



PROBLEMATIZING GEN-Z MUSLIMS' HISTORICAL LITERACY ABOUT THE PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON MUSLIM WORSHIP PRACTICES

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Abstract: This study scrutinized the historical literacy of Generation Z (Gen Z) Muslims about the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices. The pandemic has raised not only questions about health but also worship. Employing a qualitative approach that combined textual and fieldwork research, this study seeks to explain the historical literacy of Gen Z Muslims about the pandemic. It also explores the ways in which they respond to the diversity in Muslim worship practices during the pandemic and the extent to which their involvement increases their Islamic historical literacy. The study was carried out in Surabaya, involving several data collection methods, such as interviews, focused group discussions, and surveys. The study reveals that the historical literacy of Gen Z Muslims fell short of expectations. Furthermore, with regards to the impact of the pandemic on the adjustment of worship practices among Muslims in their community, Gen Z Muslims are divided into three groups: affirmative, negative, and ignorant. This study also shows that Gen Z Muslims have yet to be connected intensely with community networks that allow them to participate in and improve their historical literacy.

Keywords: historical literacy, Gen Z Muslims, pandemics, worship practices.

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Introduction

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has evoked diverse responses and reactions among the public since its breakout.¹ Over time, people

¹ Nyong Eka Teguh Iman Santosa, "New Normal Islami" (Presented at the Webinar Nasional Fenomenologi Agama Universitas Katolik Parahyangan,

began to realize its catastrophic dangers as it had shown significant impact not only medically but also economically² And even caused social unrest.³ Such issues are vital to be addressed wisely because they are potentially related to sensitive issues and prone to conflict between beliefs and religious rituals.

Among Muslims, differences (*ikhhtilāf*) are prevalent yet potentially cause paradoxes. This difference, if not properly managed, will be counterproductive for the maintenance of a harmonious and tolerant socioreligious life in a pluralistic society. These paradoxes potentially grow even stronger when Muslims are not sufficiently equipped with the literacy capacity to understand and deal with differences in a reasonable manner. Generation Z is among those who are prone to be exposed to hoaxes and being provoked by issues of differences and easily ignited for friction and discords. Generation Z or Gen Z refers to the generation born between 1996-2009.⁴ According to the latest

Literasi Agama di Masa Pandemi: Tinjauan Perspektif Teologi Biblika dan Al-Qur'an, Bandung, 2020).

² Galuh Artika Febriyanti, "Dampak pandemi Covid-19 terhadap harga saham dan aktivitas volume perdagangan (Studi kasus saham LQ-45 di Bursa Efek Indonesia)," *Indonesia Accounting Journal* 2, no. 2 (December 2020): 204–214; Ngadi, "Survei Dampak Darurat Virus Corona Terhadap Tenaga Kerja Indonesia," *Lembaga Institut Pengetahuan Indonesia, Indonesian Institute of Sciences*, last modified May 19, 2020, accessed June 13, 2021, <http://lipi.go.id/berita/single/Survei-Dampak-Darurat-Virus-Corona-terhadap-Tenaga-Kerja-Indonesia/22030>.

³ Sigit Somadiyono, "Kajian Kriminologis Perbandingan Kejahatan Yang Terjadi Sebelum Pandemi Dan Saat Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Belo* 6, no. 2 (February 2021): 148–156.

⁴ When it comes to comprehending generations, Josh Miller also recommends using events as categories rather than strictly adhering to arbitrary dates. Because they were born in the age of smartphones, grew up with the complexity of computer technology, and have an openness to easier internet access than the generation that came before them, members of Generation Z are recognized for their digital nativeness. Along with their familiarity with online communities and social media, gen zers (another term to refer to the members of Generation Z) also share some other qualities that set them apart from members of their former generation, Generation Y. Some of these qualities include a desire to always be competitive and individualistic, skepticism regarding certain things, financial pragmatism, an interest in the world of entrepreneurship, a desire to consistently connect with others both offline and online, an interest in direct

Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik/ BPS) census in 2020, Gen Z contributes 27.94 percent or over 75.49 million of the population.⁵ Gen Z represents Indonesia's future and is the leading edge of its changing diversity make-up, either to positive-constructive or negative-destructive course.

In the midst of the spread of hoaxes and misinformation, historical illiteracy among Gen Z Muslims regarding the diversity within Islam is increasingly unsettling.⁶ Historical illiteracy potentially becomes an entry point for unscientific, ahistorical, and provocative inputs that may ignite conflicts both within and among religious groups. This is exacerbated by the increasingly digitized world where information is growing uncontrollably, and misinformation is getting bigger. Gen Z is known for their digital natives and intimately spends most of their time with the virtual world through the facilitation of information technology.⁷ Therefore, historical illiteracy among Gen Z needs greater attention and a lot of efforts need to be expended to lessen its long-term detrimental impact.

Studies investigating the diversity of worship practices among Muslims during the pandemic have so far only focused on changes

interaction, openness to change, and an eagerness to embrace new experiences. See Josh Miller, "A 16-Year-Old Explains 10 Things You Need to Know About Generation Z," *SHRM Magazine*, last modified October 30, 2018, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/1118/pages/a-16-year-old-explains-10-things-you-need-to-know-about-generation-z.aspx>.

⁵ Badan Pusat Statistik, *Hasil Sensus Penduduk 2020*, Berita Resmi Statistik No. 7/01/Th.XXIV, January 21, 2020.

⁶ Farid Abdullah, "Wacana Tuna-Budaya dan Tuna-Sejarah pada Generasi Masa Kini," *Puitika* 15, no. 2 (April 3, 2020): 98–107.

⁷ Angga Yudistira Permana, Agus Mulyana, and Lely Yulifar, "Z Generation's Historical Literacy Ability in Historical Learning," 2018, 52–56; Anthony Turner, "Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest," *The Journal of Individual Psychology* 71, no. 2 (2015): 103–113; Fairouz Aldhmour and Isra Sarayrah, "An Investigation of Factors Influencing Consumers' Intention to Use Online Shopping: An Empirical Study in South of Jordan," *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce* 21, no. 2 (August 1, 2016); Sabina Lissitsa and Ofrit Kol, "Generation X vs. Generation Y – A Decade of Online Shopping," *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 31 (July 2016): 304–312.

and adjustments in several aspects.⁸ Several others have merely analyzed the role and involvement of civil society, including religious organizations in educating their congregants to participate in complying with regulations or policies taken by the government and religious authorities in dealing with the pandemic.⁹ However, studies that comprehensively examine the historical literacy of Gen Z Muslims about the pandemic and its impact on religious life, their attitudes toward the changes and adjustments in worship practices during the pandemic, as well as their involvement in efforts to increase their historical literacy have not been well carried out.

⁸ Muhammad Fuad Zain and Hasanudin, "The Impact of COVID-19 in the Procedure of Religious-Worship and Social Life, In Islamic View," *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine* 8, no. 3 (February 2021): 272–278; Mehmet Ozalp, "How Coronavirus Challenges Muslims' Faith and Changes Their Lives," *The Jakarta Post*, last modified April 2, 2020, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2020/04/02/how-coronavirus-challenges-muslims-faith-and-changes-their-lives.html>; Nicholas Kuipers, Saiful Mujani, and Thomas Pepinsky, "Encouraging Indonesians to Pray From Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 8, no. 3 (2021): 211–222; Mohammad Syahrul RA, Yusuf Hamdika, and Sholahuddin Al-Fatih, "The Impact of COVID-19 Through the Lens of Islamic Law: An Indonesian Case," *Lentera Hukum* 7, no. 3 (November 2020): 267–278; Monsurat Abdussalam Al Haqiqi, "Covid 19 and Its Challenge on Muslim Prayers, a Discussion in The Light of Maqashid Asy-Syariah," *Syaikhuna: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pranata Islam* 11, no. 2 (October 11, 2020): 138–157.

⁹ Ad Kusumaningtyas, "Komunikasi Publik Ormas Keagamaan Islam Terkait Social Distancing Pada Masa Pandemi COVID-19 (Studi Atas Sikap Resmi NU, Muhammadiyah, Dan MUI)," *Muttaqien; Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 23, 2021): 21–47; Syafiq Hasyim, "Covid-19, Islamic Civil Society and State Capacity in Indonesia," *Perspective ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute*, no. 39 (May 5, 2020): 8; Faried F Saenong et al., *Fikih Pandemi: Beribadah di Masa Wabah* (Jakarta: NUO Publishing, 2020); Kemenag RI, *Surat Edaran Nomor: SE 03 Tahun 2021 tentang Panduan Ibadah Ramadan dan Idul Fitri Tahun 1442 Hijriyah/2021*, 2021; Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Fatwa MUI Nomor 14 Tahun 2020 tentang Penyelenggaraan Ibadah dalam Situasi Terjadi Wabah COVID-19*, 2020; Nahdlatul Ulama, *Surat Edaran nomor 3953/C.I.034.04.3030 tentang Ibadah Ramadhan dan Idul Fitri 1441 H.*, 2020; Muhammadiyah, *Edaran Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Nomor 02/EDR/I.0/E/2020 tentang Tuntunan Ibadah dalam Kondisi Darurat Covid-19*, 2020; LDII, *SE Nomor: SUM-26/DPP LDII/III/2020 tentang Menyikapi Wabah Covid-19 Beserta Dampaknya di Lingkungan Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia*, 2020.

Departing from this background and taking Surabaya as the research site, this study seeks the answer to the following questions: (1) How is the historical literacy of Gen Z Muslims regarding the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on Muslim worship practices? (2) How are the attitudes and actions of Gen Z Muslims toward the diversity of Muslim worship practices during the covid-19 pandemic? and (3) How is the involvement of Gen Z Muslims in efforts to increase their historical literacy about the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices?

The questions were examined by a combination of literature and fieldwork studies.¹⁰ The study, in addition to researching the relevant literature, used the data collected from surveys, focused-group discussions, and interviews. The fieldwork was conducted in 2021 between July and October in Surabaya, involving Gen Z Muslims as the main respondents. They were purposively selected in consideration of socio-cultural and religious diversity existing in Surabaya society. The term "Gen Z Muslims" is used in this study to describe a group that includes not only those who were born between 1996 and 2009 and who identify as Muslims but also those who identify as Muslims who were either born Muslims or converted to Islam during that time period, as well as those who are residents of Surabaya, whether they were born in Surabaya or are immigrants, and who are enrolled in high school or at least six semesters of college. The fieldwork also involved interviewing with Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) of Surabaya, the People's Forum for Religious Harmony (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama/FKUB) of Surabaya, National Unity, Politics, and Community Protection Agency (Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik Perlindungan Masyarakat/BAKESBANGPOL-

¹⁰ Anna Dubois and Lars-Erik Gadde, "Systematic Combining: An Abductive Approach to Case Research," *Journal of Business Research* 55, no. 7, *Markets as Networks* (July 1, 2002): 553–560; John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014); Wolff-Michael Roth, *Fist-Person Methods: Toward an Empirical Phenomenology of Experience* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012); Sheila Keegan, *Qualitative Research: Good Decision Making Through Understanding People, Culture and Markets* (London: Kogam Page, 2009).

LINMAS) of Surabaya, and religious authorities as well as *takmir* (mosque managements) in Surabaya.

Historical Literacy

Historical literacy is simply understood as the ability to read and write, yet, the National Literacy Trust adds the ability to speak and listen as other crucial elements of literacy. To that end, a person is considered to be literate if they are able to effectively communicate with others either orally or in writing.¹¹ In the last decade, the concept of literacy has expanded widely. Literacy is understood in a narrow and broad sense. The first understands literacy only focuses on pragmatic and economic aspects, while the latter focuses on cultural, moral, or intellectual aspects. This suggests that literacy can be conceptualized as a skill, employment, level or competence, and also morbidity.¹² In order for someone to be able to use historical literacy as a “toolkit” that can help direct them to see the present and future in the context of the past, they must at least include elements of understanding from a historical point-of-view and practical framework about the past.¹³

Thus, literacy is a very complex concept, not singular but in plural form (multiple literacies). The ability to read and write may be viewed as a form of literacy which is known as foundational literacy. While other forms can include digital literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, data literacy, game literacy, health and financial literacy, civic and ethical literacy, news literacy, and

¹¹ Cambridge Assessment, *What Is Literacy? An Investigation into Definitions of English as a Subject and the Relationship between English, Literacy and ‘Being Literate,’* A Research Report Commissioned, January 2013, <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/130433-what-is-literacy-an-investigation-into-definitions-of-english-as-a-subject-and-the-relationship-between-english-literacy-and-being-literate-.pdf>.

¹² Debra Edwards and Anthony Potts, “What Is Literacy? Thirty Years of Australian Literacy Debates (1975–2005),” *Paedagogica Historica* 44, no. 1–2 (February 1, 2008): 123–135.

¹³ Peter Lee, “Historical Literacy: Theory and Research,” *History Education Research Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 2005).

coding and computational literacy.¹⁴ In consideration of the complexity of the concept of literacy, the researchers argue that historical literacy can also be another form of literacy that a person must possess.

The concept of literacy is understood in three ways: quantitative, qualitative, and pluralist perspectives.¹⁵ From a quantitative perspective, historical literacy can dichotomize between those literate and illiterate. From a qualitative perspective, historical literacy is seen as a trajectory point of not yet and being literate (a continuum). From a pluralist perspective, historical literacy is perceived as “a construction made-up of several building blocks.” To avoid the risk of labeling a person as historically illiterate, historical literacy should be metaphorically associated with a house. No matter it is a two- or one-story house, it is a house. Each individual may have different building blocks of the houses depending on the access to historical sources available for them. Therefore, people may have a diverse notion of historical literacy influenced by differences in space, time, and context.

Historical literacy here is conceptualized as a capacity to understand a historical narrative and demonstrate it in a contextual way.¹⁶ Historical literacy has to be acknowledged in a way that reflects “*the assumptions and expectations, biases or emphases of production, association, prior use, transmission, maintenance, and preservation.*”¹⁷ Historical literacy is built in several dimensions: knowledge, conceptual, methodical, consciousness, and linguistic. The first dimension is the knowledge of historical content

¹⁴ Nickey Pietila, “The Top 10 Literacies in Education Today,” *Advancing K12*, last modified March 2017, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.skyward.com/discover/blog/skyward-blogs/skyward-executive-blog/march-2017/the-top-10-literacies-in-education-today>.

¹⁵ Marshall Maposa and Johan Wassermann, “Conceptualising Historical Literacy – a Review of the Literature,” *Yesterday & Today Journal for History Education in South Africa and abroad* 4 (2009): 41–66.

¹⁶ See Stéphane Lévesque, “On Historical Literacy: Learning to Think Like Historians,” *Canadian Issues / Thèmes Canadiens* (2011): 42–46..

¹⁷ Harvey J. Graff, “Introduction to Historical Studies of Literacy,” in *Understanding Literacy in Its Historical Contexts: Socio-Cultural History and the Legacy of Egil Johansson*, ed. Harvey J. Graff et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2009), 14–21.

comprising the ability to remember past event occurrences and to follow the sole, grand-narrative or multi-narratives. The second dimension is conceptual understanding, where historical literacy is shaped by time, cause and consequences, motivations, significances, moral judgments, change and continuity, and empathy. The third dimension is related to the historical method by which a person works with the sources. This dimension demands not only the ability to work with sources but also the ability to corroborate or confirm, contextualize, analyze, evaluate and explain the historical facts. The fourth dimension of historical literacy deals with the ability to consciously connect the past with the present and future (historical consciousness). The last is the linguistic-related dimension involving the understanding and use of historical language.¹⁸

These five dimensions of historical literacy are an ideal building for the understanding of historical literacy in individuals or groups. However, for practical purposes of this research, some dimensions were used in a more limited way. This present research employed mainly the dimensions of historical knowledge and consciousness. As for the knowledge dimension, literacy indicators were limited to the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices recorded in the history of the classical period of Islam. The other three elements were still more or less used, although not specifically. For example, the data collection procedures involved the examination of respondents' moral judgments, sources of information they know, and contextualization.

Eisenhower Decision Matrix: Importance and Urgency

The Eisenhower matrix is a method used to analyze priority levels. Through this matrix, the historical literacy of Gen Z Muslims is analyzed through a priority lens, and it examines the importance or urgency of efforts to increase their historical literacy. The principle underlying priority of importance and urgency is the statement of Dwight D. Eisenhower, "I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are

¹⁸ Ibid.

not important, and the important are never urgent." Urgent means a task needs immediate attention, equated to a to-do task that must be done "Now!" which is a more reactive action in nature. Important means the tasks may contribute to long-term missions, values, and goals. Occasionally an important task is an urgent one to do, but frequently they are not, and therefore the action is responsive in nature. Different from an urgent to-do task that may ignite defensive, negative, impulsive paradigms, responsive acts have more serene, rational, and open to new opportunities.¹⁹ Eisenhower matrix was later developed into four quadrants: Quadrant 1 (urgent and important) requiring to-do task, Quadrant 2 (not urgent but important) requiring to-plan task, Quadrant 3 (urgent but not important) requiring to-delegate task, and Quadrant 4 (not urgent and not important) requiring to-eliminate task.²⁰

Historical Literacy of Gen Z Muslims about Pandemic and its Impact on Muslim Worship Practices

This section elaborates on the extent to which Gen Z Muslims are historically literate about the impact of the pandemic on Muslim worship practices during the time of the Prophet's companions and *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*. The Islamic tradition is plenteous of the Prophet's teachings, especially about protecting individuals and society, including during outbreaks or pandemics. The study revealed that out of 83 research participants, 64,6% of them claim to have the knowledge of historical records of how the Prophet's companions and *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* set an example of how to perform health and safety protocol during a pandemic to navigate threats toward the community. Surprisingly, when asked about the extent to which they have a grasp of the historical records on how the Prophet's companions and *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* performed health and

¹⁹ Bret McKay and Kate McKay, "The Eisenhower Decision Matrix: How to Distinguish Between Urgent and Important Tasks and Make Real Progress in Your Life," *The Art of Manliness*, October 24, 2013, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/character/knowledge-of-men/eisenhower-decision-matrix/>. last updated September 25, 2021.

²⁰ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

safety protocol during a pandemic, only 42.7% of them admitted to being well-informed and having an adequate understanding about such records.

In addition to exploring the participants' knowledge of how health and safety protocol was exemplified by the Prophet's companions and *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* during the pandemic, our research also further scrutinized their analytical responses to the extent to which Gen Z Muslims are historically literate. The researchers found that around 57.3% of the respondents consider that today's Gen Z Muslims know very little or even nothing about the history of pandemics during the time of the Prophet and his companions and how they responded to pandemics in their worship practices. This suggests that although the majority of Gen Z Muslims have sufficient Islamic historical literacy related to the pandemic, the level is well below par. Lack of historical literacy among the younger generation seems to be driven by the input used in the process of extracting data in research which is still within the scope of knowledge, especially those related to events and overlooks other aspects of historical literacy, for example, the interconnectivity of events and contextualization of the event into a larger context.²¹

However, the survey shows a promising future of historical literacy among Gen Z Muslims, indicated by their grave concerns for the urgency of increasing their historical literacy about the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices. Employing Eisenhower's matrix, the study revealed that the majority or over 98.6% of respondents considered the importance of Gen Z Muslims to be equipped with adequate knowledge necessary to understand the history of the pandemic during the time of the companions of the Prophet and how they performed their worships during the pandemic. However, less than 60% of them considered this effort urgently to be done.

²¹ Maposa and Wassermann, "Conceptualising Historical Literacy."

The Attitudes of Gen Z Muslims in Response to the Adjusted Practices of Muslim Worship during the Pandemic

This section elaborates on the awareness of Gen Z Muslims regarding the implementation of health protocols in mosques during the pandemic and their view on how Islamic law justifies the adjustment of worship practices during the pandemic.

Gen Z Muslims' Awareness of the Adjustment in Worship Practices during the Pandemic

The study revealed that the majority of Gen Z Muslims (87.8%) are aware of the changes and adjustments the Muslim society has made in their worship practices in response to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. They also acknowledged that Muslim society does not remain utterly silent, passive, and ignorant about the impact of the pandemic on their worship practices. They noticed that Muslims in their community had made some adjustments to their worship practices, albeit carried out in various ways. This is confirmed by the survey, which shows 98.9% of respondents noticed the difference in responses and attitudes among the Muslim society about how the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically affected their worship practices.

The various responses of the Muslim community as the respondents identified can be seen from the rules, appeals, and the provision of health facilities in carrying out worships at the mosques. As for the rules for implementing the health protocol for congregational prayers and religious activities at mosques, respondents identified the arrangements of the *şaf* (rows of prayers), the requirement of wearing masks, limitations on the number of participants in congregational prayers or religious activities, as well as time restrictions for carrying out religious activities in mosques, such as Friday sermons and prayers, and *zikir*. In response to the outbreak threats, the mosque management also appeals to their congregants to refrain from congregational prayers at mosques, including the Friday and *tarawih* prayers, or participating in or conducting religious activities that cause mass gatherings i.e. *majelis taklim* (Islamic learning forum), *majelis* (associations) of *salawat* and *zikir* and encourages them to take part

in the Covid-19 vaccination program organized by the government.

In addition to the rules and appeals governed by mosque management, most respondents also noticed that mosques were equipped with proper handwashing facilities, hand sanitizers, and disinfectant liquid. However, only 39% of them acknowledged that the mosques had been equipped with a proper disinfectant-spraying booth to kill any traces of the covid-19 virus before the congregants entered the mosque. In addition to implementing strict health protocols in mosques, they also observed that mosque management provides social assistance programs to congregants to help them maintain health and immunity.

The data above is quite encouraging as it provides factual affirmations regarding the concerns of Gen Z Muslims about what is happening and experienced by Muslims in the midst of the pandemic and how it impacts their worship practices. The concern shown by Gen Z Muslims regarding the impact of the pandemic on the Muslim worship practices in their community is evidenced by their observations of mosques implementing health protocols. 54.9% of them admitted that the mosques around them had implemented health protocols. 40.2% said mosques in their neighborhood did not implement health protocols. The rest, or 6% did not know. Their concern over the disturbing impact of the pandemic on Muslim worship practices was also demonstrated in their opinion on whether or not it is necessary to implement health protocols in worship places. 82.9% of them claimed that strict procedures are still needed in worship places as an effort to prevent the spread of the virus. 17.1% stated that places of worship do not need to apply strict health protocols, and 6.1% said they did not know.

Gen Z Muslims' Perceptual Justification on the Adjustment in Worship Practices during the Pandemic

This study also examined deeper the religious perceptions and justifications of Gen Z Muslims regarding the adjustment of worship practices by their community in relation to religious provisions they believe to be true. The survey examined two practices frequently associated with health protocols, wearing

masks and physical distancing, and found that Gen Z Muslims are divided into three groups: affirmative, negative, and ignorant.

The survey found that 58.7% of respondents stated that wearing masks, especially during prayer, is a practice that is justified by Islamic law, 22% said it is not, and 24% said they did not know. Regarding maintaining distance between rows (*saf*), especially during congregational prayers, 39% of respondents stated that it is a practice that is justified by Islamic law, 42.7% said it is not, and the remaining 18.3% said they did not know.

Not only assessing the respondents' knowledge about the justification of the practice of wearing masks and maintaining distance between rows under Islamic law, the study also investigated on what basis they justify the implementation of health protocols during the congregational prayers, especially wearing masks and maintaining distances between rows. The affirmative group (74.4%) was able to express their arguments underlying their attitude that the implementation of health protocols in Muslim worship practices can be justified by Islamic law. Six considerations for justifying the wearing of masks and maintaining distance between rows during congregational prayers were affirmed. Politically, they affirmed that the implementation of the health protocol was an order from a legitimate leader (*ulū al-amr*). In addition, the implementation of health protocols, especially during congregational prayers in mosques, has followed the *fatwa* of MUI, which is *ahl al-dhikr* whose *fatwa* should be the reference in the implementation of worship (spiritual considerations). Also, examples of worship practices have been given by the companions of the Prophet and the *salaf as-ṣāliḥ* about protecting lives during a pandemic (historical consideration). Furthermore, they argued that Islam teaches its followers not to be anti-science or encourages them to be open to scientific developments, including in the medical field (scientific considerations). Finally, they considered that Islam teaches its followers to take care of themselves and maintain life (*hifz al-nafs*) and stay away from losses (*maḍarat*). The negative group, as much as 12.2%, firmly disagreed that the implementation of health protocols can be justified normatively in the Muslim worship practices, while the remaining 13.4% (ignorant group) said they

did not know whether Islamic law justified the implementation of such health protocols.

In addition to exploring Gen Z Muslims' perceptions of how Islamic law justifies the implementation of health protocols in mosques (wearing masks and maintaining distance between rows), this study also delved deeper into their perceptions of the urgency and importance of implementing health protocols in mosques. Following Eisenhower's matrix, the survey suggests a strong influence of the level of emergency of the pandemic on their attitude towards the implementation of health protocols. When the Covid-19 pandemic reached a severe and critical level, 81.7% of respondents stated that the implementation of health protocols in mosques became more urgent and important (quadrant 1) while the other 12.2% considered it important but not urgent (quadrant 2). However, the urgency and importance of implementing health protocol decreased to 47.6% (quadrant 1) when the government announced that the pandemic was relatively under control and implemented the public activity restriction policy (PPKM) with various emergency levels according to the conditions of each region. 40.2% said that when the COVID-19 pandemic showed a decline in cases, health protocols such as wearing masks and maintaining a distance between the rows during congregational prayers and other religious activities were still important but not urgent (quadrant 2).

From the survey, researchers argue that the attitude shown by Gen Z Muslims is closely related to their religious literacy or historical literacy about the pandemic. The majority of respondents claim to be literate in Islamic history about the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices, but there are still some who are indifferent and even underestimate the importance of implementing health protocols in mosques, both in congregational prayers and other religious activities. In fact, the researchers found a trend of historical illiteracy, as shown by their claim of not knowing about the implementation of health protocols in mosques. Although this is not considered historically illiterate, the 'swing' reality where Gen Z Muslims cannot be sure whether they know or not, to agree or disagree, to accept or reject,

tend to show negative attitudes towards the implementation of health protocols in wider religious practices is more apparent.²²

Gen Z Muslims' Involvement in Improving their Historical Literacy about Pandemic and its Impact on Muslim Worship Practices

This section elaborates on the involvement that Gen Z Muslims have taken in improving their historical literacy about the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices. Through focused group discussions and interviews involving Gen Z Muslims, *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama/FKUB* (Interreligious Harmony Forum) Surabaya, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI* (Indonesian Ulama Council) Surabaya, *Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik/KAKESBANGPOL* (Unified Nation and Politics)-*Perlindungan Masyarakat/LINMAS* (Social Protection) Surabaya, religious authorities, and mosque managements around Surabaya, research shows that most Gen Z Muslims have not been actively involved in educational activities and communities to improve their historical literacy.

The discussion involving Gen Z Muslims found that their participation in historical literacy, especially regarding the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices, is still open for further improvement. They acknowledged that their historical literacy about the pandemic was not evenly distributed among their circle. Some may have demonstrated the possession of historical literacy knowledge from various sources of information available, but quite a few are indifferent, evidenced by their assessment that the pandemic has insignificantly impacted their worship practices and, therefore, is not urgent to be addressed. However, they did notice the differing responses shown by the Muslim community around them, especially in the implementation of health protocols in mosques during congregational prayers or other religious activities.

Regarding efforts to increase voluntary community participation, especially Gen Z, in dealing with the pandemic, FKUB Surabaya claimed to have provided a room for dialogues in

²² Ibid.

periodic events involving interfaith youths, one of the themes raised was about the pandemic the society was encountering; the religious society was no exception. Affirming the efforts made by FKUB Surabaya in educating Gen Z about the pandemic and its potential impact on religious practices, MUI Surabaya also deems that historical literacy among Gen Z still needs to be strongly encouraged to prevent them from anti-diversity, religious exclusivism, and provocative acts.

The efforts to improve Gen Z historical literacy, albeit noticeable, seem to fall short of expectations. BAKESBANGPOL-LINMAS Surabaya reported that no communities have specifically engaged in historical literacy with Gen Z as the target audience. However, communication with youth communities, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations has been well-established. Regarding the impact of the pandemic on Muslim worship practices, the mosque management admitted some adjustments had been made, especially with the implementation of health protocols in mosques which received varying responses from Muslims. So far, the managements admit, the varying responses are still under control and have not led to conflict. Most mosques do not hold regular learning forums (*majelis taklim*) devoted to studying Islamic history, which is often incidental. Most forums study the interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith, fiqh, tawhid, and morality. Even if there is a forum focusing on historical study, as Tatas, Secretary of Al-Ikhlâs Mosque management in the North Surabaya, stated that it is not specifically for the younger generation but for the public.

These findings suggest that many factors may contribute to the person or group's literacy. Family economy and parental education background are among the contributing factors to children's literacy.²³ In addition, the patriarchal tradition where gender preferences have provided more space for men than women to obtain education also contributes to the literacy gap.²⁴

²³ Andrejs Geske and Antra Ozola, "Factors Influencing Reading Literacy at the Primary School Level," *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, no. 6 (2008): 71-77.

²⁴ Mamonah Ambreen and Anwaar Mohyuddin, "Mamonah Ambreen and Anwaar Mohyuddin, 'Cultural Factors Influencing Gender Literacy Level,' *Asian*

Another factor is discrimination in the treatment of those with disabilities or special needs.²⁵ From the findings also, the researchers argue that the environment where a person is intensively involved contributes to literacy development. From this point of view, this study looks into the extent to which Gen Z is involved in activities or communities that potentially support the development of their historical literacy. Among these activities is the existence of a historical community as well as Islamic learning forums that dedicate themselves to studying Islamic history, in addition to other studies. The research also revealed that Gen Z is relatively left untouched by educational communities or activities to increase their historical literacy. This can be seen from the absence of such a historical literacy community targeting Gen Z as the main audience. Furthermore, the special learning forums focusing on studying Islamic history were not routinely carried out by the mosque management.

This condition should have been anticipated as a room to occupy for related stakeholders, especially mosque management, the government, and also educational institutions, by giving more attention to the younger generation's historical literacy. This becomes even more important when historical literacy, in certain cases, is closely related to aspects of religious life which often ignite differences in society. Thoughtfulness in responding to differences can be promoted by strengthening relevant historical literacy. Proper management of the historical literacy gap is needed more than ever to prevent them from deliberate disinformation spread and historical hoaxes that may endanger the nation's diversity and unity.

The existence of a historical literacy community and learning forum specifically studying Islamic history allows Gen Z to not only have the knowledge necessary but also participate in its

Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities 1, No. 4 (2012): 109-115," *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 1, no. 4 (2012): 109-115.

²⁵ Nur Farhana Mohamed Zaki, Nor Aniza Ahmad, and Muhammad 'Ilman Mohamed 'Ashri, "Exploring the Factors Affecting the Gap on Literacy Skills among Students with Learning Disabilities: A Case Study," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 8, no. 3 (September 23, 2019): 237-247.

development. Inter-community networking could have been more elevated to allow historical literacy not only to be apprehended under the scope of knowledge and consciousness but extends to conceptual, methodical, and linguistic elements of history, as shown in Mapossa and Wasserman's historical literacy map. Historical literacy should have been understood not only to develop the young generation's insights about past factual events; further, it should be valued as an intellectual toolkit that allows them to critically read the present and the future by profiting from the knowledge and wisdom in the past.²⁶

Conclusion

The study on Gen Z Muslims' historical literacy about the pandemic and its impact on Muslim worship practices has uncovered interesting findings. It revealed that most Gen Z Muslims are less likely to be historically literate about the pandemic in Islamic history and its impact on Muslim worship practices. Nevertheless, they have demonstrated positive attitudes toward the importance of the younger generation being equipped with sufficient historical literacy. They are also aware of the differing responses that Muslims in their community have about the pandemic, as reflected in their worship practices. The most noticeable responses of adjustments their community has made were the wearing of masks and maintaining distance between rows during congregational prayers and other religious activities in mosques.

Their views that wearing masks and maintaining distance between rows in congregational prayers is unjustified by Islamic law is another token of their lack of literacy regarding pandemics in Islamic history. Albeit not specifically referring to certain health protocols, the majority of Gen Z Muslims are providential of the view that there are argumentative reasons that can normatively justify the implementation of health protocols in worship practices. Situational factors such as the emergency level of the pandemic are deemed to have influenced their attitudes towards the importance or urgency of implementing health protocols in

²⁶ Lee, "Historical Literacy."

mosques, especially in congregational prayers. However, the majority still believe that it is necessary to carry out as long as the pandemic keeps still existing.

Several factors might contribute to the low historical literacy of Gen Z Muslims, such as their disconnection with communities actively educating the public to improve their historical literacy, especially Islamic history. The scarcity of learning forums devoted to studying Islamic history in mosques is also acknowledged to be the contributing factor to their low literacy, especially about pandemics in Islamic history. Departing from this conclusion, the researchers call for mosque management to routinely hold learning forums that specifically study Islamic history, in addition to the interpretation of the Qur'an, hadith, tawhid, and fiqh. The government and educational institutions must actively support the initiation of historical literacy activist communities that involve the younger generation and help them network and have a wider role in their community.

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