



Traditional Muslim Education Regarding Pandemics: Lessons from Islamic Injunctions to Prevent COVID-19

Ali Yassin*



Institute of Teacher Education and Behavioral Sciences, Wollo University, Dessie, Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

The foremost objective of this article was to explore whether traditional Muslim education addresses mechanisms of thwarting any pandemic such as the COVID-19. I used textual analysis of the holy Qur'an and the Prophetic hadiths. The research questions were (1) What do Islamic scriptures instruct about personal and public health? (2) How do Islamic injunctions perceive pandemics? (3) What are the mechanisms to curb contagious diseases from Islamic education perspective? Based on the textual analysis and interpretations, it is concluded that Muslim education strongly emphasizes on the wellbeing of human beings physically, mentally, financially and spiritually. Treatment in Islam is based on a combination of religious, emotional, and material means. For this reason, the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophetic practices stressed on the importance of keeping personal hygiene by washing more than five times per day, keeping physical distance from the sick, practicing quarantine during the pandemic and seeking for medical treatments whenever possible before and during the outbreak of any contagious diseases. Hence, I would like to recommend to health personals and education centres to communicate such and other related valuable mechanisms to save the lives of our people by using religious scholars in any public health projects especially in preventing the community from COVID-19.

Key Terms: *Pandemics, COVID-19, Muslim education, Islam, Prophetic Hadith*

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*Corresponding author: alyassin1999@gmail.com.

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Introduction

Ever since the COVID-19 erupts in Ethiopia, it lasts two years up to now. This pandemic which started in China affected almost the whole world and the whole walks of life. Over 440 million people are infected with the virus while over million 5.9 people are dead worldwide (CNN, Hopkins University, 26th March 2022). Over 468 thousands of people are infected with the virus while 7.5 thousand persons were dead in Ethiopia while this article was written. There are different vaccine types so far for this fatal virus. Schools and universities that were closed have started normal functions. Many towns and cities that were under lockdown have now lifted the lockdown.

At the beginning of the outbreak, there was no immunizing agent for the disease and no immunity from it; there were no recognized treatments for the disease; many people with no warning signs were spreading the virus. Because of these factors, COVID-19 was diffused swiftly and it was difficult to control. But currently that rhetoric is reversed. Economically well-to-do countries have developed their own versions of vaccines despite the inability of the poor even to afford the medicine. Donations of vaccines appear to be showering from the rich.

In this severe time of the corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) plague, it is difficult for Ethiopians in general and Muslims in particular to find reliable and valid sources to guide them in their daily lives. Citizens need vivid, truthful and actionable guidance to help orient their lives in a peaceful and knowledgeable manner. In such a case, Muslims and non-Muslims necessitate honest spiritual and therapeutic guidance in order to enable them take the appropriate safety measures to assist relatives and communities in need, and concurrently raise their hands in supplication to the Divinity asking for tranquillity and guard for humanity.

Followers of Islam are deeply concerned regarding the healthiness, safety, and spiritual well-being of people. All the human races shall unite together and should do something cooperatively to avert this calamity and support one another. This is the time to be unified across the globe irrespective of differences in race, color, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, or otherwise. Consequently, plentiful entities including spiritual, civic, community, medical, and public health organizations have come together to serve the educational, social, spiritual, and physical well-being of the society in the globe at large.

Statement of the Problem

Ever since the renaissance period, traditional costumes and ways of life in general and Islamic cultural and religious education in particular are perceived wrongly by many educated and non-educated people. As a result, many people are ignorant of the relevance of Islamic education in the modern world. Islam is understood by Muslims as a comprehensive way of life (Knowles, 1977). In this regard, it has got myriads of topics that are relevant for contemporary life.

One of the most misunderstood concepts is the issue of diseases and their treatments. Muslims believe that "For every disease, there is a cure". This is one of the Prophetic hadith injunctions. For this reason, a disease with no cure is unknown in the Muslim culture. "[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving," (*Qur'an* Surah al-Mulk)

From Abu Hurairah, the Prophet said: "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment." *Sahih al-Bukhari* (5678)

From Anas bin Malik, the Prophet said: "Indeed, Allah created disease and also its cure. Hence, seek medication." (*Musnad Ahmad*, 12596).

Reviewing both hadiths, it is clear that it means the knowledge regarding diseases is revealed through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet PBUH or it can also be understood with capability. These hadiths also show that seeking medication is only with what is permissible. Thus, it is prohibited for someone to seek medication from what is prohibited as stated by Imam al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (*Fath al-Bari*, 10/135)

Furthermore, there are evidences that prohibit us from medicating with anything that is prohibited or dirty, they are as the following:

From Abu Darda' the Prophet: "Allah has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing unlawful." *Sunan Abu Daud* (3874).

While in another hadith: From Abu Hurairah, the Prophet said: "The Messenger of Allah forbade treating illness with foul things (*Khabith*), meaning poison."

While such Islamic injections are clear, on August 12/2012 E. C, I heard an interview reported on Fana Radio in Ethiopia. One of the interviewees said,

“Any face-cover could not prevent people from contracting the disease. Since it is sent from Allah, no one can block it. I have got a mask in my pocket but I do not use it”. Such disinformation was transmitted to millions of people in the nation. What does Islam teach about pandemic diseases? How shall Muslims prevent themselves from contagious diseases? Such issues are not examined at all in the Ethiopian context.

A lot of people also correlate religion as a mechanism for spiritual treatment only. They think that religion in general and Islam in particular has little or nothing to do with the use of treatments (Ali, 2020). In fact, I know different Sheiks and Imams and other religious individuals serving as local doctors for all kinds of ailments. They treat not only humans but also plants and other animals using different herbs. That may imply some sort of medical instructions in Muslim education (Ali, 2020).

Currently, Covid-19 vaccines are available in most urban areas in Ethiopia. However, many people appear to have negative attitude to the vaccination. The government has declared to conduct the vaccine going home-to-home. Ethiopia has lost millions of lives due to this pandemic. What does Islam teach about epidemics and their control mechanisms? Such and related questions were demystified in this article.

Research Objective

The main objective of this study was to examine the teachings of the scriptures of Islam (The Qur'an and A hadith) in order to disclose how Islamic education can contribute to combat COVID-19 and other related pandemics to the readers.

Research Questions

The research questions were (1) what do Islamic scriptures educate concerning pandemics? (2) how can we prevent from the current corona virus from Islamic perspective?

Research Paradigm

I used the constructivist paradigm considering reality to be multiple and subjective according to the meanings given to different issues by the scriptures and that of mine (Creswell, 2007).

Research Design

Textual analysis was used in this study by discussing the meanings and interpretations of the Qur'an and the ahadith (Hoover, 2013).

Research Methods

To achieve the objective of the study, data were collected from the teachings of the Prophetic Hadiths and the Qur'an through reading and re-reading in the form of text analysis. I used qualitative research method. I also used personal reflections and review of research literatures on the agenda.

Data Analysis

I used three different analytical strategies: structured analysis (developing codes and themes); interpretative analysis (using the voice and meaning of the texts and that of mine given to an issue); and finally reflective analysis (giving my own imagination and insight) (Creswell, 2007).

Limitation of the study

This study is limited to investigating and reviewing works from Islamic education perspective. That means, it does not address the teachings of Christianity or other religious traditions. This is the major limitation but it can open for other researchers in other faith groups to investigate further, if they need to do so.

Data Presentations, Analyses and Discussions

Islam and Pandemics

Islamic injunctions related to pandemics to safeguard people from demise and illness goes back to the very early stages of the emergence of the monotheistic religion.

On several circumstances, the Prophet Muhammed gave advice to his companions to give value to their lives as the utmost importance over death in his abundant sayings (hadiths), perusing people to stay away from places where there were outbreaks.

“Our Prophet speaks about the concept of quarantine fourteen hundred years ago,” says Cafer Karadas, professor of divinity at Uludag University, referring to one of the widely known hadiths (*TRT World*, 2020).

Prophet Mohammed “When you heard about a plague in any land, then do not enter it.” “And if plague outbreaks in your land, then do not leave your land.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari 5728)

This saying precisely refers to the principle of modern quarantine. What it has been currently practiced concerning the corona virus epidemic is the same principle as the advice of the Prophet” Karadas told *TRT World* (2020).

Courage during the Pandemic

A Muslim person who is dying from the plague is considered to be a martyr in Islam because Prophet Mohammed said, “The death from the plague (deadly contagious virus) will be considered as martyrdom for a Muslim” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 2830). This gives the courage for believers in that if they died of the COVID-19 Virus, their reward in heaven is the best of all.

Correcting misconceptions

There are many misconceptions related to the pandemic among the population. The demise of Companions of the Prophet, and not just any Companions, during a pandemic shows that there is no Islamic foundation for asserting that certain people will be secured during an epidemic, including believers or a country where there are Saints. That is a misconception. No one is protected from the endemic except those whom Allah has decided to spare (Sheikh Diop, TV interview).

Another misconception that needs to be corrected is the concept of “No cure or no vaccination”. According to the teachings from the Islamic scriptures, there is a cure for every disease. What is expected from the people is constant search and experiment for the cure. That is all. Hopelessness is also forbidden in Islam. “There is no disease that Allah has created, except that he also has created its treatment” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 5678).

Some people said, “We don’t need to follow the recommendations of health specialists; we just need to place our trust in Allah to protect us from the COVID-19.” However, Islam recommends something else. Abderrahmane Ibn Abi Layla (RA) relates that a man asked the Prophet: “Do I place my trust in Allah and leave my camel outside without attaching him or do I attach my camel outside and place my trust in Allah?” The Prophet told him: “Attach it outside and place your trust in Allah.” Ask for forgiveness and pray to Allah “God, protect me from skin disease, from leprosy, from mental illness and the consequences of other illnesses.”

Attaching your camel in the current context means that we must take every precaution to avoid contracting the COVID-19 disease. In this way, we truly place our trust in Allah (STW). It is only when we have taken all precautions, following the general and specific recommendations cited above, that our prayers have the most chance of being favorably accepted by Allah (Sheikh Diop).

The need to be abided by the scholars during the epidemic

The Qur’an orders Muslims to request specialists: “Ask scholars and specialists if you do not know.” (Chapter: The Bee, V 43 and S The Prophets V 7). The measures that doctors worldwide suggest today are in alignment with directions provided in the Qur’an and Sunnah (Sheikh Diop).

For every group or society, there is a leader. The people shall also accept the leader so long as he is not ordering them to do crimes. Medical specialists shall also be followed and respected in order to combat the disease.

“Islam has priorities [about life], urging Muslims to protect five main things during their lifetimes. They are to protect life, to protect intelligence, to protect faith, to protect [financial] belongings and lastly to protect offspring,” Karadas recounted (TRT 2020). According to Karadas, the teaching of Islam’s “to protect life” principle pretty much refers to protecting personal and public health. “An epidemic obviously threatens both personal and public health. As a result, a Muslim should strictly follow instructions of pandemic experts to protect his/her personal life as well as public health,” Karadas said.

Avoiding physical contacts to prevent the pandemic

The Prophet said: “Avoid contact between people who are contaminated and those who are not contaminated.”

Avoidance of the physical contacts shall be done not only for the sick-people but also for the sick-animals in Islam. Animals also have contagious diseases like human beings. The Prophet Mohammad “The cattle (sheep, cows, camels, etc.) suffering from a disease should not be mixed with healthy cattle” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 5770).

Ensure personal and public cleanliness and hygiene

Islam is a religion that celebrates health: of body, mind and soul. The Prophet taught Muslims to pray to Allah to bless them with health and grace; and also said that whoever is blessed with health and grace possesses the best of this world and the next.

The religion called Islam teaches that our bodies are trusts; it is our duty to help conserve them. The Islamic way of life focuses good sanitation and taking care of our bodies, minds and souls by developing good habits. The Quran tells us that in so far as Allah has forbidden certain things, He has done

so because they are harmful for us and/or our community. Allah sent His messenger to allow things that are pure and wholesome, and ban things that are polluted and distasteful. By staying away from that which is prohibited, we help protect ourselves from diseases and don't get caught up in activities that are damaging to society and the surroundings.

In addition to the above excellent Islamic teachings related to purification, including washing posterior regions after answering the call of nature, regular major and mini ablutions, washing hands, cleansing the mouth, teeth and nostrils, are all part of the Prophetic Sunnah. Holding fast to these teachings can defend us from bacterial contaminations (<http://www.islam.ca>).

The Prophet said: "When you do your ablutions, clean your nostrils with water and when you use the latrine, clean yourself with water...and when you wake up, wash your hands before putting them anywhere, because you don't know where your hand has spent the night." Verses 43 Chapter The Woman and 6 Chapter The Table of the Qu'ran recommend using water for ablution and in the toilet whenever possible.

"Cleanliness is half of Faith," said the Prophet. The Prophet said: "Allah is Clean and loves those who are clean... is Generous and loves those who are generous. Always keep your courtyards and public places clean." The Qu'ran says: "Allah loves those who purify themselves" (Quran: Chapter Repentance, Verse 108).

Medical experts emphasize the critical importance of regularly washing the hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. This will kill the corona virus. They have also shown that the corona virus is found in feces. Thus, it is extremely important to wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds after going to the toilet (Sheik Diop, TV Interview).

Covering your mouth and nose while coughing and sneezing

Covering your mouth whenever coughing or yawning is also recommended in Islam. The Prophet said: "When you cough or yawn, place your hand in front of your face (mouth) and lower your head." His followers reported that: "When the Prophet (PBUH) coughed, he put his hand or his handkerchief over his mouth to reduce the impact." In the current context of corona virus, these guidelines are recommended by doctors who consider them as ways to avoid spreading saliva, considered to be the main vector for contaminating others with the corona virus. This is why they recommend coughing or sneezing into the

crook of the elbow or into a tissue to be thrown into a waste basket immediately after use. Breezing in to the cup while drinking is also forbidden in Islam.

Avoiding shaking hands to prevent the pandemic

Avoid shaking hands when greeting someone during the pandemic is also crucial. Allah says in the Qur'an in V 54 Chapter The Livestock: "When those who believe in Our teachings come to you, tell them: Peace be with you!" The only obligation in greeting in Islam is to say, "Peace be with you." So when health experts judge that hugging or shaking hands can contaminate others, Muslims should refrain from doing so.

"The Prophet gives utmost importance to his own health and public health. When he was in Medina and was about to make an agreement with one of the delegations, he refused to shake hands with one of the people [from the delegation], who had a contagious disease, sending him back [to where he came from]," said Hussein Ari, an expert in the High Council of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (2020).

Be careful in the way that you gather at mealtime and adapt to the corona virus situation by eating separately. Verse 61 Chapter The Light states: "There is no harm in eating either together or eating separately." Avoid gathering together for prayer according to the situation. Health experts recommend avoiding gatherings in places of worship during the pandemic. This recommendation corresponds to the Prophet's advice.

Staying and praying at home during times of insecurity

Islam allows you to pray at home in times of insecurity. Scholars say that in order to avoid Pharaoh's oppression of the Jews, Allah advised the Jews to pray in their homes instead of the synagogue. The Qur'an in V 87 Chapter Jonah: says: "We said to Moses and his brother: Make your home a place of worship and be diligent in prayer. Announce the good news to believers."

In situations where the health or life is threatened, Islam grants several exemptions related to worship. For example, you are allowed to do the following: suspend prayers in times of insecurity or when traveling temporarily suspend fasting during times of illness permanently; end fasting for people with chronic illness not perform the pilgrimage in times of illness or insecurity; shorten prayers and the number of Rakas when ill or in times of insecurity. All of these exemptions are granted in accordance with the

following Qu'ranic principle: "Allah does not want to cause you problems. On the contrary, he wants to purify you and fill you with favors so that you will be grateful." (Qur'an: Verse 6 Chapter The Table).

As mentioned earlier, Islam allows you to pray at home when the weather is terrible: Imam Ibn Hajar says in *Fathul Bâry Commentary* on Bukhari: Bukhari reports that Abdallah Ibn Harith said: "Abdallah Ibn Abas exhorted us one day of great rain and when the muezzin arrived at the phrase, Come to prayer, he ordered him to say: Pray in your homes. Everyone looked at each other in amazement. He said to them: Do you disagree with me? Yet someone better than me (the Prophet) did it."

As the Covid-19 outbreak continues to kill over 5.9 million people across the world, the Prophet Muhammed's advice on how to respond to a pandemic offers a motivation to people to stay in their homes and protect themselves from the deadly virus in the early 7th Century. Staying at home is one mechanism to reduce physical contacts, as well.

Banning Travel during a Pandemic

Through the rule of Caliph Umar, who was one of the four upright caliphs after the Prophet according to Sunni Islam, Muslims tried to practice what the Prophet pushed for them to do in the time of a pandemic. When one of the Muslim armies approached a place in present Syria (the old Levant), where there was a plague, back in the mid 7th Century, the commanders fell into confusion over what to do.

"Caliph Umar urged the army commander to retreat from the expedition in the face of the plague," Ari told *TRT World* (2020). But the order did not appear to be fulfilled enthusiastically.

Then, he himself moved to a place to meet with commanders to discuss on the issue. When the disagreement continued, he consulted with a diverse range of advisers to reach an ultimate decision.

Ultimately, he settled on the decision to stay away from the epidemic. "I am returning in the morning, so you return as well," Umar said, declaring his decision to retreat. Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah, the commander of the army and one of Umar's best friends, who passed away later from the plague, expressed his dislike of Umar's decision, asking: "Are you fleeing from the decree of Allah?" The answer from the Caliph was clear: "Yes, we are fleeing from the decree of Allah to the decree of Allah," Umar famously replied (Hadith).

Despite the steps taken by the Caliph Umar, the epidemic still killed many people. "The plague led to the deaths of nearly 25,000 Muslims at the time," Ari

expounded (TRT World, 2020). In accordance with the Hadith of Abdourahmane Ibn 'Awf, the Prophet said: "When a plague breaks out in the land where you are, do not leave and flee from it. When you hear of an epidemic outbreak in another land, do not go there" (Sheikh Diop TV Interview).

Preservation of life as the first priority of Islam

In different instances, the Prophet Muhammed demonstrated his hate of wishing for death under any circumstances. "None of you should wish for death due to a calamity that has afflicted him," Prophet Muhammed said in one of his famous hadiths, urging Muslims to find lawful and defensive ways to stay alive. Even under the direst developments, he urged his companions to pray for a good fate and wellbeing.

"Yet if he must do something, let him say: O Allah, keep me alive so long as life is good for me, and cause me to die if death is better for me," the Prophet said in the continuation of the same hadith.

Being careful not to being the cause for the death of a person

According to Islam, if a person is mature and sane, he or she is responsible in whatever he/she does. "If someone infects the virus to someone else as a result of our ignorance or deliberate action, he/she violates the infected person's rightful due," Ari viewed (TRT 2020). That is if the infected person dies because of the virus-related disease, it means the person, who infected the other person, also led his/her death in a sense, becoming responsible for the death. Everyone is responsible for whatever action.

Prevention and seeking for medication

The Prophet also stressed prevention and seeking advantageous treatment through medication and religious healing. Here are some tips from the Sunnah to help us face the threat of the novel corona virus and other contagious diseases:

Firstly prevention is better than cure: Islam stresses leading a life of balance and moderation - focusing on daily habits to enhance bodily, psychological and spiritual fitness. Besides the rules of hygiene mentioned earlier, prevention includes clearing out our body, clothes and surroundings off all sources of dirt and contamination. The Prophet always ordered keeping water sources and air free from contamination. Once a delegation that embraced Islam asked him about a summer resort they frequent, saying that they fall ill when they go there. The

Prophet advised them to stay away from that place. While commenting on this story, some scholars stated that he said so because the environment there had been polluted and was not conducive to human health.

Quarantine or isolating those infected with contagious diseases is another important Prophetic Sunnah. The Prophet said, “Those with contagious diseases should be kept away from those who are healthy” (Reported by Abu Dawud and others).

The above rule applies to those who are in affliction from diseases which may spread through corporeal contact, and even those whose indications may be troublesome or disgusting to others. People infected with viruses, or with flu-like symptoms, should stay at home instead of attending congregational prayers or social gatherings.

It is also important to seek beneficial methods of treatment. There is a misunderstanding amongst many Muslims that the Prophet has prescribed spiritual treatment for most diseases - this is false. On the other hand, the Prophet taught us to seek treatment from physicians. Aisha, his beloved wife, tells us that the Prophet would consult physicians who visited him and she would retain the instructions she heard them prescribing (TRT 2020).

Once while visiting Sa’d b. Abi Waqqas who was sick, the Prophet advised his caregivers to go and consult Harith b. Kildah, the famous physician of Arabia. They did so and Sa’d was healed after taking the medicine prescribed by Harith (Reported by Abu Dawud).

The Messenger of Allah said, “When Allah sends down diseases, He also sends down cures for them.” (Reported by Bukhari). He also said, “Seek treatment for Allah has sent down a cure for every illness save one: old age” (Reported by Ibn Abd al-Barr and others).

Seeking treatment from experts is imperative, rather than relying on black magic disguised as spiritual healers.

Finally, there is a need to seek strength in the basic tenet of faith that Allah is the Sovereign Lord, who has created and decrees all things in the universe - not even a single leaf falls without His will (Qur’an Sura Al-Ana’m verse, 59). He has decreed good and bad, and He tests us through His blessings as well as through trials, calamities and tragedies. By believing in the divine decree, we develop peace of mind and equanimity in all states.

The words of the Prophet are the source of strength for Muslims at all times: “A believer is indeed a most wondrous person: When faced with a joyful event he is grateful to Allah and hence it is good for him; if, on the other hand, sorrow befalls him, he is patient,

which again, works out for his good. This is a gift unique to the believer” (Reported by Muslim and others).

Prevention strategies of COVID-19 according to Islamic injunction

1. Cleanliness

One aspect of corona virus that comes obviously to Muslims is personal hygiene. Health organizations and experts encourage personal hygiene to bound transmittable diseases such as corona virus especially washing hands habitually for at least 20 seconds.

Islam has been teaching personal hygiene for centuries. The Qur’an instructs Muslims to keep their clothes and bodies clean: “God loves those who are clean” (Qur’an 2:222).

More than fourteen centuries ago, Prophet Muhammed emphasized “cleanliness is half of faith” and encouraged Muslims to wash their hands before and after eating, bath at least once per week, brush their teeth daily and to clean their nails and private parts (Ozalp, April 2, 2020:4).

Muslims wash at least five times a day for prayers. Before each prayer, Muslims are commanded to wash themselves in a certain order – first hands, the mouth, nose, face, hair and ears and finally their feet and ankles (Aslan, March 16, 2020:4) as order in the Holy Scripture.

2. Balancing between precaution and trust on God

Muslims believe that just like the universe is created by God, so is the virus. On this premise, some Muslims argue the corona virus was created by God to warn and punish humanity for their ill-deeds on land, sea and air (Qur’an). This means prevention of the pandemic is futile and people should rely on God (tawakkul).

Such thinking might help in reducing the sense of fear and panic such a large-scale pandemic poses. But Muslim scholars argue that while the outbreak of the virus might not be in human control, the spread of the disease certainly is. One upon a time Prophet Mohammed advised a man who did not tie his camel because he trusted in God: “tie the camel and then trust in God”.

In Islam, there is a story where one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), Anas Ibn Malik, asked the Prophet, “O Messenger of Allah (God), should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I leave her untied and trust in Allah?” The Prophet replied to him by saying “**Tie her and trust in Allah.**” With this story in mind, we will be looking into the discussion on the importance of faith and work in achieving one’s goals.

Let us analyze the answer the Prophet gave his companion. When asked what he should do about his Camel, the Prophet’s answer was both to tie your camel and to have faith in God; he did not say “have faith in God and then tie your camel” or “tie your camel and then have faith in God.” Rather, both the act of tying the Camel and having trust in God are actions that are simultaneously done with one another. In essence, you cannot have one without the other. Both actions need to happen simultaneously, and that is why in this story, one does not proceed the other; they happen at the same time (Kola, 2019).

3. Seeking medical treatment

According to the Sunnah, it is known that Allah has not sent down any disease without the remedy for it. Consequently, although the therapeutic strategies prescribed either by Prophet mentioned in the Qur’an are limited in nature, type, and number, this should not limit the discovery of new products and strategies of medicinal significance by Muslims. Moreover, Muslim physicians in the period from the 7th to 15th century success fully collected and tested the herbs and plants used for medicinal purposes from different parts of the world, including Greece, China, and India.

The Prophetic hadith that states: “for every disease there is a cure” implies that one shall search for healings from local doctors or experts to get relief from the disease. The Prophet and his companions used to visit or call for medical experts whenever someone was sick as discussed earlier in this article.

Prophet Muhammed also taught “black cumin is a cure for every disease except old age and death”. This is an encouraging statement to use different plants for treatments.

4. Quarantine /Isolation of the sick organism

Islamic rules over pandemic to protect people from fatality and sickness go back to the very early stages of the emergence of the monotheistic religion. Lastly,

regarding the quarantine that most of the planet is facing today, the Prophet said:

“Any servant who resides in a land afflicted by plague, remaining patient and hoping for reward from Allah, knowing that nothing will befall him but what Allah has decreed, he will be given the reward of a martyr.”

According to the specialist in hadiths from the 14th-15th century, Ibn Jayar al-Asqalani, all those who have met the conditions declared will be granted the rewards of a martyr, regardless that their deaths were not a consequence of the disease.

These two traditions attributed to Prophet Muhammad clearly approve today’s scientific theories and verify that, in the 7th century, there was already a clear perception of the notion of disease transmission and the ways to thwart it and minimize its risks.

On many incidents, the Prophet Muhammed advised his companions to value their lives as the utmost importance over death in his numerous sayings (hadiths), urging people to stay away from places where there were epidemics.

“Our Prophet speaks about the concept of quarantine fourteen hundred years ago,” says Cafer Karadas, professor of divinity at Uludag University, referring to one of the widely known hadiths.

“When you hear that [a plague] is in a land, do not go to it and if it occurs in a land that you are already in, then do not leave it, fleeing from it,” the Prophet famously said.

“This saying exactly refers to the principle of modern quarantine. What it has been currently practiced [concerning the corona virus outbreak] is the same principle as the advice of the Prophet” 1450 years ago,” Karadas told *TRT World* (2020).

As the Covid-19 outbreak continues to kill tens of thousands of people across the world, the Prophet Muhammed’s advice on how to respond to a pandemic offers a motivation to people to stay put in their homes and protects themselves from the deadly virus. The quarantine principle in Islam applies for both sick people and animals alike.

5. Avoiding Physical contacts

The most fundamental aspect of the plague is the element of human contact, which should be reduced to the lowest possible level to minimize the deadly effect of the virus.

“Many centuries ago, our Prophet urged his people to eliminate the element of contact to save lives. It shows how much Islam values protection of life and health,” Karadas analysed (TRT, 2020).

The Prophet also firmly observed what he advised his companions about the pandemics as he had done in other issues.

“The Prophet gives utmost importance to his own health and public health. When he was in Medina and was about to make an agreement with one of the delegations, he refused to shake hands with one of the people [from the delegation], who had a contagious disease, sending him back [to where he came from],” said Huseyin Ari, an expert in the High Council of Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs (2020). “Islam has priorities [about life], urging Muslims to protect five main things during their lifetimes. They are to protect life, to protect intelligence, to protect faith, to protect [financial] belongings and lastly to protect offspring,” Karadas recounted (2020).

Karadas says that Islam’s “to protect life” principle pretty much refers to protecting personal and public health. “An epidemic obviously threatens both personal and public health. As a result, a Muslim should strictly follow instructions of pandemic experts to protect his/her personal life as well as public health,” Karadas said.

“If someone infects the virus to someone else as a result of our ignorance or deliberate action, he/she violates the infected person’s rightful due,” Ari viewed.

“If the infected person dies because of the virus-related disease, — May Allah protect — , it means the person, who infected the other person, also led his/her death in a sense, [becoming responsible for the death].”

When one of the Muslim armies approached a location in current Syria or in the old Levant, where there was a plague, back in the mid 7th Century, the commanders fell into confusion over what to do. “Caliph Umar urged the army commander to retreat from the expedition in the face of the plague,” Ari told *TRT World* (2020).

Going back to the early years of Islam, in the 7th century, we find the following hadith, or Prophetic tradition regarding a plague epidemic and the best way to act under those circumstances.

“If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it” (Prophet Muhammad).

Conclusions

Based on the textual analysis and interpretations, it is concluded that Muslim education strongly emphasizes on the wellbeing of human beings physically, mentally, financially and spiritually. Treatment in Islam is based on a combination of spiritual, psychological, and material means. For this reason, the holy Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions stressed on the importance of keeping personal hygiene by washing more than five times per day, keeping physical distance from the sick, practicing quarantine during the pandemic and seeking for medical treatments whenever possible during the outbreak of any communicable diseases.

Hence, I would like to recommend to health personals and education centers to communicate such and other related valuable mechanisms to save the lives of our people by using religious scholars in any public health projects especially in preventing the community from any pandemic (such as COVID-19).

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