



## Religious Beliefs and the Behavior of People during COVID-19 Crisis

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### **Abstract**

Religion is a powerful, long-standing, pervasive, and at the same time, most influential social force, whereas its social power can be used either in helpful ways to slow the spread of Covid-19 or in harmful ways that favor the rapid spread of the virus. While various religious communities played a central role in spreading COVID-19 in various spheres of the globe, intensive debates about physical distancing and its implications for religious gathering have brought religious topics onto agendas. Additionally, there are various religious stigmas, superstitious beliefs, stereotype ideas, arrogancies, targeting a particular community for the outbreak, disobeying nature of the government orders have also emerged in the scenario during the pandemic world is facing right now. However, following a qualitative narrative approach based on secondary materials, the study attempted to investigate the actual responses of various religious communities across the world in the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the study concluded by explaining the potential role of religious leaders in this crisis.

**Keywords:** *COVID-19; Transmission; Religious Behavior; Public Health; Religious Leader*

### **Introduction**

Religion is a most influential social force that can be used either in positive ways to slow the spread of Covid-19 coronavirus or in harmful ways that favor the virus's rapid spread. Placing the religion in the first place, many believers see it as the protection against the virus, and they have been following various rituals and traditional practices. Likewise, some communities also have adhered to certain behavior patterns to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus. To them, the pandemic is God's judgment on a sinful person; sometimes, God uses disease to bring judgments on sinners. In the West, Africa, the Middle East or in Asia everywhere in the world, religious beliefs and behavior have played a significant role in responding to the crisis. At the same time, it raises questions about what religious institutions and beliefs have to do with the crisis and how they react to it. (Wildman, Bulbulia, Sosis, & Schjoedt, 2020).

However, the main focus of the study is to investigate the actual responses of various religious communities in the crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the paper has been divided into a few sections, where the first section deals with the problem statement and the methodology of the study. The second part is about the key arguments of the various scholars. Thereby, the third part explains the key findings and recommendations after analyzing the different case studies. In that part, particularly, religious beliefs and the behavior practiced in India got the main focus which supported the key arguments of the study. Finally, the concluding part suggests that religion is an integral part of the world where religious practices and behavior of the people play a vital role in the crisis.

## Background and Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by a new coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2, presents major challenges in intensive and still evolving ways along with high death tolls and extreme economic and social impacts worldwide. Whereas the religious practices of hundreds of millions of people have been experiencing profound changes in response to the crisis (Bavel, Baicker, & Boggio, 2020). Furthermore, it raises questions about what religious institutions and beliefs have to do with the crisis and how religious beliefs, institutions, leaders, and practices respond to the ongoing coronavirus crisis, whether it is positively or less positive, and how they matter for the policy.

Although many religious communities have embraced physical distancing measures, some still encourage the gatherings despite strong public health messages that created a threat of virus transmission (Robinson, Wilkinson, & Marshall, 2020). For instance, In South Korea, it was reported that gatherings at the Shincheonji Church of Jesus accounted for 5080 confirmed positive cases (Sang-Hun, 2020). A gathering of the Muslim missionary group Tablighi Jamat, was linked to 30% of known cases in India, a huge number in Malaysia, Pakistan. In Bangladesh, particularly in B.barria, thousands of people gathered to an Islamic leader's Janaja Prayer (funeral prayer of Muslims) (Kamruzzaman, 2020). On the contrary, some religious leaders have used misinformation to acquire attention. Earlier the pandemic, some asserted that this virus was manufactured in China due to bad eating practices that won't harm other people who consume halal food (Kamruzzaman, 2020). In India, some Hindu leaders were engaged in publicity that India's practice of greeting people with Namaste and upper caste practices of hygiene and purity as exemplified in vegetarianism and thus the indigenous traditional system of medicine that known as Ayurveda as well as cow urine as an effective medicine for all disease and so would protect themselves from coronavirus (Kohli & Dhawan, 2020). In the West, the evangelical pastor Kenneth Copeland claimed to have cures for COVID-19. Some Hindu nationalists in India have blamed the Muslims for the country's coronavirus outbreak. Some religious leaders framed earlier that the pandemic is God's judgment on sinful cities and arrogant nations. According to them, God sometimes uses disease to bring judgments who reject him and disrespect the religion; fearing this, they gathered to say prayers.

Addressing such challenges, particularly challenges centered on safe religious gatherings and practicing rituals; building trust; promoting efficient communication and advocacy; identifying and responding to the needs of their communities, religious actors have large roles to play (Karam & Mustafa, 2020). Research suggests that millions of people globally look more to religious actors than health officials for guidance on behaving and what to believe in crisis. (Robinson, Wilkinson, & Marshall, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to understand how religion deals with the present pandemic caused by a coronavirus.

## Objectives and Key Questions

The primary objective of this study is:

-To explore the global responses driven by religious beliefs and behaviors during the pandemic caused by the COVID-19.

-To investigate the role of the religious leaders of various religious communities

This study is based on following key questions:

**Primary Question:** To what extent have various communities' religious beliefs and behavior responded to the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic?

**Secondary question:** What can be the potential role of religious leaders in this crisis?

## *Methodology*

This study is based on secondary information collected from different sources. Some of the most popular national dailies of the globe, including the New York Times, the Aljazeera, the Dhaka Tribune, and the Daily Star, helped to get a general idea about the role of religion and beliefs in the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, secondary data sources like relevant journal articles, organizational reports (WHO), working papers also played a predominant source. However, this study has been conducted by following the qualitative method and was based on a case study approach. After analyzing the evidence from existing literature, the study focuses on the overall picture of the positive and negative responses of religious beliefs and behavior to the present COVID-19 pandemic.

## *Literature Review*

In December 2019, sparking an epidemic of acute respiratory syndrome or COVID-19 in humans, centered in China's Wuhan, a new coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2 emerged, and within 5 months, it had spread to more than 7 million cases and caused 0.4 million deaths in 213 countries compelled WHO to declare a global pandemic (Worldometer, 2020). The pandemic represents a massive global health crisis. Unlike various efforts to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, religious beliefs and behavior of the people have a significant role in discussing where it can provide valuable insights for managing the pandemic and its impacts (Bavel, Baicker, & Boggio, 2020). Religion is the most influential social force, with 84% of the world population identifying with a religious group (Robinson, 2020). Therefore, various governments and religious leaders have taken different preventive measures following the WHO's guidance. Robinson (2020) argued that the Covid-19 pandemic has rocked everyday life around the globe by disrupting religious practices and rituals where religious communities have been required to shift worship (Robinson, 2020). Catholic churches from Ghana to the USA and Europe have changed their activities to avoid infection as the response to the Covid-19 (Wildman, Bulbulia, Sosis, & Schjoedt, 2020). But there are various religious stigmas, superstitious beliefs, stereotype ideas, arrogancies, disobeying nature of the government orders that have also emerged in the scenario during the pandemic world is facing right now. Another critical phenomenon, targeting a particular community for the outbreak, was also common in the present pandemic (Marshall, 2020).

Furthermore, Bentzen (2020) argued that in times of a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, humans have a general tendency to turn to religion for relaxation and release (Bentzen, 2020). Extensive Google searches for religious terms compared to all other searches during this pandemic provide a signal of people's interest in religion in crisis time. Moat (2016) identified that human behavior on the internet

reflects their interests and actions in the real world (Moat, Olivola, Chater, & Preis, 2016). Therefore, people's unreasonable search for religious terms and coronavirus prayer on the internet reflects their religious preferences in this crisis (Bentzen, 2020).

Though many religious communities have embraced physical distancing measures to protect from coronavirus, some still encourage gatherings that cause a threat of virus transmission (Elsanousi & Roberts, 2020). Therefore, Marshall (2020) argued that millions of people worldwide look more to religious leaders than health officials for suggestions on how to behave and believe in a crisis (Marshall, 2020). She suggested that it is crucial to engage religious institutions in stopping the spread of coronavirus, as it was done in the Ebola outbreak during 2014 and 2016 (Robinson, Wilkinson, & Marshall, 2020). Initially, the religious leaders believed Ebola was divine punishment for various sins or simple as fate, but public health officials engaged them in health education, including hygiene practices and quarantining, and they played a vital role (Jouret, 2020). For this, she asserted that the religious actors could help build essential bridges between faith and science to strengthen a pandemic response (Blevins, 2020). According to Katherine (2020), bridging theology and science with the help of government and NGOs was imperative in the Ebola outbreak when more than 60% of Ebola cases were linked to funerals (Marshall, 2020). Research suggests that religious actors offer trust, the most vital key in a crisis for addressing fear and misinformation. Therefore, religious leaders' intervention for Covid-19 can be an essential tool in hygiene practice and physical distancing so that people can easily understand and accept (WHO, 2020).

### ***Key Findings***

Religion plays a significant role in people's daily lives during the pandemic caused by the SARS-coV-2 or COVID-19 virus pandemic. The long history of pandemics suggests that religious factors are integral parts of the story every time as religious traditions, beliefs and institutions play a significant role in everyday life for nearly all people worldwide, and the present pandemic is not an exception. But, the religious practices of hundreds of millions of people have been experiencing profound changes in response to the crisis (Yamin, 2020). Though many religious communities have embraced physical distancing measures to protect from coronavirus, some still encourage gatherings that cause a threat of virus transmission. The pandemic also provided various religious stigmas, superstitious beliefs, stereotype ideas, arrogancies, disobeying the nature of the government orders during the pandemic (Yee, 2020). Another essential phenomenon, targeting a particular community for the outbreak, is expected in the present pandemic.

To prevent the rapid transmission of the coronavirus, the government in many countries have imposed lockdowns, many religious communities such as churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras, and others have suspended and discouraged the meetings and gatherings to protect their congregants (Dein, Loewenthal, & Lewis, 2020). Though it has given a major challenge for religious communities in disseminating religious teachings, it also encouraged them to experiment with new advances in internet-based communications technology, especially social media and video conferencing (Bacchi, 2020). Thereby most of the communities around the world have cooperated with governments' initiative of physical distancing, but at the same time, several have become clusters for the transmission of the Covid-19 because of ignorance in case of basic hygiene, misplaced faith, and most importantly, distrust of government. The following part discusses the key findings of the study:

### **Sin, Punishment, and Divine Protection**

Religious beliefs provide an indeclinable source of interpretations when nothing seems to describe the beginning of an unimaginable tragedy such as war, natural or human catastrophe, famine,

pandemic (Lim, 2020). According to Ralph Drollinger, a US minister of Religion who chairs a Bible study group in the White House under President Trump, the present crisis is nothing but an act of divine judgment. He also added that the Covid-19 is an expression of God's anger, not with America but with those who worship environmentalism and have an acceptance for homosexuality and lesbianism (Pew, 2020; Merritt, 2020). Similarly, another conservative leader in Florida named Rick Wiles declared that the virus's publicity in Synagogues is "God's retribution for those who oppose Jesus ."In an interview, Yaakov Litzman, who is an ultra-orthodox Israeli Minister of Health, assured that the Messiah (Jesus) would come before Passover (a yearly occasion of Jews) and relieve them from all the evils of the world (Jouret, 2020). But unfortunately, he was later tested positive for Covid-19 and compelled Prime Minister Netanyahu and other officials to go into quarantine as they had been in contact with him. Notwithstanding, Islamic State Organization (ISIS) also described to its members that it had been sent by order as well as decree of Allah and advised them to keep their faith in Allah and find shelter with him, while at the same time asserted practical recommendations to avoid contagion (Paras, 2020). Likewise, the Greek Orthodox Church rejected the notion that religious conversations could favor virus transmission. The Holy Synod (the ruling body of the Orthodox Church) publicly asked the congregation members to participate in the blessed Eucharist that could not possibly cause the spread of the virus in this pandemic situation (Yee, 2020). In Malaysia, the deputy minister for women and family development, Siti Zailah Mohd Yusouf, in a public meeting, asserted that the possibility of dying from the coronavirus is only one percent, while the chance of dying at any moment is a hundred percent (Lim, 2020; Lieberman, 2020). In Indonesia, Roni Arif, an employee of the health minister, said that none of us fear corona. Instead, all sickness and health are from Allah, and whatever happens is driven by Allah's will (Sang-Hun, 2020).

### **Rising Religiosity as a Global Response to Covid-19 Fear**

Using daily data on Google searches, it is found that the Covid-19 crisis has increased Google searches for prayer in comparison to all Google searches, which is the highest level ever recorded (Bentzen, 2020). Existing research identified that human behavior on the internet reflects their interests and actions in the real world (Moat, Olivola, Chater, & Preis, 2016). Similarly, humans' search for religious terms on the internet reflects their religious preferences (Yeung, 2019; Davidowitz, 2015). Searches for the topics related to prayer in all languages, other religious terms such as God, Allah, Muhammad, Quran, Bible, Jesus, Buddha, Vishnu, Shiva, and so on also rise. Some data have clearly shown the intensified level of prayer in times of a crisis event (Bentzen, 2020)..After the WHO's declaration of Covid-19 as a pandemic, Google searches for prayer have surpassed all other significant events. The level of search in March 2020 was more than 50% higher than February 2020. The rise in searches for prayer was 1.3 times larger than the surge in searches for takeaways, where 12% of the rise in Netflix searches reflects the massive change in human behavior (Bentzen, 2020; Bacchi, 2020). Most interestingly, Coronavirus prayer was one of the most searched for prayer categories where people ask God for protection against the virus prayers to stay strong. A recent Pew Research Center survey suggests that more than half of Americans had prayed to end the coronavirus (Pew, 2020). It suggests that the main reason for the rising interest in prayer on the internet is religious coping. Humans practice religion to cope with adversity and pray for relief, understanding, and comfort (Bentzen, 2020).

### **Precautionary Measures Taken by Various Religious Communities**

The covid-19 pandemic has rocked everyday life around the globe by disrupting religious practices and rituals where religious communities have been required to shift worship. Daily and weekly prayers at churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples have moved to the home with the closed order from the government to combat transmission (Bacchi, 2020). In Jerusalem, the waqf administration decided to close the grand Al-Aqsa mosque on 23 March and ordered them to pray outside, maintaining a safe distance from one another. Saudi Arabia has banned the Omrah Hajj and has suspended this year's Hajj preparations, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Foreigners were not allowed to travel to Mecca or

Medina (Lim, 2020). In Iran, authorities have banned the Friday prayer in the mosque, and their leader Ayatollah Khamenei has requested everyone to say their prayers at home during Ramadan. In Singapore, during Ramadan, Muslims going to the mosque were obliged to bring their prayer mat and were forbidden from shaking hands. In Tajikistan, it was ordered prayers must be said at home. Similarly, Bangladesh also imposed restrictions on prayers at mosque till the half of Ramadan. Likewise, Nowruz, the Persian New Year was not celebrated in public. The Mormon Church has canceled all its ceremonies around the world. Passover of Israel was not publicly celebrated this year. Devasted by the virus, Italy has canceled Palm Sunday mass, Good Friday, Easter Vigil. Pope Francis bestowed his blessing, and the Vatican may only be visited virtually via the internet like Mecca and Kaaba. Close contact such as hand-holding, sharing communion in Christian churches, and touching or kissing holy religious objects claimed to be avoided in many sacred spaces by several religious communities (Bacchi, 2020). Similarly, Dalai Lama advised Buddhists to chant the 'Tara Mantra' in response to the Covid-19, where chanting mantras is a wide practice that Buddhists use to cultivate compassion for themselves and other sensible beings (Paras, 2020).

### Case Study

Many believers have practiced misplaced faith where they believe that God will protect them from disease and viruses. Some communities embrace a fatalistic theological worldview that leads them to believe God decides whether a person can live or die, making them reluctant to take any protective measures. Moreover, several clusters of infection in many parts of the globe have been linked to various religious communities and practices. (Robinson, 2020; Lim, 2020). In addition, most believers had been reluctant to accept the temporary bans suggested by WHO and ordered by the government on visits to religious sites and congregations. Following these characteristics, this study is going to focus on some events:

**Sri Petaling Tablighi Jamaat in Malaysia:** A Tablighi Jamaat gathering of 16000 people, considered one of the most significant Islamic missionary movements, has been linked to hundreds of coronavirus infections at a Malaysian mosque in March became the most prominent known viral vector in Southeast Asia. This gathering has been claimed for spreading the coronavirus to half a dozen countries. Among the participants, more than 620 people have tested positive in Malaysia alone, 10 cases in Thailand, 25 Pilgrims in Cambodia, 73 positive cases in Brunei are tied to the gathering (Beech, 2020). The majority of them stated that they are not afraid of corona but rather afraid of Allah. They also added that all sickness and all health are from Allah and whatever happens to them is Allah's will, physical distancing, or even nothing that can protect them from this (Beech, 2020).

**Shincheonji Church of Jesus in South Korea:** In March, around 60% of the positive cases in South Korea were found a link to a meeting of the Shincheonji Church, a controversial Christian new religious movement. This event accounted for 5080 confirmed coronavirus cases (Sang-Hun, 2020). While the church leadership has cooperated with the authorities by providing a list of their members, its role in the country's Covid-19 cases has generated a public backlash, discrimination, and hatred. The Shincheonji's worshiping in closest proximity and pressuring ill members to attend their meetings largely contributed to the spread of the virus (Wildman, Bulbulia, Sosis, & Schjoedt, 2020). These practices were in the Church's belief that sicknesses result from sin and that members should not avoid meeting despite being sick (Sang-Hun, 2020). However, the Church's coronavirus pandemic's mishandling derived from a combination of both its faith and poor relations with government and broader society.

**Ultra-Orthodox in Israel:** For many weeks, ultra-orthodox neighborhoods refused to obey the restrictions imposed by the Israeli government. The country's largest ultra-orthodox city, Bnei Brak, has tested nearly 40% of the population. Likewise, 74% of people who tested positive in Jerusalem came from the city's ultra-orthodox neighborhoods (Jouret, 2020).

**Religious beliefs and the behavior of the people in India:** The study focused on India's response as a distinct case for this paper that supports the core arguments of the paper.

In India, the pandemic of Covid-19 has provided Hindutva organizations a fresh target for their nationalist propaganda. Furthermore, earlier of the pandemic, many Hindu nationalists began to focus on Hindu chauvinist discourses by claiming India's practice of greeting people with Namaste and upper caste practices of hygiene and purity as exemplified in vegetarianism and the traditional indigenous system of medicine known as Ayurveda (Kohli & Dhawan, 2020). Initially, many Hindus believed that Covid-19 was manufactured in China due to bad eating practices and it's a symbol of bad behavior, and that was extensively shared on social media and everyday conversations. It has given space to humiliating attacks on people from northeastern states due to their facial resemblance to the Chinese (Kohli & Dhawan, 2020). Furthermore, superstitious beliefs are a common phenomenon in defending against the spread of the virus. One leader associated with Hindu nationalist organizations organized a cow urine party on the 14<sup>th</sup> March. The organization offered cow urine and incense to protect themselves from coronavirus by seeking divine intervention (Kohli & Dhawan, 2020). Thereby, some Hindu leaders prescribed cow urine, cow dung, and Hindu chanting as a course of treatment, and consumption of symbols of Hindutva as cures were the most focused issue. Meanwhile, home remedies suggestions from various leaders were rapidly spreading through WhatsApp and other social media that had also weakened the preventive behavior (Marshall, 2020). Except these, India's strong religious and cultural traditions of communal celebrations constitute major social and behavioral factors that pose significant challenges. People started the festival in the streets in several parts of the country in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to deliver thanks to the health workers by clapping hands from home (Mufsin & Muhsin, 2020). Although the Ram Navami celebration in Ayodhya was canceled, it was likely to be celebrated in different parts of the country (Kohli & Dhawan, 2020). Muslim congregational prayers, Sunday church services, and similar religious mass gatherings among various religious communities were present in different corners of the country that triggered community spread (Mufsin & Muhsin, 2020).

In addition, the outbreak of Covid-19 in India has reflected another target to launch a fresh attack on the minority, particularly the Muslim community. Likewise, there has been a surge in Islamophobic hashtags and posts on social media accusing Muslims of purposefully spreading the virus by describing a new 'term corona jihad' (Bisht & Naqvi, 2020). It all started after the news telecasted that people who had attended a large Tablighi Jamaat gathering at Nizam Uddin in New Delhi had tested positive for the Covid-19 (Apoorvanand, 2020). They were blamed for organizing such an event ignoring the spread of the virus, and that became a justification for the BJP government to create a separate column of Tablighi Jamaat-related cases in the daily press briefing. It has created an impression that Muslims are the main culprit, and they were seen as potential carriers of the virus. Thus, the hashtag coronajihad became a most trending phrase on social media (Bisht & Naqvi, 2020).

**Canada as an exceptional case:** Many religious groups continue to provide charity services, including donating medical equipment and providing food, and concern for vulnerable groups. In that case, Canada got wide accepted attention where religious communities were uniquely positioned to support people and foster resilience during the pandemic due to their moral authority and vast networks. The following examples show how religious communities are at the forefront of community-led responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding, the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto has issued public health updates to Jewish organizations with the target of launching a consistent community-wide response. These voices have strong influences within and beyond their communities (Bavel, Baicker, & Boggio, 2020). Sikh temples, which regularly hold langar (a community kitchen offering free meals), are now offering free take-out langar and organizing grocery deliveries to older and disabled people. Likewise, the Sikh Awareness Foundation has launched a "No Hungry Tummies" initiative to give meals to vulnerable communities in Toronto. Similarly, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association has taken a nationwide 'Neighborhood Helper Campaign' where Canadians can request help by signing up online or calling a

helpline (Robinson, 2020). At the same time, the United Jewish Appeal or UJA Federation of Greater Toronto has broadened its 'yearly global seder campaign' to help the low-income families in the region (Paras, 2020).

### **Potential Role of the Religious Leaders**

Religious actors' status, trust, and vast networks can be factors of further danger and positive change. In that regard, US National Center for Biotechnology Information stated that religious leaders have the power to influence health education, health promotion, and positive health outcomes by encouraging health service utilization (Bacchi, 2020; Robinson, 2020). The earlier part of the discussions shows that experiences learned from the response to the Ebola crisis in Africa where religious leaders played a vital role by persuading and supporting the communities in embracing the lifesaving advice of health officials against perceived stigma, discrimination, and fear (Marshall, 2020). So, with medical and material responses, religious leaders and community's beliefs and attitudes need to be mobilized to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and its impact. Therefore, governments and international agencies urgently need to provide training to them that will allow effectively, informed, and comprehensive health interventions, particularly in areas where local governments fail to get acceptance (Marshall, 2020). There are some possible steps to involve them by enabling them to (NCA, 2020):

- Support effective distribution of messages guided by health officials such as hand hygiene, physical distancing, and so on
- Counter misinformation, misconceptions, stigma, stereotyping ideas and other existing dangerous ideas within the community
- Take the lead in providing safe alternatives of religious rituals and practices in accordance with the health official's guidance.
- Promote humanity, unity, and solidarity
- Work to reduce tensions between different groups.
- Advocate for the necessities for the vulnerable groups during lockdowns and quarantines
- Reduce anxiety and fear where religion is vital for the mental health

Moreover, religious leaders can be played an effective role by using references from holy texts and appropriately contextualized theology to increase awareness and promote social behaviors that protect people and communities from harm (Blevins, 2020). Therefore, they should be integrated into planning, decision-making, and implementation at all levels of their Covid-19 response.

### **Conclusion**

While various religious communities played a drastic role in spreading COVID-19 in various spheres of the globe, intensive debates about physical distancing and its implications for religious gathering have brought religious topics onto agendas. Nevertheless, there are various religious stigmas, superstitious beliefs, stereotype ideas, arrogances, targeting a particular community for the outbreak, disobeying nature of the government orders have also emerged in the scenario during the pandemic world is facing right now. Without some exceptions, most religious communities have canceled in person events and have established a variety of platforms and models for online prayers and religious practices. Moreover, in case of government's hard respond to the crisis by imposing lockdown and restrictions on movements and practices, it is necessary to highlight that such measures are simply not accepted by individuals, households, communities in most of the developing countries where the idea of voluntary quarantine or stay home order failed due to economic needs. But in that case, religious leaders can play a vital role in these communities due to their much acceptance than health officials. However, religious



practices and beliefs have impacted and will continue to impact the coronavirus response innumerable ways.

However, as the need to enforce physical distancing became the core to public health, adapting or religious gatherings emerged as an obvious need. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many religious communities to suspend public gatherings to help combat the transmission. Suspending religious congregations does not imply a lack of faith rather a commitment to basic tenets such as loving one's neighbor and the golden rule by preventing the transmission. However, fighting the Covid-19 crisis requires a holistic approach that adequately integrates the infrastructural, social, religious, behavioral, psychological aspects. Therefore, Religious leaders and public health authorities have needed to work together on effective responses to the pandemic.

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