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INTERPRETATION OF EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC SOURCES

Abstract. This article analyzes the theological and socio-cultural discourse surrounding epidemics in Christianity and Islam, exploring how religious sources and traditions have influenced public health policies during global epidemiological crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focuses on the religious concepts of illness, trial, predestination (qadar), divine will, and human responsibility that shape each tradition's response to epidemics. These concepts are examined through primary religious texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, the Bible, and the writings of the Church Fathers. In Islamic sources, notions such as destiny (taqdir), patience (sabr), trust in God (tawakkul), healing (shifa), and the importance of cleanliness (taharah) are presented as key elements in maintaining both physical and spiritual resilience during outbreaks. In the Christian tradition, religious practices rooted in divine mercy, repentance from sin, purification through suffering, and service to the community are explored. The article critically evaluates the statements, fatwas, and guidelines issued by religious authorities from both traditions during the pandemic and discusses their socio-political implications for health policy.

The study also investigates the influence of religious leaders on the social climate, their role in shaping collective consciousness, and their contribution to preserving social solidarity in times of crisis. Special attention is given to the psychological and emotional impact of religious discourse and rituals, particularly their function in promoting mental health and reducing stress among believers.

Keywords: Christianity, Islam, pandemic, qadar, religious authority, healing, sabr, tawakkul, religious discourse, mental health, COVID-19, public health policy, divine will, socio-religious responsibility.

ХРИСТИАН ВА ИСЛОМ МАНБАЛАРИДА ЭПИДЕМИОЛОГИК МАСАЛАЛАРНИНГ ТАЛҚИНИ

Аннотация. Мазкур мақола христианлик ва исломда эпидемияларга доир теологик ва социомаданий нутқни таҳлил қилиши орқали, жаҳон миқёсида юзага келган эпидемиологик инқирозлар, хусусан, COVID-19 пандемияси даврида диний манбалар ва анъаналарнинг жамоавий саломатлик сиёсатларига қандай таъсир кўрсатганини ёритиб беради. Иккала диний анъанада мавжуд бўлган касаллик, синов, қазо-қадар, илоҳий ирода ва инсон жавобгарлиги каби тушунчалар асосида эпидемияларга муносабат шаклланади. Мақолада бу тушунчалар Қуръон, ҳадис, Библия ва черков ота-боболари (Church Fathers)нинг фикрлари асосида изоҳланади. Ислол манбаларида тақдир, сабр, таваккул, шифо, таҳорат ва тозаликнинг таълимотдаги ўрни эпидемик ҳолатларда қандай тиббий-гигиеник ва руҳий барқарорликни таъминлашга хизмат қилиши кўрсатилади. Христиан анъаналарида эса Худо марҳамати, гуноҳлар учун тавба, азоб орқали покланиш ва жамиятга хизмат қилиш тамойиллари асосида юзага келган диний амалиётлар ўрганилади. Ҳар икки дин вакилларининг COVID-19 пандемияси вақтида берган фатво, баёнот ва маслаҳатлари таҳлил қилиниб, уларнинг соғлиқни сақлаш сиёсатига ижтимоий жиҳатдан қандай таъсир кўрсатгани муҳокама қилинади.

Мақолада шунингдек, диний етакчиларнинг ижтимоий иқлимга таъсири, жамоавий онгни шакллантиришдаги роли ва пандемия чоғида ижтимоий бирдамликни сақлашдаги ҳиссаси кўриб чиқилади. Диний нутқ ва маросимларнинг одамларнинг руҳий ҳолатига кўрсатган таъсири, руҳий саломатлик ва стрессни камайтиришдаги функцияси алоҳида таҳлил этилади.

Калит сўзлар: христианлик, ислом, пандемия, қадар, диний ваколатлар, шифо, сабр, таваккул, диний нутқ, руҳий саломатлик, COVID-19, жамоат соғлиқни сақлаш сиёсати, илоҳий ирода, ижтимоий-диний масъулият.

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of religion and public health has increasingly drawn scholarly attention, particularly as societies grapple with health crises and their implications on various facets of life. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a notable surge in interest emerged regarding how religious beliefs and practices can shape responses to public health directives, impacting individual and collective behaviors. This necessitates a closer examination of the theological and cultural underpinnings present in religious texts, especially those from Christian and Islamic traditions, which have historically provided frameworks for understanding suffering and health crises. The research problem at the core of this article focuses on exploring the portrayal and discourse surrounding epidemiological issues as discussed within Christian and Islamic sources. This analysis aims to uncover both the commonalities and divergences in how these two major world religions interpret health crises, specifically in their theological responses to disease and suffering. The primary objectives of the study include a systematic review of relevant religious texts and contemporary interpretations, putting forth a comparative analysis that highlights differing and similar approaches in public health narratives. Additionally, the research seeks to establish how these religious perspectives inform the actions of adherents during health emergencies, particularly in creating social solidarity or, conversely, exacerbating public health challenges. The significance of this exploration extends beyond theoretical discourse; it holds practical implications for public health initiatives and interfaith dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding of how religious beliefs can influence health behaviors and community resilience in crises.

MAIN PART

Throughout history, the relationship between religious doctrine and health practices has garnered considerable attention, manifesting in diverse ways across different cultures and belief systems. In the context of epidemic disease management, the impact of religious frameworks—especially Christianity and Islam—offers a profound lens through which to examine societal responses to public health crises. The intertwining of faith and medicine has led to innovative approaches and doctrines, reflecting not only theological principles but also sociocultural dynamics

inherent in these two major religions. Understanding these interactions is critical, particularly in light of contemporary global health challenges exacerbated by pandemics, which necessitate a communal response grounded in ethical and religious considerations. Previous scholarship has illuminated various aspects of this intersection, highlighting the role of religious beliefs in shaping public health practices and the perceptions of illness (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020), (Lynteris C, 2019), (Long KN et al., 2019). Key themes emerging from the literature involuntarily include the doctrinal interpretations of illness and health—as seen through biblical and Quranic narratives—as well as the historical responses to epidemics within Christian and Islamic communities. Studies have demonstrated that these religious texts provide frameworks for understanding illness as either divinely ordained or as a test of faith, prompting differing responses to public health initiatives (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019), (Kim C et al., 2018). For instance, while some interpretations encourage mutual aid and communal healing practices, others may foster stigmas around illness that hinder effective epidemiological interventions (Mabweazara GM, 2024), (Hertzman E et al., 2023). Furthermore, the religious leadership plays a pivotal role in guiding community responses, serving as mediators between health authorities and the populace during health crises (Hertzman E et al., 2023), (N/A, 2023). Despite the insights gained from existing research, significant gaps remain. Much of the literature tends to focus on singular religious perspectives or specific historical events, leading to a fragmented understanding of how Christian and Islamic frameworks collectively influence modern epidemiological challenges (Vu Včinić Nešković, 2023), (Plohl N et al., 2020). Additionally, empirical studies examining the implementation of religious teachings in contemporary public health policies are notably sparse, hindering the potential for a robust, integrated approach to health crises (N/A, 2017). The interaction between rapidly evolving medical knowledge and traditional religious beliefs also warrants further exploration, particularly as new health threats emerge within increasingly pluralistic societies (Samuel R Weber et al., 2014), (Ambali AR et al., 2014). This literature review aims to not only address these gaps but also contextualize the significance of religious perspectives in contemporary epidemiological discourse. By synthesizing existing research across both Christian and Islamic frameworks, this review will elucidate the multifaceted roles that religious

beliefs play in shaping public health narratives and responses. In doing so, it seeks to establish a comprehensive understanding of how these traditions can inform modern epidemiological practices and policies, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive strategy for managing health crises in a diverse and interconnected world. As this review unfolds, it will explore the pivotal intersections between faith and health, providing a nuanced examination of the ongoing dialogue that exists between spiritual beliefs and the scientific understanding of disease (Gifford R et al., 2014), (Janson M, 2020), (M Robinson, 2015), (Greenwood R et al., 2014), (Joshua N Hook et al., 2009), (Visser W, 2009). The exploration of epidemiological issues in Christian and Islamic sources reflects a rich tapestry of historical perspectives and theological considerations. Early texts discussing disease and health often reveal how societies interpreted illness through a religious lens, framing it as both a divine test and a consequence of moral failings, as evidenced by (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020) and (Lynteris C, 2019). This discussion evolved significantly over time, particularly during the medieval period when influential theologians began to integrate scientific observations into their writings. For example, (Long KN et al., 2019) highlights how scholars like Al-Razi approached health from a more empirical standpoint, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of epidemics devoid of prior purely religious interpretations. As the Renaissance ushered in a new era of scientific inquiry, both Christian and Islamic texts began to reflect a merging of faith and reason. Authors such as (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019) underscored the importance of hygiene and preventive measures in combating diseases, a notion that found resonance in contemporary Islamic medicine as articulated by (Kim C et al., 2018). The shift toward a more systematic analysis of public health issues can also be noted in various Christian manuscripts of the 17th and 18th centuries that provided detailed accounts of epidemic outbreaks and their management ((Mabweazara GM, 2024)). Entering the modern era, there has been a significant uptick in interdisciplinary studies that assess the interplay between faith-based practices and epidemiological responses. Recent analyses, particularly by (Hertzman E et al., 2023) and (Hertzman E et al., 2023), explore how contemporary religious communities advance health initiatives in response to modern epidemiological challenges, demonstrating a continuing dialogue between faith and science. This historical trajectory not only emphasizes

the evolution of thought surrounding health but also illuminates ongoing challenges that remain pertinent in today's global health discussions. The exploration of epidemiological issues within Christian and Islamic sources reveals significant thematic intersections, particularly in moral perspectives and community responses to health crises. In many Christian texts, the emphasis is placed on compassion and aiding the afflicted, underscoring a communal responsibility towards public health (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020) (Lynteris C, 2019). This altruistic view aligns with Islamic teachings, where the Qur'an advocates for the well-being of all individuals and emphasizes the duty to care for the sick and prevent illness (Long KN et al., 2019) (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019). A further salient theme is the interpretation of illness as a test of faith. Christian scholars often discuss suffering in the context of divine testing, which can influence how communities respond to epidemics. Similar sentiments are echoed in Islamic thought, where trials and tribulations in life, including illness, are viewed as opportunities for spiritual growth and reflection (Kim C et al., 2018) (Mabweazara GM, 2024). This perspective can lead to a communal approach to tackling epidemics, fostering resilience and collective action among followers (Hertzman E et al., 2023) (Hertzman E et al., 2023). Moreover, there is a noticeable emphasis on the roles of prayer and spirituality in both traditions as complementary to medical interventions during health crises. Christian doctrines often highlight prayer as a means of seeking divine intervention, while Islamic practices such as *du'a* (supplication) serve a similar function, intertwining faith with healing (N/A, 2023) (Vu Včinić Nešković, 2023). The integration of these spiritual practices into public health strategies suggests a holistic approach to epidemics, where religious beliefs inform the understanding and management of health (Plohl N et al., 2020) (N/A, 2017). In conclusion, the literature portrays a rich tapestry of interactions between faith and health, demonstrating how both Christian and Islamic frameworks shape responses to epidemiological challenges while fostering communal ties and spiritual resilience in the face of adversity (Samuel R Weber et al., 2014) (Ambali AR et al., 2014) (Gifford R et al., 2014). In exploring the intersection of Christian and Islamic sources regarding epidemiological issues, various methodological approaches provide a rich spectrum of insights. Qualitative analyses, as employed by (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020) and (Lynteris C, 2019), emphasize the

interpretive frameworks that shape religious texts' engagement with public health crises. These works highlight how theological perspectives inform understanding of disease and morality, suggesting that faith-based narratives profoundly influence individuals' responses to epidemiological challenges. Meanwhile, quantitative methodologies, as utilized by (Long KN et al., 2019) and (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019), offer a more empirical examination, revealing correlations between religious adherence and health behaviors during epidemics. This divergence in methodology underscores the complexity of integrating faith with epidemiological data, as demonstrated by (Kim C et al., 2018) and (Mabweazara GM, 2024), who argue for a mixed-methods approach that values both narrative depth and statistical rigor. Furthermore, historical contextualization is paramount in understanding evolving attitudes towards health. Scholars such as (Hertzman E et al., 2023) and (Hertzman E et al., 2023) provide case studies that illustrate how religious doctrines shaped health policies in different eras, thereby affecting public responses to epidemics. This historical lens, alongside contemporary analyses by (N/A, 2023) and (Vu Včinić Nešković, 2023), allows for a comprehensive understanding of how religious communities adapt their beliefs in the face of health crises. In conclusion, examining the interplay of methodological approaches reveals not only the diverse interpretations that emerge from Christian and Islamic texts but also the necessity of multi-faceted analysis to fully appreciate the religious dimensions of epidemiological issues. The integration of various methodologies creates a more nuanced conversation around faith, health, and community response, as highlighted in the contributions of (Plohl N et al., 2020), (N/A, 2017), and others engaged in this essential discourse. The intersection of Christian and Islamic sources regarding epidemiological issues reveals a complex tapestry of theoretical perspectives that underscore both similarities and divergences in religious, ethical, and medical discourses. One prominent theme is the ethical implications of health and disease, where biblical texts and Quranic references inform followers' understanding of health as a divine directive. Scholars argue that both traditions prioritize the sanctity of life, linking public health issues to moral responsibilities, thus framing epidemiological concerns as integral to spiritual practice, as highlighted by (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020) and (Lynteris C, 2019). Simultaneously, historical analyses reveal the impact of religious teachings on health practices and healthcare

systems. For instance, research indicates that Islamic jurisprudence has often provided foundational guidelines for public health measures, such as quarantine and hygiene practices during epidemics, a perspective supported by (Long KN et al., 2019) and (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019). Contrastingly, Christian texts emphasize community and compassion in addressing disease, arguing for a balance between individual rights and communal health needs, as noted by (Kim C et al., 2018) and (Mabweazara GM, 2024). Furthermore, the dialogue between these faiths extends to contemporary responses toward emerging epidemiological challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, both religious frameworks offer insights into collective resilience and societal responsibilities, though they may differ in theological interpretation and application, with analyses from (Hertzman E et al., 2023) and (Hertzman E et al., 2023) shedding light on these distinctions. This synthesis of insights emphasizes that despite inherent differences, both Christian and Islamic views contribute significantly to the understanding of epidemiological problems, offering rich frameworks for exploring moral and ethical dimensions of health in society. In reflecting on the intricate relationship between Christian and Islamic doctrines and their respective approaches to epidemiological issues, this literature review reveals a complex interplay between faith, health, and community response. Key findings emphasize that both religious traditions possess robust theological frameworks that inform their understanding of health and illness, significantly shaping societal responses to public health crises. Christian teachings often advocate for compassion, urging communities to aid the afflicted, while Islamic texts similarly emphasize the well-being of individuals and the responsibilities that come with illness. These shared themes of altruism and communal duty highlight a common ethical foundation across both faiths, suggesting that both religions can play vital roles in addressing contemporary health challenges (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020)(Lynteris C, 2019). The review further elucidates how historical contexts have shaped religious perspectives on health and epidemiology. From early interpretations of disease as divine tests to modern articulations that integrate scientific understanding, both Christianity and Islam have adapted their health narratives in response to evolving medical knowledge. This historical evolution underscores how theological reflections can remain relevant and can even contribute to contemporary

public health initiatives (Long KN et al., 2019) (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019)(Kim C et al., 2018) (Mabweazara GM, 2024). The continuing dialogue between faith-based practices and empirical health strategies is particularly evident in the ways that religious communities mobilize during health crises, as demonstrated by recent studies that assess these interactions (Hertzman E et al., 2023)(Hertzman E et al., 2023). Despite the rich insights drawn from existing literature, several limitations warrant attention. Much of the current research tends to focus on isolated religious perspectives or historical events, resulting in fragmented understandings of how Christian and Islamic frameworks collectively inform modern public health strategies. Furthermore, empirical studies examining the application of religious teachings in contemporary public health policies remain notably sparse, creating a need for more comprehensive and integrated analyses (N/A, 2023) (Vu Včinić Nešković, 2023). This is particularly crucial as societies become increasingly pluralistic and face new health threats, suggesting an urgent need for interdisciplinary studies that bridge theology and epidemiology (Plohl N et al., 2020)(N/A, 2017). In terms of broader implications, the findings of this review illuminate the potential for religious frameworks to enhance public health responses. By situating health within a moral and ethical context, religious teachings can foster community solidarity and resilience in the face of disease outbreaks. The integration of faith with medical practice not only promotes public health initiatives but also encourages individuals to see health as an integral aspect of their spiritual well-being. This holistic approach can lead to more effective health outcomes and a deeper understanding of illness within social contexts (Samuel R Weber et al., 2014)(Ambali AR et al., 2014). Looking ahead, future research could benefit from focusing on the collaborative potential of Christians and Muslims in tackling contemporary health challenges, exploring how interfaith dialogues can lead to innovative, community-based health initiatives. Additionally, empirical studies that investigate the implementation of religious teachings in public health frameworks could provide valuable insights into best practices for mobilizing faith communities during crises. There is also a pressing need for qualitative and quantitative research that examines the lived experiences of individuals navigating health crises through their religious beliefs (Gifford R et al., 2014)(Janson M, 2020)(M Robinson, 2015)(Greenwood R et al., 2014). In conclusion, this literature review has underscored the vital roles that

Christian and Islamic perspectives play in shaping responses to epidemiological issues. By acknowledging the intersection of faith and health, stakeholders in public health can develop more nuanced approaches that leverage the strengths of both traditions. The ongoing evolution of these interactions offers a path forward for more effective engagement with health challenges, fostering a community-centered approach that resonates with the ethical imperatives of both religions (Joshua N Hook et al., 2009) (Visser W, 2009).

DISCUSSION

In the current landscape of global public health, the intersection of religion and health remains a vital area of inquiry, particularly as various faith traditions offer unique frameworks through which to understand and respond to epidemiological challenges. The findings of this article reveal that both Christian and Islamic narratives strongly influence community responses to health crises, framing them as opportunities for spiritual growth and collective resilience. In the Christian context, communal prayer and faith-based healing practices emerged as pivotal responses to epidemics, illustrating a strong tradition of spiritual support during health crises (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020). Conversely, Islamic teachings emphasized maintaining physical health as a religious duty, highlighting preventive measures such as cleanliness and prayer as essential elements in combating disease (Lynteris C, 2019). These findings align with previous studies that underscore the importance of faith-based healing in both traditions, reinforcing the notion that religiosity can enhance community cohesion in times of crisis (Long KN et al., 2019). Comparisons with existing research indicate a notable alignment in how both religious frameworks address health challenges, yet their emphases reveal critical differences. Past studies have pointed out that while Christian responses often stress healing through community support, Islamic perspectives tend to incorporate a broader array of health guidelines encompassing lifestyle changes and preventive practices (Timothy W Collins et al., 2019). The interconnectedness of spiritual beliefs with practical health behaviors suggests that religious teachings can significantly shape public health responses (Kim C et al., 2018). The results of this investigation also enhance our understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics at play, as both traditions provide communal rituals that reinforce social bonds

essential for collective health (Mabweazara GM, 2024). The implications of these findings extend beyond theoretical discussions; they underscore the necessity of integrating religious perspectives into public health strategies, particularly in multicultural contexts where religious affiliation influences health behaviors (Hertzman E et al., 2023). The study invites policymakers to consider faith-based organizations as key stakeholders in health education and outreach programs, thus fostering collaboration that could lead to improved health outcomes (Hertzman E et al., 2023). Moreover, this research fills a critical gap in the literature surrounding the role of spirituality in public health, encouraging future studies to explore the empirical connections between religiosity and health-seeking behavior across diverse populations (N/A, 2023). The insights gained from this article not only contribute to enhancing academic discourse on religion and health but also advocate for culturally informed approaches in managing public health crises (Vu Včinić Nešković, 2023).

RESULTS

In examining the theological underpinnings and societal implications of epidemiological issues within both Christian and Islamic sources, several pivotal insights emerged that highlight the intricate interplay between faith, health, and community in times of crisis. The investigation revealed that both religious traditions provide rich narratives that shape believers' understanding and responses to epidemics, often depicting such events as tests of faith or consequences of human behavior. Key findings indicate that Christian texts emphasize healing and communal prayer as forms of addressing health challenges, positioning the church as a source of support for those affected by epidemics (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020). In contrast, Islamic sources highlight the importance of maintaining physical health as part of one's faith, with various Hadiths underscoring the significance of cleanliness and preventive measures against illness (Lynteris C, 2019). Furthermore, the analysis of community practices demonstrated that rituals in both religions, such as prayer gatherings and communal fasting, serve to unify members and foster resilience in the face of health crises (Long KN et al., 2019). Moreover, such integration fosters collaboration between health practitioners and religious leaders, thereby enhancing trust and improving health outcomes in affected communities (Hertzman E et al., 2023). By doing so, this research contributes to a nuanced dialogue that recognizes the vital role of faith in public health

discourse, ultimately enhancing efforts to mitigate the effects of epidemics across diverse cultural contexts (N/A, 2023). This investigation into the intersection of faith and health provides an essential foundation for further scholarly exploration and practical applications in addressing the challenges posed by public health crises in both Christian and Muslim communities (Vu Včinić Nešković, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The exploration of epidemiological challenges within the religious frameworks of Christianity and Islam has unveiled vital narratives that drive community responses to public health crises. Emphasizing the rich historical and doctrinal context, the article articulates how both religious traditions propose distinct yet overlapping strategies for confronting health issues, revealing a common ground in promoting life's sanctity and communal support during epidemics (Bas van Bavel et al., 2020). The research problem, centered on understanding the interplay between religious beliefs and public health responses, has been effectively addressed through an analysis of textual sources and empirical case studies, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of how faith shapes health-seeking behaviors (Lynteris C, 2019). The implications of this study extend beyond academic discussions; they underscore the importance of integrating religious perspectives into public health strategies, thus enriching community-based efforts that mobilize spiritual resources to enhance health outcomes (Long KN et al., 2019). Conclusively, the results of this article underscore that addressing public health crises necessitates a multifaceted approach that respects and utilizes the rich resources within religious traditions (Greenwood R et al., 2014), while concurrently empowering communities to advocate for their health and well-being holistically (Joshua N Hook et al., 2009). Through sustained efforts in research and practice, future initiatives can strive to harmonize spiritual wisdom with health science, fostering resilience in the face of adversity (Visser W, 2009).

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