.

Yet if it is explored deeper, then the correct understanding is not the case. *Takwa* (piety) which is called fear of Allah is not just etymological. It does not mean that we only fear Allah and not considering other things. However, the meaning of *takwa* expands to matters relating to the goodness in the world and the hereafter.

Rasyid Rida mentioned the meaning of *takwa* by defining it as *ittiqôu 'adzâbihi wa' iqôbihi* (avoiding His punishment). Then she explained that there were two kinds of punishments; they are punishment in the world and the hereafter. The way to avoid punishment in the world is to understand *sunnatullah* (social law). Besides, to avoid the other punishment is by believing, doing good deeds and leaving immorality.⁵¹

Based on the previous explanation, the understanding that fearing Covid19 is unnecessary and one should only fear Allah is not entirely correct. Avoiding the causes of the destruction that occurred due to Covid19 using social distancing, hand sanitation and employing lockdowns is also included as being *takwa*. Therefore, there is no more reason for anyone, especially Muslims, to contradict religious texts with social realities.

⁵¹ Ridha, p. 105.

This kind of thinking paradigm was understood by Umar bin Khattab when he offered Abu Ubaidah bin al-Jarrah to get out of Syam and head for Medina. According to him, settling in the area that has been hit by *tha'un* (plague), at that time Syâm, is *rukhsah* (allowed). As leaving it is also *rukhsah*. That is all for the sake of saving oneself.⁵² Although in the end, Abu Ubaidah preferred to remain in Syam and died there because of the plague.⁵³

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that *sunnatullah* as a religious paradigm in interpreting the Qur'an and hadith by Indonesian *ulama*, observed in their explanation, need a perfect understanding of religious texts. They need to pay attention to social law such as the provisions of the test (*sunnatu al-ibtîlâ'*) and the law of causality (*sunnatu al-asbâb*). The importance of the *sunnatullah* paradigm for interpreting al-Qur'an and hadith is to get a correct understanding so that there is no conflict between religious texts and social, political and health issues.

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⁵² Ali Muhammad as-Salabi, *Sirotu Amir Al-Mu'minin Syakhsiyatuh* (Kairo: Muassasah Iqra', 2005), pp. 230–35.

⁵³ Muhammad Syarab Muhammad Syarab, *Abu Ubaidah Amir Bin Al-Jarrah* (Bairut: Darul Qalam, 1997), p. 220.

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