

**STAYING SAFE AND STAYING SANE:
REFLECTIONS DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC**

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**Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
Human Sciences**

International Islamic University Malaysia, P.O. Box 10,
50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Tel.: +603 6421 5051/5053

Fax.: +603 6421 4870

Email : webmaster@iium.edu.my

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MAJLIS KESELAMATAN NEGARA

Aras LG & G, Blok Barat, Bangunan Perdana Putra,
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Shukran Abdul Rahman, Lihanna Borhan, Sh. Fatimah Al-Zahrah Syed Hussien
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Shukran Abdul Rahman, Lihanna Borhan,
Sh. Fatimah Al-Zahrah Syed Hussien Al-Attas

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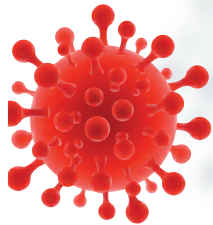
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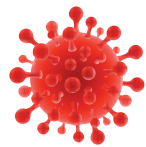
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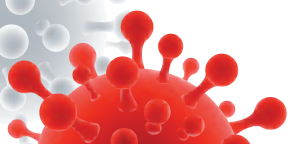
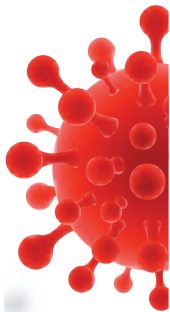


AUTHORS

Shukran Abdul Rahman is a professor at Department of Psychology and Dean of KIRKHS. He lectures in Industrial/Organisational Psychology and Psychological Assessment. His research areas include higher education change and development. He is currently an Associate Research Fellow at the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) and Distinguished Associate Fellow at the Institute for Psychotherapy, Correctional and Rehabilitation (iPSYCORE)

Lihanna Borhan is an associate professor and Developmental and Educational Psychologist in the Department of Psychology, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. You may reach her at hannarozi@gmail.com

Syarifah Fatimah AlZahrah Syed Hussien AlAttas is an assistant professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Coordinator of Social Issues and Development Center, Kulliyah



of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM. Fatimah Al-Attas focuses on topics relating to gender, family, and work with an increasing interest in social inequalities. She is currently embarking on a research concerning menstrual poverty among young women in urban Malaysia.

AUTHORS

Abdelaziz Berghout is a professor in the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, KIRKHS. He specialises in Islamic Studies and Civilisation; Comparative Study of Zakat and Income Tax Systems. He is a senior expert with the FUIW and ISESCO, and Advisor to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Social, Cultural and Family Matters. He has received several awards from various international agencies on his outstanding achievement in teaching, researcher, leadership, publication and services

Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri is an associate professor in the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, KIRKHS. Graduated from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, he specialises in Islamic Thought, Ahl al-Sunnah wa I-Jamaah, Tasawwuf, Islamic Missionary Thought and Practice, Islam in the Malay World, Muslim Thinkers and World Religions. He has published *Panduan Mengajar Akidah kepada Kanak-Kanak* (2003), *Dimensi Pemikiran Shah Wali Al-Dihlawi* (2007), *Muslim Converts in Malaysia* (2008), and *Contemporary Issues in Islamic Thought* (2018).

Abdulwahed Jalal Nori is an assistant professor in the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies. His main research interest and consultancy revolves around futures studies, political reform in Malaysia, and in the Islamic World. He was an active participant in and contributor for *Envisioning Malaysia in 2050*, a project of Akademi Sains Malaysia (ASM).

He is a columnist to NST on issues related to the futures of the Malaysian Education System; Malaysian Youth; and National Integration and Unity.

Aini Maznina A. Manaf is an associate professor at the Department of Communication, IIUM and Deputy Dean (Academic and Industrial Linkages) at KIRKHS. Her research interests revolve around organisational communication, intercultural communication, and new media.

Amilah Awang Abd Rahman is an associate professor at the Department of Usuluddin and Comparative Religion. She teaches courses on Islamic Ethics, Islamic Social Institutions, Islam and Modern Ideologies and Early Development of Islamic Thought. Her research interests are Islamic Theology, Ethics and Psycho-spiritual Development as well as Post-Modern Philosophy.

Ahmad Anas Almi is a postgraduate student in the Department of Psychology, IIUM.

Akmal Khuzairy bin Abd Rahman is professor at Department of Arabic Language and Literature Department, KIRKHS and Director of Centre for Islamisation, IIUM

Ayman al-Akiti is an assistant professor at the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, KIRKHS. He is an Honorable Fellow of the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM). He gives weekly lessons on *Usul al-Din* on IKIM Radio. His research interests include Islamic Theology, *Usul al-Din*, Manuscript Studies (Philology and Codicology), *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*.

Azlin Alwi is an assistant professor at the Department of Psychology, IIUM. She specializes in the area of developmental psychology, focusing on adolescents' resilience. Many of her research delve into building intervention programs to improve well-being.

Badri Najib Zubir is an associate professor in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, KIRKHS. He is also currently the Director of Academic Programmes and Student Management at the IIUM Academy of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Elmira Akhmetova is an associate Professor in the Department of History and Civilization, KIRKHS, and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of South Australia. Akhmetova is the author, editor and translator of several books in the areas of Islam in Russia, Islamic Civilization, Islamic Political Thought, Diplomacy in Islam and Nationalism in the Muslim World, and has several dozens of articles and book chapters to her credit.

Fahad Riaz Choudhry is an assistant professor and Clinical Psychologist in the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. His research focuses on qualitative methods, mental health and resilience factors in marginalized groups.

Haffiezah An-NadiahAzlan is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. Her interests include emotion, mental health, and health psychology.

Haslina Ibrahim is an associate professor at the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, KIRKHS. She is currently Deputy Dean, Responsible Research and Innovation, KIRKHS. Her areas of research interest are religious studies, inter-religious relationship and Islamic da'wah. Her latest publication are Exploring Religious Pluralism: Christian and Muslim Response and an article titled Mediation and Interreligious Discourse: Prospects and Challenges in Resolving Interreligious Skirmishes in Malaysia. Her upcoming works are Kalam and Its Relevance in Muslim Scholarship of Religion: An Integrated Approach and A Muslim Guide to Understand Sacred Text of Religions: A Comparative Approach

HomamAltabaa is an assistant professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, KIRKHS. He is the Associate Editor of Journal of *Islam in Asia* and a member of the Editorial Board of *Al-Tajdid* Journal. His research interests include comparative literature, creativity education and contemporary Islamic issues.

Idayu Mumtaz Iskandar is a graduating student of the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, KIRKHS with a minor in Economics. Having a growing passion for education through content creation, she aspires to pursue a writing career while becoming an educator for youth in her home state, Sabah. She formerly served on the executive committee of IIUM Student Union 2019/2020.

Intan Aidura Alias is an assistant professor at the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. She lectures in Physiological Psychology, Cognitive Psychology. Her interest is in the integration of religion and psychology, particularly in relation to cognition and how the integration can lead to better performance of the righteous behaviors. Her research interests include autobiographical memories of the young and older adults.

Iyad Muhammad Eid is an assistant professor at the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, KIRKHS. He lectures in population and society, sociological theories and introduction to sociology at the undergraduate level. His research focuses on social change and development, refugees, crucial issues in the Malaysian local community.

Jamilah Hanum Abdul Khaiyom is an assistant professor and a clinical psychologist, KIRKHS. She lectures and supervises research in areas related to Abnormal Psychology, Clinical Psychology, and Assessments. She also provides clinical supervision for masters' students in clinical and counselling psychology specialization. She gives talk and conducts

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workshops on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Relaxation Training, Mindfulness-based Interventions, Religiosity and Spirituality, Mental Health, and Stress, Anxiety, and Depression.

Kabuye Uthman Sulaiman is an assistant professor in the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, KIRKHS. He is an alumnus of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He teaches Basic Philosophy and the Islamic Worldview, Ethics and Fiqh of Contemporary Issues, and Knowledge and Civilisation in Islam. His research areas include Islamic worldview and epistemology of knowledge, Islamic civilisation and contemporary issues.

Lee Pei May is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, KIRKHS. She teaches Introduction to Political Science and Survey of Political History at the undergraduate level. Her general research interest is in the area of International Political Economy, specifically focusing on China.

Mariam Adawiah Dzul kifli is an associate professor at the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. Her main research area is human memory (normal and abnormal memory processes), the relationship between memory, aging and the psychological processes related to memory and learning. She teaches cognitive psychology, introduction to psychology, experimental psychology, physiological psychology and psychology of learning,

Mardiana Mohamad is an assistant professor at the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. She teaches Personality Psychology, Counselling Psychology and Counselling Technique. Her research areas focus on person-centred approach to Counselling, challenges and coping strategies of individuals in difficult situations. She also provides counselling services in the department's Psychology Services Unit.

Mohammed Farid Ali al-Fijawi is an assistant professor at the Department of Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh, KIRKHS. He teaches Introduction to Islamic Jurisprudence, Introduction to Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, Qadaya Fiqhiyyah Mu'asirah (Contemporary Fiqh Issues) and "Islamization of Human Knowledge. He also published on education leadership in his book *40 Hadith on Leading the Way*.

Mohd Hemi Mohd Sobri is assistant professor at Department of History and Civilization, KIRKHS. He specializes in nineteenth-century British educational thought and culture with particular reference to English theory and practice of liberal education. His research interests include nineteenth-century English university education; the rise of utilitarian sensibility in the nineteenth century and its impact on English liberal education; and the impact of modernity on the Malay conception and experience of custom ('adat).

Muhammad Ihsan Shaharil is an academic fellow at Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design, IIUM. He specialises in built environment in architecture. His current works involve integration of education and graphic in spreading understanding, awareness and interest especially in current issues. Ihsan is currently the Graphic illustrator for the IMPaCT Project.

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali is a professor in Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, KIRKHS. He has published several text books from Islamic perspective. He was awarded the National Book Award for his books, *Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge: Civilization Building Discourse of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers* and *Islamization of Modern Science*.

Murni Mahmud is an associate professor at the Department of Information Systems in Kulliyah of Information and Communication Technology. Her research area is Human

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Computer Interaction, with specific interest in design and evaluation of user interaction.

Nazariah Sharie' Janon is an assistant professor and Head at the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. She lectures in several psychology courses in the area of Developmental Psychology. She is a member of TRGS research that develops profiling for High-functioning Children with Learning Disabilities

Noor Azlan Mohd Noor is an associate professor at Department of Sociology & Anthropology, KIRKHS. He specialises in medical anthropology and has been conducting research projects on indigenous and traditional medical knowledge as well as on community sustainable development

Nor Diana Mohd Mahudin is an Ergonomics Trained Person (ETP), specialising in road user behaviour, transport crowding, and commuting stress. Her research and public engagements include crowd behaviour and crowd management, restorative effects of environments and environmental ergonomics, as well as development and evaluation of interventions.

Nor Juliana Ali is an alumna of IIUM, completing her bachelor and masters' degree at Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. She is currently an industrial/organisational psychologist and continues to engage with the department and university members.

Nur Suriya Mohd Nor is an assistant professor at the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, KIRKHS. She specializes in Islamic Da'wah and study of religions with special focus on Buddhism. Her research areas include Islam and other religions, Mahayana Buddhism, Muslim scholars of Nusantara, Islamic Da'wah, and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.

Nurul Miza Mohd Rashid is a lecturer at the Department of Psychology, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, KIRKHS. Presently, she is completing her doctoral studies specializing in violent extremism in Malaysia. Her research areas further include risk factors of violent extremism and effects of media.

Norbani Ismail is an assistant professor at the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, KIRKHS. She specialises in the Qur'an, Women and Islamic Institution in Southeast Asia. Her research interests are in Muslim women, Official Islam and Intellectual History in Southeast Asia.

Pamilia Lourdunathan is an assistant professor and a Clinical Psychologist at the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. She enjoys lecturing particularly in the areas of Clinical Psychology, Community Psychology, Adolescent Psychology and Health Psychology. She also provides clinical supervision for masters' students in clinical and counselling psychology specializations. She provides clinical and counselling services in the department's Psychology Services Unit (PSU).

Rabi'ah Aminudin is an assistant professor and the head of the Department of Political Science, IIUM. Her main interests are gender and politics, public policy, intergovernmental relations, East Asian politics, and the politics of identity. Her current researches are on Malaysian women political empowerment and religious extremism.

Rabiah Tul Adawiyah Mohamed Salleh is assistant professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, IIUM. She is also Director of Child Bilingualism Centre of KIRKHS, a centre for research and consultancy in children's acquisition of language(s).

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Ramzi Bendebka is an assistant professor at the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, IIUM, motivated in the fields of Muslim World Issues, Middle Eastern Studies and International Studies.

Rohaiza Rokis is associate professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, KIRKHS. She specialises in Sociology of Work, Gender Stratification and Inequality.

Ruhaya Hussin is assistant professor at the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. Her research and consultancy works mainly focus on organisational psychology, work-family issues, coping, and well-being. She is currently serving the KIRKHS as the Kulliyah Employee Assistance Programme Coordinator.

Suzanah Abdul Rahman is a professor at the Department of Biomedical Science and Dean of Kulliyah of Allied Health Sciences in IIUM Kuantan. She lectures mainly in Pharmacology and Toxicology courses and her research interests include Reproductive Sciences and Natural Products. She is the current Chair for the Deans Council of Health Sciences for Public Universities, Malaysia.

Syed Ahmad Muhajir Alhaddad is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology, KIRKHS. His research interests include adolescents, social competence and mobile technology usage.

Wan Zahidah Wan Zulkifle is an assistant director at Sejahtera Centre for Sustainability and Humanity, IIUM. Her current work focuses on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), sustainable development on grassroot level, and community empowerment. She is also in the Secretariat of RCE Greater Gombak.

Zeti Azreen Ahmad is an assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Head of Communication Department,


KIRKHS. Her research interests include but not limited to public relations, corporate social responsibility, crisis management and community engagement . She is an editorial board member for Journal of Communication Education (JCE).

Zunaidah Mohd Marzuki is an assistant professor at the Department of Qur'an and Sunnah Studies, KIRKHS. Her areas of interest include but not limited to Sciences of Hadith, Methodology of Scholars of Hadith, Takhrij Hadith, Research Methodology, Disability especially Cerebral Palsy, Sciences of Qur'an, as well as contemporary issues in Islamic studies. She is an editorial board member for Al-Burhan: Journal of Qur'an and Sunnah Studies.




PANDEMICS AND THE ISLAMIC SOCIOLOGY OF AMANAH



Homam Altabaa



Trust or *amanah* is a foundational value in Islam, and it gains increased importance when the *ummah* is going through a period of crisis. In the Islamic traditions, *amanah* is part of the pure nature of humans known as “fitrah” and it is strongly equated with faith as in the hadith “there is not faith for the one who has no *amanah*” (Mishkat al-Masabih, 35) and “the believer is the one people trust with their lives and wealth” (Mishkat al-Masabih, 33-34). The morphological roots of *iman* (faith) and *amanah* (trust) are one in the Arabic language. Trust is an obligation where one has to be trustworthy not merely to meet social expectations but rather divine demands.



A key meaning of *amanah* is being accountable to Allah in every aspect of personal and interpersonal life. A Muslim is responsible to develop their abilities and morality to become a proactive member of society. The realm of *amanah* expands first from the personal to the family level where Islam stresses that “a man is the guardian of his family and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband’s home and his children



and she is responsible for them” (Mishkat al-Masabih, 3685) Islamic law and moral teachings specify the roles and virtues of family members to ensure that families serve their role as pillars of the community. In times of crises and pandemics, individuals and families should heed their *amanah* and play their respective roles to protect themselves as part of their Islamic duty.

At the highest level of a social order, a ruler is responsible for the welfare of the people as a critical *amanah*, “any ruler over the affairs of the Muslims who does not sincerely and keenly work for their welfare will not enter Paradise with them.” The same goes for all public offices as clearly indicated by this narration by the Abu Dharr, “I said to Messenger of Allah: ‘Why do you not appoint me to an (official) position?’ He patted me on the shoulder with his hand and said, ‘O Abu Dharr, you are a weak man and it is a trust and it will be a cause of disgrace and remorse on the Day of Resurrection except for the one who takes it up with a full sense of responsibility and fulfils what is entrusted to him’” (Mishkat al-Masabih, 3682). Failure to fulfil the *amanah* could thus be a cardinal sin.

In the economic realm, betrayal of trust is similarly condemned as the Prophet said, “he is not one of us who cheats” (Jami’ at-Tirmidhi, 1315). In fact, the whole Islamic economic and financial system is based on the prohibition of cheating, corruption and unlawful gains. Betraying the economic or commercial *amanah* in times of pandemics and crises by seeking unlawful gains is strongly condemned by Islam. In the realm of science and scholarship, in addition to public intellectuals and the media, the concept of *amanah* also applies. Any Muslim is responsible for their knowledge and its consequences.

On the positive side, having influential knowledge and the ability to inform public opinion is of such critical importance as indicated by the hadith, “scholars are the inheritors of the prophets” (Mishkat al-Masabih, 212). On the negative side, every

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word one utters is a grave responsibility as indicated by “and follow not (O man i.e., say not, or do not or witness not, etc.) that of which you have no knowledge. Verily! The hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those you will be questioned (by Allah)” (Qur’an, 17:36). Such involvement in the public realm is also governed by the hadith, “if anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect, and if anyone invites others to follow error, his sin will be equivalent to that of the people who follow him (in sinfulness) without their sins being diminished in any respect” (Mishkat al-Masabih, 158). The *amanah* of public good is taken very seriously in Islam and betraying this *amanah* in times of pandemics can have dire consequences.

In brief, the moral imperative placed on *amanah* by Islam towards all its followers individually or in various social hierarchies is definitive and unavoidable. This imperative is further underscored in the times of pandemics that threaten the lives and livelihoods of Muslim individuals and communities.

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