



The Strategic Role of Dayah Ulama in Handling the Covid-19 Pandemic in Aceh: Collaboration, Public Awareness, and Social Solidarity

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A B S T R A C T

The government is the front guard responsible for breaking the chain of spread of Covid-19. However, multi-stakeholder support and integrated cooperation are needed to break the chain of transmission and spread of Covid-19, including the involvement of ulama figures. Because, in the structure of Acehese society, ulama occupy a highly respected and revered position. Moreover, the Aceh government considers ulama to be the government's communication link to the community. Therefore, this article aims to understand perceptions and identify the involvement of ulama, both directly and indirectly, in handling Covid-19 in Aceh. The method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The database comes from in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentation studies. Meanwhile, technical data analysis uses an inductive approach and is analyzed interactively. The research results show that the role of ulama has become crucial in efforts to handle and manage the impact of Covid-19 in Aceh. Ulama play an important role in raising public awareness during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through collaboration with the government, ulama participate in socializing government policies down to the grassroots level to suppress the spread of Covid-19. It is not just an appeal but is also involved in disciplining the community regarding health protocols, supporting preventive measures, providing psychological and spiritual support, as well as encouraging social solidarity, and even taking part in the Covid-19 vaccination program. Ulama have helped unite communities in facing the Covid-19 crisis in Aceh.

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic, which has caused panic and fear for many people, is one of the global health crises in the last decade (Susilo, et al, 2019). Why not, the World Health Organization (WHO) report shows that there are more than half a billion cases (772,838,745 confirmed cases) and almost seven million deaths (6,988,679 confirmed deaths) due to this disease (WHO, 2023). In Indonesia itself, since the first case of Covid-19 entered Indonesia in March 2020 which infected 2 residents from Depok, Jawa Barat, the number of cases infected with Covid-19 has continued to increase every day until as of June 21 2023, there were 6.8 million confirmed cases with a recovery rate of 6.6 million and a death rate of more than 161 thousand people (kawalcovid19.id, 2023; Kementerian Kesehatan, 2023).

The rapid spread of the disease accompanied by additional cases that are still occurring and the variety of clinical manifestations of Covid-19 has the potential to lead to the collapse of the health system (Vollono, et al, 2020). Even until the end of December 2023, Covid-19 cases were still occurring. Even though global data and in Indonesia as a whole do not show an increase in cases (Sadya, 2023), this does not mean that Covid-19 virulence is occurring. This means that it is necessary to realize that fluctuations in Covid-19 cases will still exist, now or in the future (Aditama, 2023; Rokom, 2023; Ahdiat, 2023).

Reading the phenomenon above, holistic and sustainable treatment is needed, because Covid-19 not only has an impact on the health aspect, but also has a huge impact on health, social life, the economy, education, tourism, sports, religion and even political policy (Azmi, et al, 2021; Chairani, 2020; Yanuarita, et al, 2020; Nasution, et al, 2020; Aji, 2020; Sugihamretha, 2020;

Gunawan, 2020; Gindarsah, 2020; Fa'az, et al, 2021). In fact, the subsequent effects of Covid-19 have the potential to bring major challenges to the world health system and have far-reaching consequences for the global economy (Liu C, et al, 2020), as well as local economies if the spread of the virus is not controlled effectively (Pangaribowo, 2022).

In such conditions, of course the Indonesian government continues to take strategic steps in handling Covid-19. This handling program includes the implementation of health protocols in all aspects of activities, from social restrictions to total lockdown, and finally through vaccine development (Perpres No. 99 of 2020). However, the Government's policies in handling Covid-19 are not without obstacles. Even since the government announced the implementation of a lockdown in several areas, the public has been faced with various dilemmas in implementing this policy. Likewise with the mandatory Covid-19 vaccination policy for the entire community. The policies issued by the government also provoked various responses, both pros and cons (Tinungki, et al, 2022; Fadhillah, 2021; Gafatia and Novri, 2021; Rachman and Setia, 2020). Many people link Covid-19 as a free space for social assistance corruption, as well as a diversion of issues regarding political competition in Indonesia (Gustomy, 2020). Even looking at people's activities on social media, many groups have found calls that reject and are anti-Covid-19 vaccines (Kurniawan, et al, 2021; Hidayati and Nur, 2023). The reasons are varied, ranging from halal issues, the existence of global elite conspiracy theories, to about inserting microchips in the human body (CfDS, 2021; Fa'az, 2021).

These two contradictory pieces of information can shape the character of public awareness regarding the issue of handling Covid-19. Because there are those who obey government

regulations and there are also those who deny government regulations. Therefore, public trust in the Covid-19 problem also polarizes perceptions. So the handling also experienced very serious problems. This phenomenon also occurs in Aceh. The majority of people are reluctant to comply with the Covid-19 health protocol rules that have been established until the Covid-19 vaccine is developed by the government (Pahlewi, 2021; Akhyar, 2021). This situation is very ironic.

Referring to the problems raised, the government is indeed the front guard responsible for breaking the chain of spread of Covid-19. However, multi-stakeholder support and integrated cooperation are needed to break the chain of transmission and spread of Covid-19, including the involvement of ulama figures. Because, in the structure of Acehese society, ulama occupy a highly respected and respected position. The Acehese people's fanaticism towards the ulama is stronger than elements of the government (Nurlaila, 2019). So with all the information conveyed by the ulama, the public is more obedient and respects every decision conveyed. Moreover, the Aceh government considers the ulama to be the government's communication link to the community, because the ulama have a large mass, especially students and congregations, who obey the edicts given. So this will make it easier for the government to handle problems that arise in society related to Covid-19 in Aceh by integrating with ulama.

Regarding the handling of Covid-19, collaboration between the government and ulama in Aceh is an injection of energy that can influence thought patterns among people who believe and do not believe regarding Covid-19, especially regarding vaccines. Therefore, the Government needs to encourage the involvement of ulama figures to play an active role in providing educational messages to the public regarding handling Covid-19, vaccines, implementing health discipline and protocols. The problem analyzed in this research focuses on the views of Dayah ulama towards the Covid-19 pandemic and the agenda for handling it in Aceh. This effort is to understand perceptions as well as identify the involvement of ulama, both directly and indirectly, in handling Covid-19 in Aceh.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. This technique is used to reveal the common meaning that is the essence of a concept. The goal is to dig into the deepest awareness of the individual about the experience in an event that is happening, in this case, is the response of scholars to the outbreak of Covid-19. The phenomenological approach would make it easier for researchers to capture not just something sensibly accepted. But with this approach, researchers can study the structure of our minds against the objects seen. In other words, this approach is closely linked to the study of consciousness by describing or interpreting and then connected to the relevant context. (Frechette, J, et al, 2020; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The research locations were conducted in the province of Aceh with distribution in five districts or cities namely Aceh Big, Banda Aceh, Bireuen, North Aceh, and East Aceh. As for the research objects, they involved the leadership of the dayah, the Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh (HUDA), the alumni of the dayah, religious figures, as well as academics. As for data collection techniques carried out through processes; (1) dissemination of questionnaires (2) Interviews through in-depth interview methods (3) FGD (Denzin, 2009). The informants

were selected through an intensive, purposed sampling technique of 20 people. Although the source is not selected proportionally, this technique is done by selecting the source in such a way that it can represent the characteristics of the object of study as well as facilitate comparative analysis of the trend of view and behavior toward the issues raised.

Technical data analysis is conducted through an inductive approach and analyzed interactively with measures; (1) Finding patterns from the collected data; (2) Formulating the appropriate themes of the data required for categorization; (3) Finding relationships between concepts; (4) Interpreting the data and giving interpretations of meaning as a conclusion of the entire analysis process. As far as this research is concerned, it is carried out in several stages: bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing. (Greening, 2019)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dayah Ulama's Views About Covid-19

Understanding Covid-19 within the framework of the definition of ulama in Aceh is very important to raise collective awareness that handling the pandemic must be carried out jointly, unified and integrated. From the results of interview data with informants, it is clear that Covid-19 is a dangerous and contagious epidemic and is very threatening to human life. According to him, this epidemic

"Covid-19 is a warning from Allah to His servants to understand the power that He has. It was also stated that no disaster would happen if it were not for Allah's permission. So Covid-19 has become a disaster with Allah's permission for his servants to understand and realize that servants are weak creatures and there is no effort against Allah's will. (Results of an interview with Tgk. H. Muhammad Yusuf A. Wahab, 15 October 2021).

In line with Tgk. Ibrahim A. Gani (Waled Ib) in an interview explained that Covid-19 is spreading in society today. To believe in the existence of Covid-19, it is guided by what the experts say. This means that if the majority of health experts say there is a Covid-19 outbreak, then we will definitely believe it, because they have the knowledge and are experts in that field. Waled Ib also said that if there are some opinions from the public that do not believe in the existence of the Covid-19 outbreak, then Waled Ib will still be guided by what health experts say. Waled Ib stated this *"that if the train breaks down, go to the repair shop to repair it, if you are sick, go to the doctor for treatment and to study religious knowledge, go to the Ulama. So the problem with the status of the Covid-19 outbreak is as stated by health experts. Because they know better and are more knowledgeable in that field.*

From several scholars interviewed such as; Dr. Mr. Wildan, MA; Tgk H. Bulqaini, Dr. Mr. Imran Abu Bakar, M. Sy, (Abiya Imran), Abi H. Hidayat Muhibuddin Wali; Overall, it is stated that the existence of Covid-19 is true and we must be serious about handling and being aware of it. Even though it is a disaster permitted by Allah, there is wisdom behind all these disasters. So there is no need to deny this with untrue assumptions. In fact, human efforts as God's creatures to overcome Covid-19 are mandatory. Therefore, the government's direction to maintain health and break the chain of spread of Covid-19 is a part that must be followed, because obeying the leadership is part of obeying Allah and His Messenger.

The ulama also emphasized that they must continue to be committed to protecting themselves from being infected with Covid-19 and also from spreading Covid-19 to others. Therefore,

according to government regulations for maintaining health protocols, the ulama agree and state that it is very appropriate to protect ourselves and also protect others. This means it is better to follow the government regulations that have been set. Because the regulations that have been made by the government are for good intentions and for the benefit of the community so that they do not become infected with Covid-19. Preventing yourself from getting infected is better than treating yourself after being infected.

Furthermore, according to Tgk. H. Faisal Ali (Abu Sibreh) from the interview said that Covid-19 is an epidemic that has become a new disaster in the era of the industrial revolution. Whether we realize it or not, Covid-19 is not only a disease that damages human health, but also damages all aspects of normal life, such as affecting the economy, education and social relations. Therefore, the government's efforts in enforcing regulations in this pandemic era need to be followed equally, so that the government's efforts to quickly eliminate the epidemic will be of benefit to all of society. In the pandemic situation, the ulam also reminded all people to be aware of how important and valuable health is in living a good healthy life. Because following health protocols is an obligation for us to take care of ourselves and others. According to religion, it is mandatory for humans to protect their body and soul from all problems. The ulama also emphasized that in responding to the Covid-19 outbreak, there is no need to accuse Covid-19 of whether it is true or not, or whether it is in the interests of other parties. However, the problem can actually be seen and felt, so many people have died suddenly, both young and old. This shows that it is clear evidence that Covid-19 is hitting the Aceh region. So following health protocols is very important. Apart from that, continue to pray and make dzikir to ask for help from Allah so that Covid-19 will soon disappear from the face of the earth.

Behind the common perception of the dangers and threats of Covid-19, the ulama are also of the view that even though the Covid-19 outbreak has become a disaster throughout the world, including in Aceh, in reality what is happening on the ground, the handling of Covid-19 is like playing games and is not serious. The regulations that have been set by the government to deal with the spread of Covid-19 are very strict and orderly, but what is happening in the field is that there are many mistakes and don't seem serious. In fact, it can be seen that the government itself is not strict in implementing the rules for implementing health protocols. This condition was seen when the PSBB policy was implemented where the prohibition was very loose and not comprehensive. Indeed, when this regulation was implemented, the access gates to Banda Aceh City at the Lambaro roundabout and Lhoknga road were closed and guarded very closely. However, on the other hand, the entrance via the Indrapuri Toll Road to Sultan Iskandar Muda Airport is free of access. This means that people from outside the city are free to enter and exit Banda Aceh City via Darussalam by entering the toll road, and there are absolutely no guards in the area. So according to the informant, this situation is an example of how Covid-19 in Aceh was not handled seriously, even by the government itself.

A slightly different statement was conveyed by Tgk. Zulfadli (Waled Landeng) in an interview said that Covid-19 is a fever and common flu. This looks at the reality of what is happening in Aceh as the impact of Covid-19 is small. So the horror of Covid-19 is not so serious as the various types of media that promote Covid-19 are very problematic in life. However, it is also necessary to see that the existence of Covid-19 exists as

instructed by the government, but its influence on us, the people of Aceh, is still small. Apart from that, it is also necessary to believe that Covid-19 exists with permission from Allah. Because from a religious point of view, it would be impossible for Covid-19 to come suddenly, if not by Allah's permission. Even though it is said that Covid-19 is a virus created for a global conspiracy, the presence of Covid-19 remains with Allah's permission.

Based on all the interview results described, it can be understood that all Acehnese Ulama believe and acknowledge the existence of the Covid-19 outbreak which is currently developing. Scholars agree that Covid-19 is a dangerous disease and can threaten human life, although some say it is a form of common fever. Therefore, maintaining health is an obligation as a result of very precise efforts in understanding a disaster. However, on the other hand, it needs to be understood that Covid-19 exists based on permission from Allah as a test for His servants. So apart from following health protocols, it is also necessary to follow religious protocols to get closer to Allah, and ask Allah for guidance to provide a way out in overcoming the Covid-19 outbreak.

Aceh Government Policy Agenda in Handling Covid-19

Various efforts have been made to government policies in handling Covid-19. Among them is the obligation to maintain health protocols such as wearing masks in public places, not allowing large crowds to occur, even to the point of imposing a curfew in various places in Aceh. As in the joint maklumat issued by the Aceh Regional Leadership Coordination Forum regarding the implementation of a curfew in handling Covid-19 on March 29 2020. This maklumat directs all Acehnese people to have no night activities and all public facilities must be closed starting at 20:30 WIB until 05:30 WIB. Although on the other hand, the implementation of this proclamation has attracted many protests, the Aceh government's efforts remain committed to overcoming the spread of Covid-19 to the people of Aceh.

Apart from that, the vaccination policy is also implemented for all citizens. This is based on Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 99 of 2020 concerning the procurement of vaccines and implementation of vaccinations in the context of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. This regulation explains that all relevant ministries and all regional heads must fully support the national vaccination program, so that people throughout Indonesia can be protected from the Covid-19 disaster. Responding to the order issued by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, the Governor of Aceh Ir. Nova Iriansyah then issued a policy based on the Aceh Governor's Instruction letter No.02/INSTR/2021 regarding imposing sanctions on all elements of public officials who are unwilling to take the Covid-19 vaccine. The Governor of Aceh requires all State Civil Apparatus (ASN), both civil servants (PNS) and contract workers and outsourced workers (TKO) who work for Aceh Government agencies, to take part in the Covid-19 vaccination. These strict rules are contained in the Governor's Instruction regarding the Implementation of Covid-19 Vaccination for all civil servants, contract workers and outsourcers. Therefore, civil servants in the Aceh Government who are not willing to take part in the Covid 19 vaccination will be punished/sanctioned in accordance with Government Regulation Number 53 of 2010 concerning Civil Servant Discipline and Presidential Regulation Number 14 of 2021 concerning Amendments to Presidential Regulation Number 99 of 2020 concerning Procurement and Implementation of

Vaccinations in the Context of Combating the Covid-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, contract workers in the Aceh government who are not willing to take part in the Covid-19 vaccination will be punished in the form of dismissal as contract workers.

Collaboration between the Aceh Government and Dayah Ulama in Handling Covid-19

Based on the situation that occurred, both pros and cons in handling the Covid-19 pandemic, the Aceh government began to build intensive communication with Dayah ulama to be involved in carrying out health education to prevent Covid-19 in Aceh. This effort is very appropriate, bearing in mind that Ulama Dayah is still a role model in society and is also still a source of trust for the community in social issues and the correct practice of religion in Aceh. The Acehnese people still have strong religious values and are still strongly religious, so the Acehnese people's trust in the Dayah Ulama is still very influential. Thus, the Aceh Government continues to strive to collaborate and cooperate with Dayah Ulama to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Aceh, including socializing vaccinations to the community.

This is proven by the Dayah Ulama in Aceh supporting the vaccination movement in the Dayah environment, as an effort or effort to break the chain of transmission of Covid-19 in society and especially in the Dayah environment. From the results of field data, it is known that Tgku Waled Nuruzzahri, or familiarly known as Waled Nu, said that the TNI and Polri had come to him to ask for support for the vaccination program. Likewise with the Aceh Government's plans regarding the student vaccination movement throughout Aceh. On that occasion, Waled Nu welcomed and immediately informed the students about the importance of the Covid-19 vaccine. Even on this occasion, the leader of Dayah Mudi Mesjid Raya Samalanga, Abu MUDI, also conveyed this through his representative, Abah Sayed. He said that his party's support for student vaccination had been realized. He said that as many as 2,409 MUDI Dayah students at the Samalanga Grand Mosque had received the Covid-19 vaccine injection.

Based on research from Litbang Dialeksis.com on Saturday 2 October 2021, there have been many roles played by Dayah ulama in helping the government to improve the Covid-19 vaccine in Acehnese society (Fatur, 2021). Starting from Abu MUDI who had carried out the Covid-19 vaccination, then followed by other charismatic Dayah clerics. Like Waled Nu Samalangan, Abu H. Mustafa Sarong from Aceh Jaya. Even Abu Tu H. Muhammad Amin (Abu blang Blahdeh Bireuen) invited the public to be willing to take the vaccine so they can maintain their health in the face of the Covid-19 disaster.

After carrying out cooperation and mutual assistance between Dayah Ulama and the government in saving society from the Covid-19 disaster, the promotion of vaccines to prevent Covid-19 continues to be socialized by various media, so that it becomes good education for the public. Several forms of socialization carried out based on the results of researchers' observations in the field can be seen from the following pictures.



Figure 1. Abu Tu H. Muhammad Amin (Abu Blang Blahdeh) supports vaccines and socializes the dangers of Covid-19

Figure 1 above explains that charismatic scholars and leaders in Aceh expressed support for the implementation of vaccination as a means to break the chain of spread of Covid-19 in Aceh. It's proved not only to be an excitement and socialization, but also to join in signing up for vaccination. This can be seen in Figure 2, a post by one of the scholars in Aceh that indicates that they have been vaccinated against Covid-19.



Figure 2. One of the Dayah MUDI Mesjid Raya Samalanga alumni carries out vaccine outreach on his Facebook media



Figure 3. Covid-19 vaccine socialization event by the Aceh Regional Secretary to Dayah Leaders in Bireuen Regency on October 5 2021

In addition, figure 3 shows the appreciation of the local government towards the community of Aceh, in particular the scholars and leaders of dayah for being ready to support the implementation of vaccination for the centri and inviting other members of the general public in the Province of Aceh to follow the vaccination program promoted by the government. The

support for the vaccination has also been realized by the Dayah Mudi Mesra Samalanga centers where as many as 3,000 centers have received injections of the Covid-19 vaccine.



Figure 4. MPU Aceh issued a letter of appeal to the public to vaccinate against Covid-19

The Covid-19 vaccination appeal was also made by the Assembly of the Permusyawaratan Ulama (MPU) of Aceh and the scholars who agreed to follow the fatwa of the Indonesian Parliament (MUI) that the Sinovac Life vaccine is illegal and sacred to use. Following the agreement, the MPU and its scholars also expressed their commitment to help socialize the Covid-19 vaccination program to the public as a joint effort to counter the spread of COVID-19 in Aceh.



Figure 5. Abu MUDI with Mr. Muhaimin (Deputy DPR RI) and the research team participating in the mass vaccine event at Dayah MUDI Mesjid Raya Samalanga on 26 October 2021



Figure 6. Abu MUDI with Mr. Muhaimin (Deputy DPR RI) and the research team participating in the mass vaccine event at Dayah MUDI Mesjid Raya Samalanga on 26 October 2021

Some of these images are proof of the seriousness of Ulama Dayah in promoting Covid-19 vaccination to the public. On the other hand, Ulama Dayah is also committed to helping the Aceh Government play an active role in educating and developing the people of Aceh to live healthy lives and be free from Covid-19. It is known that the Chairman of the Aceh Ulama Consultative Council (MPU) Tgk H Faisal Ali also again invited the people of Aceh to proactively participate in the Covid-19 vaccination program. According to him, vaccination is very important to build community immunity or herd immunity, so that the Corona virus can be blocked, especially in Aceh. Likewise, what was stated by Tgk. Zufadli (Waled Landeng) in an interview. He appreciates and fully supports the vaccination program for Dayah residents. However, its implementation must be carried out in a very modest and wise manner, and begin with good and professional education for the students and parents of the students, so that it does not create uncomfortable conditions for the Dayah residents. In the interview, Waled Landeng also said that the government should have invited Dayah Ulama to play a joint role in socializing Covid-19 vaccination from the start. This decreases, the government is a little late in implementing this policy. After there were pros and cons in society and even the majority of people refused to be vaccinated, the government realized that it involved Dayah Ulama to help with the outreach. Apart from that, he also mentioned that in fact we all know that all of these diseases are qadar from Allah SWT, humans only have to make efforts by taking care of themselves, taking care of their family, their environment and society.

The same support was also provided by the Lhokseumawe City Nahdlatul Ulama (PCNU) Branch Manager (Tgk. M. Rizwan H. Ali, MA), he gave his appreciation and support to the government for vaccinating the people of Aceh so that they are protected during the Covid-19 disaster. In fact, according to him, it was very good to launch vaccine vouchers with Umrah prizes by Lhokseumawe Police Chief AKBP Eko Hartanto at the local Police vaccine acceleration outlet, Monday, October 18 2021. This is a new model and innovation for the community. However, apart from the importance of participating in vaccinations, people must also always be disciplined in wearing masks and maintaining distance, frequently washing their hands using soap or hand sanitizer, avoiding crowds, and reducing mobility or travel, except for very urgent needs.

Based on the results of observation data from several informants and the media, it is proven that the influence of the

Dayah Ulama on the people of Aceh is still very strong. Even in the matter of efforts to maintain health from the Covid-19 disaster, the people of Aceh still believe that this policy must look at the decisions made by the Dayah Ulama. Including health efforts, the people of Aceh also follow the decisions made by the Dayah Ulama. The Aceh government has been greatly helped by the efforts made by Abu MUDI, Waled Nurruzahri and other Dayah ulama. After Abu MUDI administered the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine on Monday 6 September 2021 in Bireuen Regency, it has opened the way for the Aceh government to easily vaccinate the public widely. This was seen before the Dayah ulama administered the first dose of vaccine, the statistical data for the number of vaccines was below 10%. Meanwhile, after Abu MUDI, Waled Nu and other Dayah ulama administered the first dose, the statistical data for the Covid-19 vaccine rose to 26% (Results of interviews with the Regent of Bireuen Regency Dr. H. Muzakkar A. Gani, SH, M.Si)

Based on the results of the interview and observation data, it can be understood that the Dayah Ulama is actually very ready to help the Aceh Government to carry out healthy programs to protect the community so that it is not affected by Covid-19 which is currently occurring violently. The involvement of Dayah Ulama in handling Covid-19 in Aceh is very ready even though the government itself is not serious about involving ulama directly in the Team of Forces handling Covid-19. However, Dayah Ulama is very willing to protect the community from the Covid-19 disaster. Acehnese ulama also always carry out and invite all people to face the Covid-19 disaster not only by implementing health protocols, but must be accompanied by religious protocols (Protag), by praying and reciting dhikr and increasing their deeds of worship. This needs to be done in the hope that Allah will grant His servant's request and be saved from the dangers of Covid-19. Because everything comes from Allah with His permission and also returns to Allah for his love for His servants.

The Role of Ulama in Handling COVID-19: Building Trust and Overcoming Uncertainty in Facing the Crisis

Covid-19 has become a global challenge that affects almost every aspect of human life, including social and religious aspects. In dealing with this pandemic, the role of ulama or religious leaders has a significant impact in efforts to handle and manage the social impact of this pandemic. In many countries, ulama have played a role as important messengers, spiritual leaders, and sources of inspiration for millions of people.

From the data and observations obtained, it can be said that the role of ulama in handling Covid-19 in Aceh includes:

1. Dissemination of Accurate Information and Public Education

One of the key roles of ulama in handling Covid-19 is in disseminating accurate information and education to the public. In conditions where false information and rumors can spread quickly, ulama exist as authoritative sources that can be trusted. They use the pulpit, social media and various other platforms to convey important messages regarding health protocols, the importance of vaccination and other preventive measures to their congregation.

2. Support Government Steps in Prevention and Health Protocols

Ulama also actively support preventive measures and health protocols recommended by health authorities. They provide religious fatwas and guidance that reinforce the importance of

maintaining personal and public health. For example, these fatwas may emphasize religious obligations to wash hands, maintain social distancing, and avoid crowds during the pandemic.

3. Provide Psychological and Spiritual Support

Apart from that, ulama also play a role in providing psychological and spiritual support for people who are emotionally affected by this pandemic. Through lectures, sermons and spiritual counseling, they provide calm and hope to the congregation. In such difficult times, the presence of clerics as spiritual leaders can be an incentive for many individuals to remain calm and persevere.

4. Encourage Solidarity and Social Concern

More than just giving messages, clerics also encourage solidarity and social concern among the people. They invite people to help each other, donate aid to those in need, and work together to overcome the social and economic impacts of this pandemic. This not only helps in reducing the overall negative impact of the pandemic, but also strengthens social ties among communities.

5. Conduct an Active Campaign to Encourage Participation in the Vaccination Program

Ulama are also involved in active campaigns to encourage participation in vaccination programs. They invited people to receive the vaccine with confidence and trust, and explained that vaccination is an important step in protecting yourself, your family and your community from Covid-19. Through their support, clerics help increase vaccination rates in society, which in turn contributes to global efforts to end the pandemic.

6. Be a role model by receiving vaccinations

Not only providing verbal support, clerics also become role models by publicly accepting vaccinations. This step not only strengthens public confidence in vaccines, but also shows people that vaccination is an important and safe step to take. In this way, ulama act as leaders who lead by example in efforts to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

In an effort to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic in Aceh, the role of ulama has become crucial in efforts to handle and manage its impact. Based on the analysis results obtained, it can be concluded that the scholars agree that Covid-19 is a virus that can threaten human life. Ulama also believe that protecting oneself from the Covid-19 outbreak is an obligation for every Muslim. Implementing health protocols is very important, but it must still be accompanied by religious protocols to always remember Allah and ask for His protection for all the trials one faces. In the context of handling Covid-19, ulama have also played an important role in raising public awareness during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through collaboration with the government, ulama play a role in socializing government policies down to the grassroots level to suppress the spread of Covid-19. In other words, the ulama have helped the government in disseminating accurate information, providing education, guidance, and increasing public awareness of health protocols and the importance of vaccination. Various efforts have been made, not just appeals, but the ulama are also involved in disciplining the community regarding health protocols,

supporting preventive measures, providing psychological and spiritual support, as well as encouraging social solidarity, providing relevant religious guidance, and even participating in the Covid-19 vaccination program. Ulama have helped unite communities in facing the Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, it is important for all of us to respect their role and work together with them in joint efforts to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

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