

# IMPACT OF ISLAMIC LAW & PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY COVID19: ANALYTIC STUDY

**Reema Al Qaruty, College of Arts and Humanities, Al Falah University**  
**Lamyia Raslan, College of Law, Al Falah University**

## ABSTRACT

*This study is focusing on highlighting the effective role of Islamic Law in the processes of reinforcing mental health and treating the negative psychological symptoms associated with the crisis of Corona pandemic. Indeed, these symptoms could be more dangerous on people's health than the physical syndromes that a Corona-affected person might suffer from.*

*In addition, the study confirms the fact that Islamic Law has great effect in spreading the spirits of peace, tranquility and optimism among patients and their families, rejecting, meanwhile, and discouraging pessimism, despair and frustration.*

*The study finally concludes that crises such as the Corona pandemic leads to creating various problems, in which people often have feelings of fear, anxiety, tension, sadness and depression. In such situations and cases, these feelings are considered as being normal. Nevertheless, and as God prescribes and determines, these feelings shall be under guidance and control. On the contrary, consequences could be very disastrous.*

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Pandemic, Stress, Quarantine, Social Distance, Psychiatry.

## INTRODUCTION

Praise be to God who created the heavens and the Earth, and made darkness and light, then those who disbelieve in their Lord equalize, a guardian to those who believe and their way out of darkness into light, creation and command are his, capable of everything. Blessings and peace upon Prophet Muhammad, the Chosen One, the leader of humanity who taught us the principles of dealing with pandemics and epidemics that might affect us at any time and place. He said (PBUH):

*“Do not enter a land affected with plague, and if a land is influenced with such epidemic and you are there, do not leave or flee (Al-Bukhari & Ibrahim, 2002)”*

It is evident that those who leave an affected area could possibly carry the virus without having the symptoms of the disease. This could lead to spreading the epidemic in other places. It is amazing to find out that, the World Health Organization (WHO) is confirming what Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has mentioned in his statement, that unaffected people could carry the virus, and specifically here COVID19, from one place to another.

This global visitor, which has come from China, has changed the map of the world leading to unprecedented collapse of the world economy, and closing all types of social and economic facilities, such as airports, shops, markets, schools, etc. horror and panic spread among

people who became helpless under the mercy of God. We still ask God to save us from the disaster that befell humans.

Undoubtedly, the crisis of COVID19 has its negative psychological influences on people's lives. Indeed, any person who discovers that he has got the virus, with the realization of its horrible consequences, will be psychologically affected in one way or another. Families will also panic and worry about the life of the affected member as well as their own lives.

For all the situations and factors stated above, we have decided to write about the issue in question, focusing on:

*“The effect of Islamic Law in the treatment of psychological problems caused by the crisis of Corona Pandemic”.*

It is remarkable to note that we are highly honored by Islam, and being Muslims. It is a great religion that is valid for every time and place as the Islamic Sharia has added many dimensions concerning psychological compatibility, physical security and social adjustment, whether in terms of motives and emotions, or in terms of prevention and treatment, or in terms of stability, cohesion and safety during any epidemic that might attack the nation.

This research aims to explore the mental health as well as the psychological stress, and quality of life for people in general and for Corona patients and their families in particular. Besides, the study also focuses on the role of Islamic Law and its provisions in the establishment of feasible psychological solutions. Finally, we pray to God to support us in achieving the goals we have placed behind writing this research.

### **Importance of the Study**

The research derives its importance from the following aspects:

1. Identifying epidemics and pandemics, and the provisions related to them as well as the role of Islamic Sharia in establishing security, safety and psychological stability for people.
2. Identifying feasibility of Islamic Law for every time and place as well as the establishment of solutions for every new situation or case.
3. Identifying the attempts to lay foundations and general controls for mental health as per the provisions of Islamic Law.

### **Research Questions/Problem**

The research is circling around the following questions:

1. What does ‘pandemic’ mean, and why has COVID19 been classified as a global one?
2. To what extent does COVID19 affect the mental health of patients and their families?
3. What are the solutions that Islamic Law introduces to ensure the stability of people's mental health?

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research aims to find suitable answers to the questions raised above. For the first question, for instance, we will agree on an acceptable definition to the term “*Pandemic*”, and meanwhile find out the reasons that lie behind considering COVID19 as a pandemic. As for the second question, our attempt shall focus on investigating the degree of effect that COVID19

might cause on people's mental health whether affected by the disease or unaffected. Finally, with the third and last question, we shall explore the solutions recommended by Islamic Law as part of the efforts to stabilize people's mental health under abnormal circumstances forced by the spread of COVID19 as a global pandemic.

## **Pandemics in Islam**

Evaluation is an essential part of perceiving anything. Accordingly, we need in this part to first explore the term "*pandemic*" through the identification of a specific definition to the term in question so as to wholly understand its meaning. Secondly, we shall classify pandemics as per causer, whether nature or man.

### **Definition of Pandemic**

Pandemic is:

*"An outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents), and typically affects a significant proportion of the population".*

Influenza pandemics, for example, seem to strike every few decades and kill people by millions. Historically, it is remarkable to refer to two popular flu pandemics. The first pandemic, known as the "*Spanish Flu*", broke out in 1918 killing about 20-50 million people worldwide. The second, known as the "*Hong Kong Flu*", broke out in 1968 and killed 1-4 million people (Al-Nu'aimi, 1968).

A pandemic, therefore, is

1. Unavoidable thing, such as cold, wind and grass (Al-Maliki, 1992; Al-Nafrawi, 1995)
2. Anything that leads to spoiling fruit or plant after being sold (Al-Adawi, 1992).

It is something that cannot be avoided (Al-Thnayyan, 1992). All these definitions refer to pandemic as a crisis that cannot be escaped, and man has nothing to do with it. However, some may object to this hint claiming that COVID19 is a man-made virus. In reply to this claim, we could say that the World Health Organization has already considered COVID19 as a global pandemic and pleaded the whole world for cooperation to mitigate its negative effects.

### **Types of Pandemics**

According to a number of scholars, pandemics are divided into two types: pandemics caused by nature, and pandemics caused by man. We shall investigate the two types in the forthcoming subsections:

#### **Pandemics caused by nature**

These pandemics are caused by Nature, and they include heat, wind, locusts, fire, mold, ice, birds, worms, toxins, snow, drought, and dried-up springs. Epidemics and diseases are not included (Al-Hattab, 1398).

## **Pandemics caused by man**

The question to be raised here is whether pandemics can be caused by man or not. Scholars come up with two different opinions about this issue. A group of those scholars believes that, what is caused by man cannot be considered pandemics, and they support their claim by Hadith attributed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in which he says, “*if God is not the producer, then what an excuse a person may use to take his brother’s money*” (Al-Hajaj, 1954). Other scholars approve the idea that man’s actions could be treated as pandemics, which do not differ from those caused by Nature. Differences are measured as per their effect on people.

In general, we may conclude that a pandemic is any action that people cannot avoid, and it casts its negative shadows over the whole world whether it is caused by Nature or by humans.

As for the subject of this study, the World Health Organization, and as everybody knows, has already classified COVID19 as a global pandemic, which almost attacked the whole world causing deep negative effects on all aspects of life, economic, social, political, educational and others.

Finally, it is remarkable to note that Islamic scholars have investigated all types of pandemics and pests that affect crops, fruit and business transactions. As it is difficult and impractical to cover all the issues related to pandemics that Islamic scholars have dealt with, the second part of this study shall focus only on COVID 19 and its effect on patients and their families.

## **Corona Pandemic and its Effect on Patients and their Families**

The COVID 19 news and its details, such as the number of people infected by the virus, those who died, and those who recovered of the disease, have become an essential part of people’s lives. We are indeed facing a pandemic, which has paralyzed life everywhere in the world. We shall attempt in this section to find suitable answers to the following questions:

1. What is COVID 19?
2. How did COVID 19 spread up?
3. Why has COVID19 been classified as a pandemic?

It is significant to note that Coronavirus is a term, which refers to a family of viruses causing a variety of infections ranging from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), or pneumonia. The symptoms of this virus are similar to those of a severe upper respiratory infection. They include fever, severe sore throat and fatigue as well as dry cough. In many cases, patients may have difficulty in breathing. Moreover, coronavirus might lead to very serious cases among people who suffer from a weak immune system. Kids, pregnant women, and those who have chronic respiratory problems are also subject to similar cases of the diseases<sup>1</sup>.

Experts working on the Animal Health Program, which is under the supervision of Barcelona Institute for Research and Technology, have announced that this virus is less aggressive than the other coronaviruses, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Since the outbreak of COVID 19 in the city of Wu Han in China in December 2019 AD, the number of infected people has been constantly increasing covering almost all the world. Indeed, within a short time, COVID 19 has become a

global pandemic with the number of infections and deaths exceeding millions bringing total paralysis to all aspects of life, economic, social, educational and religious.

### **Wide Spread of Covid19**

The wide spread of COVID19 and becoming a pandemic can be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Late discovery of the virus.
2. Delay in taking the required procedures to prevent the spread of the virus.
3. Acerbity of the virus.
4. Negligence of health sector in many countries in the world.
5. Increase of travelling and socializing among people.
6. Low awareness of the ferocity of the virus.
7. Underestimating the danger and seriousness of the virus.

For all these reasons, COVID19 has been spreading so fast everywhere in the world infecting millions of people and killing more than one million and a half to the moment of writing this research.

### **Repercussions of Covid19 on Patients and their Families**

Due to the outbreak of COVID19, the world's economy was greatly affected, leading to shutting down almost all sectors of commerce and industry. Accordingly, many people lost their jobs and became unemployed. Besides, the prices of oil have sunk to levels not seen since 2002. This dramatic drop in prices of oil caused lots of serious damages to many industries in the world. The whole situation has become so catastrophic: no work for most people, no schooling, and being under the threat of catching the virus, there was nearly no social life. Behaviors and habits of individuals, especially older ones, started to change. People now have what we may call psychological problems because of this virus.

Nevertheless, there is still hope that scientists will manage one day, sooner or later, to find a cure and vaccine to conquer Covid19 and normal life will be back again. A number of outstanding laboratories and medical factories, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, have been experimenting many chemical compounds to find one that could ally with a dead virus and create an effective vaccine. Recent news is somehow encouraging.

Until this vaccine is available, people shall face all types of negative consequences caused by COVID19. Mental health and psychological problems are part of these consequences. It has been noted that patients and even their families and those who are close to them suffer from a number of psychological problems, such as depression, stress, anxiety, tension and fear. These problems, however, shall not be underestimated as they may lead to certain types of addiction that could end with committing suicide.

Finally, we may say that all these cases can be under control and guidance if we satisfactorily accept God's judgment, and what he imposes on us. Hope in a better future, hence, will be renewed, and we may look at our current status in a different way. For example, an optimist view will read the facts as follows: a comparison between infection rate and cure rate will simply tell us that the majority of people recover from the virus and only a very low percentage suffer from the disease.

## **Psychological Health and its Effect on Individuals and Society**

In this part of the research, we shall cover three main issues: definition of psychological health, its importance, and relationship between Islamic Law and Psychiatry.

### **Definition of psychological health**

Al-Qousi (1952) defines psychological health as:

*“The prevailing and constant status of an individual who is psychologically and socially stable and compatible”.*

In addition, a psychologically healthy person shall have the feeling of happiness whether with himself or with other people. Thus, he shall own the ability to achieve self-esteem, and exploit self-skills and competencies to the maximum, and this is what we could consider as a positive characteristic of an individual’s behavior. A psychologically healthy person shall be happy, balanced and good-natured.

In conclusion, psychological health is the cornerstone of an individual’s formation, which reflects his ability to coexist with himself and with others as well as the other features of an effective member of his society.

### **Importance of mental health**

Mental health is very essential to individuals as well as to societies. Simply because it cultivates happiness, stability, and integration among the members of any society. Besides, mental health is highly influential in the selection of balanced treatment methods for solving social problems that might affect the psychological development process of the individual, and consequently the safety of society. Importance of mental health can be summarized as follows:

1. The self-stability of an individual often leads to a life that is free of tension, stress and fear. It also helps him to understand himself in a proper way with the constant feeling of calmness and safety. This will somehow enable him to understand others as well.
2. Stable and normal parents can create suitable environment for raising healthy children mentally and physically. Consequently, such families will certainly have positive influence on their society.
3. People with proper mental health often deal positively with the various problems they might face. They also have the ability to control their emotions as they are exposed to pressures of life, and continuously striving to overcome such pressures or problems,
4. Mental health has great effect on one’s achievement in the fields of education and knowledge. Higher levels of innovation and excellence can be reached, too.
5. Proper mental health could also reduce bad habits as well as cases of perversion.
6. Proper mental health might lead to strengthening the immune system and therefore minimizing the incidence of various diseases.
7. Proper mental health increases and strengthens human’s attachment to his Creator. Such unique and distinguished relation between Man and God will have positive effect on the whole society (Milouhi, 2019)

### **Relationship between Islamic law and psychiatry**

As a matter of fact, there are no signs of contradiction between Islamic Law and psychiatry. On the contrary, Islamic Law encourages for adopting anything that is useful and

beneficial, and if there are some clashes, they indeed refer to people's ignorance and lack of knowledge about the nature of this broad science.

If a psychiatrist, for instance, saves a human soul from suicide, he, indeed, is doing a great job that God shall reward him for it. God may be glorified and exalted, says in his Holy Book, *"The one who saves a soul, as if he has brought life to all people"*. A psychiatrist and a therapist, by doing their job, can be a reason for keeping families from breaking apart.

However, it should be noted that there are legal methods that might assist in the treatment of mental illnesses. Since God Almighty is the Creator of the soul, He, therefore, knows what illnesses or diseases it might have, and how to be cured. He said in his Holy Book:

*"How He does not know and He is the One who created and He is the gentle and the expert"*.

Glory to God who when He created He perfected, and when He illustrated He innovated. He did not cause a disease unless he brought a cure for it.

A person, and as he is afflicted with physical diseases also suffers from psychological illnesses. The Islamic Sharia has identified a number of treatments or medications for organic problems, such as honey, cupping, black seed and ZamZam water. Moreover, it provides effective treatments to many psychological illnesses that might occur to man and affect him negatively. Examples for these mental problems are despair, frustration, depression, panic, fear, stress and anxiety.

In relation to this issue, Qayyim (2009) said:

*"When the heart (of any person) comes into contact with God, the Creator of disease and medicine, and the Manager of Nature, this heart, and not the one that is far from God, will have the cure"*.

He also said that the ruffle and dreariness in the heart can be quietened or removed only by coming closer to our Lord. Sadness or worry can be altered into happiness by knowing Him. The fire of heartbreak can only be extinguished by accepting His order and judgment. And if there is poverty in the heart, it can be changed into richness by His love (Qayyim, 1973).

### **Role of Islamic Law & Jurisprudential Rules in Guiding and Controlling the Mental Health of Individuals and Society**

Among the basics of Islam is to believe in God, Doomsday and Destiny. These essential beliefs offer an individual a feeling of comfort and psychological security, which he needs to face difficulties of life. The Holy Quran and Sunnah provide us with a lot of evidence about this issue. God says in his Holy Book:

*"Those who believe, their hearts are relieved by mentioning God. It is by stating His name hearts are relieved"*.

Faith, hence, has an important and effective role in building up the psychological stability of an individual and helping him acquire the sense of security and safety.

When faith overwhelms the heart and inhabits the soul, the individual then realizes that the reins of all matters are in the hands of God becoming certain that what happened to him is not by mistake and he has to accept the Creator's judgement (Al-Termanini, 1971). We may

determine now that stress, depression and negative thoughts, specifically about COVID19, might lead to psychological illnesses. These illnesses are considered as more dangerous than the disease itself. Scientists have unanimously agreed that stress and depression are main reasons for the constant increase in suicide rates in the world.

Man should be aware that what afflicts people with epidemics and other crises is determined for them as it is written in the Tablet preserved by God. He says:

*“Say nothing will occur to us except what God has decreed for us. He is our Master, and on Him the believers rely.”*

God is the One who reveals all types of distress, damage, sadness, misery and calamity. It is necessary therefore to return to Him, and announce repentance of all the sins that an individual has committed in his life. It is an important step towards purifying the heart, which is the core and motive of all actions.

Who takes these words from me and complies with them, or teaches them to those who will comply with them? I said, *“Oh, Messenger of God, I will do.”* He took my hand, counted five, and said, Fear the incest, and you will be the best worshiper among people. Be satisfied with what God has determined for you, and you will be the richest. Be good to your neighbor and you become a believer. Love for people what you love for yourself, and you will be a Muslim. Do not laugh too much, for too much laughter kills the heart (Al-Termanini, 1971).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says:

*“There is a small organ in the body, if it is worthy, then the whole body become good, but if it is corrupt, then all the body becomes rotten”.*

This small organ is the heart. It shall be noted that the heart is the vault of monotheism and morals and the healer of all deficiencies, and as God Almighty says, *“Oh people, an admonition has come to you from your God: it is a cure from what is in the chests.”* Consequently, all ritual acts of worship, such as prayers, reading the Qur’an, mentioning the name of God, and supplications, are considered as the most beneficial types of treatment for mental illnesses.

Whenever Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was oppressed with grief or sadness, he would indulge himself into prayers. Once he said addressing Bilal, *“Oh Bilal, relieve us with it”*, meaning prayer announcement.

Two essential aspects of faith for any Muslim are satisfaction and patience. They are evidence for good faith as they bring comfort while waiting for relief and atonement of bad deeds and rise in degrees. God Almighty said in his Holy Book, *“Oh, you who believe, be patient and keep praying. God is with those who are patient”*. He also said:

*“Promise the patients who, when they are afflicted by a calamity, said: We belong to God, and to him we shall return, those upon them have prayers and mercy from their God and they are rightly guided”.*

However, satisfaction and patience shall be based on constant belief that can never be weakened or shuttered by doubt. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said on the tongue of his Lord:



*“I am with my worshiper. If he intends good, then it is good, and if one of you attempts, with his belief in me, to remove a mountain, he will remove it” (Al-Bukhari & Ibrahim, 2002).*

A true Muslim shall take patience as a slogan. Narrated by Abi Huraira, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *“Whatever distress, grief and harm that might befall a Muslim, and he never complains but to his God, He, in return, will atone him of his sins”*. In another Hadith narrated by Anas Bin Malik (GPWH), Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

*“A reward is measured by the calamity a Muslim might be exposed to. If God loves people, He supplants them. Contentment is for those who are satisfied, and revolt for those who are angry.” (Al-Termanini, 1971).*

All scholars agree that Islamic law has an essential role in controlling and guiding human's emotions and agitation within the legal determined route, and nobody heard about a dispute on this issue. As for the jurisprudential rules, Islamic Law has called, directed, ordered and acknowledged the necessity of treating and eliminating harm, whether physical or mental, of oneself as well as of others. We shall consider two rules related to the issue in question, and as follows:

### **No Harm to be Started & No Harm to be taken against Harm**

It has been noted that there are two types of harm: a. harm as a start, i.e. when an individual causes harm to someone to achieve a specific purpose; b. harm against harm, which means in this case that an individual causes harm to someone in reply to harm caused by the latter to the former. Both rules are based on a statement to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Al-Nadawi, 1994 & Al-Asbahi, 1994).

This jurisprudential rule is highly required to interpret or solve a number of issues. It can be used for example in sales, into acts of worship, and in the field of judiciary. According to the essence of this rule, if a Muslim has been proved to be infected by the virus, he should stay at home so as not to cause harm to others by conveying the virus to them. In other words, by implementing the home quarantine, harm is removed.

One of the necessities that Islamic Law has come up with is *“soul protection”*. A Muslim shall protect himself through processes of preserving, caring and strengthening faith in God while being infected with the disease. He should also seek for the required treatment. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

*“Medicate you. God Almighty, indeed, has created medicine for every disease except aging” (Amin, 2014).*

### **Harm shall be Eliminated**

Harm includes anything that brings deficiency to others. The provision of harm as per this rule is to be eliminated without causing an equal harm or more. Indeed, harm shall be totally removed and replaced by a benefit. Besides, harm could be replaced by less harm, and this is also required and determined by the Islamic Sharia. Anyhow, the individual who is infected with COVID19 shall comply with the rules determined by Sharia. He should consider the causes,

seeking and adhering to treatment as well as isolating himself from others to protect their lives since his life is not more precious than the lives of others.

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

With the assistance and guidance of the Lord of the Glory and his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we come now to the end of our research with the conclusions and recommendations. We set them as follows:

### Conclusion

We conclude the following:

1. Islamic Law has an essential role in rooting the psychological stability of people; it has represented the dimensions of psychological stability in an integrated and realistic way, which reflects the aspects of wisdom, optimism and hope.
2. Islamic Law has emphasized on psychological harmony of people during crises and epidemics, which is the key to stabilize individuals' emotions and behaviors.
3. It is necessary to refer to the Holy Quran and Sunnah at the times of epidemics and crises to reinforce psychological stability.
4. Achieving and strengthening attachment to God Almighty through the justification of all related reasons so that security and safety shall prevail over individuals and societies.
5. There shall be self-deterrence for every individual according to which he takes precautionary measures to avoid infection or transmission of virus. Home quarantine shall be applied by all those who are infected.

### Recommendation

We may recommend the following:

1. Islamic library is in need for writings on the role and impact of the Islamic Sharia in supporting and stabilizing individuals and societies during the outbreak of pandemics and other crises.
2. Working on attempts to avoid the spread of COVID19, and keeping lower rates of infection.
3. Intensifying medical research in order to find treatment and vaccine for COVID19.

## ENDNOTE

1. <https://www.mohap.gov.ae/ar/AwarenessCenter/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>

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