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The Effect of Covid-19 on moral commitment and the role of Islamic fatwas in promoting morality, the case of Qatar

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Abstract

The present study, which is the first study of its kind in Qatar, revolves around the role of Islamic fatwas at the state of Qatar on the moral commitment of a sample of Qatar university employees (faculty and staff) during the time of COVID-19.

The study mainly tried to explore the community's response to these fatwas and its impact on societal guidance. Therefore, it tried to answer the main question of the study which is what is the effect of the pandemic on people's behavior and system of values?

This study aims to assess the role of Islamic fatwas at the state of Qatar on the moral commitment of a sample of Qatar university employees (faculty and staff) during the time of COVID-19. To achieve this aim and answer the questions of the study, an e-questionnaire was developed, validated by a group of experts, and administered on a representative sample of the population of the study (n =244), from Qatar university employees (faculty and staff) during the academic year 2022-2023. For quantitative data, the descriptive approach was employed using SPSS-28, while content analysis

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was applied to the qualitative data collected in response to the open-ended question in the questionnaire.

Results showed that COVID-19 pandemic affected the religious values as 60% of the participants sought spiritual support through worship, 64% had a positive attitude towards improving ties of kinship, and 49% increased the sense of social responsibility. The study also showed the importance of the role of religious scholars in society, especially in times of crisis when people refer to their fatwas and guidance for enlightenment. In conclusion, Fatwas played a vital role in reinforcing many moral values although other values were badly affected by the outbreak of the pandemic. .

Keywords: pandemics, emergencies, moral system, religious fatwa, COVID-19

أثر كوفيد 19 - على الالتزام الأخلاقي ودور الفتاوى الإسلامية في نشر الأخلاق ، حالة قطر

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ملخص البحث

تعد الدراسة الحالية الدراسة الأولى من نوعها حول دور الفتاوى الإسلامية في دولة قطر على الالتزام الأخلاقي لعينة من موظفي جامعة قطر (الهيئة التدريسية والإدارية) خلال فترة جائحة كوفيد-19. وقد حاولت الدراسة بشكل رئيسي استكشاف استجابة المجتمع القطري لهذه الفتاوى وتأثيرها على التوجيه الاجتماعي. وبالتالي، حاولت الإجابة على السؤال الرئيسي للدراسة، وهو إلى أي مدى أثرت الجائحة على سلوك الأشخاص ونظام القيم لديهم؟ وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم دور الفتاوى الإسلامية في دولة قطر على الالتزام الأخلاقي لعينة من موظفي جامعة قطر (الهيئة التدريسية والإدارية) خلال فترة جائحة كوفيد-19. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف والإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة، تم تطوير استبانة إلكترونية وتم التحقق من صحتها من قبل مجموعة من الخبراء، وتم توزيعها على عينة من أعضاء هيئة التدريس والموظفين بجامعة قطر قدرها 234 فرداً، خلال العام الجامعي 2022 - 2023، واستُخدم المنهج الوصفي للبيانات الكمية باستخدام برنامج SPSS-28، في حين تم تطبيق تحليل المحتوى على البيانات الكيفية المجمعة كجواب على السؤال المفتوح في الاستبانة. وأظهرت النتائج أن جائحة كوفيد-19 أثرت على القيم الدينية حيث توخى 60 ٪ من المشاركين الدعم الروحي من خلال العبادة، وكان لدى 64 ٪ منهم نظرة إيجابية تجاه تحسين العلاقات مع ذوي القربى، وزاد لدى 49 ٪ منهم الشعور بالمسؤولية الاجتماعية. وكذلك أظهرت الدراسة أهمية دور علماء الدين في المجتمع، خاصة في أوقات الأزمات عندما يلجأ الناس إلى فتاواهم وتوجيهاتهم للإرشاد. والخلاصة أنه كان للفتاوى دور حيوي في تعزيز العديد من القيم الأخلاقية على الرغم من أن قيماً أخرى تأثرت سلباً بانتشار الجائحة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوباء، الطوارئ، النظام الأخلاقي، الفتاوى الدينية، كوفيد 19.

1. Introduction

The Effect of Covid-19 on moral commitment and the role of Islamic fatwas in promoting morality, the case of Qatar is the core of this article. COVID-19 is considered one of the prominent events that changed the face of the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It shocked everyone with its dangers and extended period, led to changes in the societal, economic and cultural lifestyles, and restored the state of medieval epidemics and plagues that ravaged humanity in the past centuries. Medicine as well as religion have combined forces to besiege the pandemic and reduce its physical, psychological and societal damage. Islam, as the last testament, calls for morality and individual commitment to the values of righteousness, righteousness, love and helping the poor, the needy, and the sick. The ethical teachings of Islam contributed to spreading the spirit of optimism and trust in God among people during difficult times, especially those affected by the epidemic.⁽¹⁾

The Qatari society, like other societies, witnessed the dangers of the pandemic, and encountered various stances and responses to it. Religious fatwa [legal ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified scholar in response to a question posed by an individual or government] was strongly present in this matter, especially since the matter was related to restrictions on ritual

(1) The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb televised speech, on (March 29, 2020), called individuals and societies to turn to God with prayer and supplication so that God would remove this crisis and reveal this anguish. See Abdelkader Bekhouche, and Zainab Rahmatullah. "COVID-19 Pandemic and the Moral Values in Christianity and Islam". *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam*, Special Issue on COVID -19, p.385, November 2022. <https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/afkar/article/view/40642/15179>

practices such as banning religious gatherings including congregational prayers, ceremonial and condolence gatherings, as well as preventing pilgrimage [Hajj and Umra] and other religious tourism⁽¹⁾. The response to such restrictions varied between compliance, rejection, or reservation. However, societal control and preservative laws approved by the state made the Qatari society survive safely the damages of this pandemic. Perspective seems the catalyst that made it happen during such crisis, which should be explored to uncover the aspects of its success and exploit them in facing similar crises. The question here is: What is the role of religious fatwa (presence vs. absence), and people's response to it (compliance vs. rejection) in the success of endeavors to survive COVID-19 at the state of Qatar? More specifically, the study seeks to investigate the effect of fatwa and people's response to it on the moral system in the state of Qatar during the pandemic. To answer these questions, a questionnaire was developed as the main instrument of the study. It included dimensions that measure the aforementioned questions. The aim of the study is to reach answers to these questions in order to provide well-based recommendations to correct the deficiency and complete the success. The problem of

(1) This study of religious fatwas were based on the fatwas found in the following institutions' sites:

the official site of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs is: (islamweb.net); the official site of the International Union of Muslim Scholars is: <https://www.iumsonline.org/ar>; and the official site of al-Balagh Cultural Association is: <https://balaghcs.org/>. See also the following sites for statistics on COVID-19 in the State of Qatar:

Ministry of Health Site, State of Qatar: <https://sehhty.com/qa-covid/>; and Ministry of Public Health site, State of Qatar: <https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/default.aspx>.

the research can be summarized in the following three main dimensions: Firstly, the religious fatwa's response to the pandemic and whether it appropriate and relevant to the posed challenges. Secondly, the community's response to these fatwas and its impact on societal guidance. Thirdly, the effect of these two dimensions on the system of values, and whether this system witnessed tremors, changes, or stability and potential enrichment. From these main dimensions, the following questions branch:

1. What was the prevailing attitude in the Qatari society towards COVID-19 vaccination and
2. What were the sources of obtaining fatwas related to COVID-19?
3. To what extent did fatwa authorities respond to developments in medical research on COVID-19?
4. How committed were respondents to the fatwas issued by the religious authorities related to COVID-19?
5. How did the participants contribute to raising awareness or provide humanitarian aid regarding the seriousness of the pandemic?

Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of this study are to explore the response of religious fatwas to challenges of COVID-19; measure the effects of related fatwas on the system of values in terms of societal commitment during the pandemic; assess the community response to these fatwas, and its effect on promoting good citizenship; measure the religious contribution to raising medical awareness and sustaining societal harmony; and measure the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the system of values.

Literature review:

There are no studies, to the researchers' knowledge, that were dedicated to measuring people's moral commitment to the fatwas issued by scholarly authorities in the State of Qatar. Most of what is published is a description of the pandemic and a monitoring of its medical and social developments.⁽¹⁾ Because of the absence of similar previous studies, this study did not compare its results with other studies.

Methodology:

The descriptive analytical approach was employed whether in the analysis of fatwas or in measuring of the effect of crises and emerging risks on the value system. Data were collected through a questionnaire that was developed and validated through SPSS version 27. Based on the statistical analysis, answers were provided to the questions of the study and conclusions were presented.

2. Fatwa and its institutions in the State of Qatar.

Islamic fatwa constitutes one of the most important aspects of the social stability in the State of Qatar due to the religiosity of the population whose majority follow the Hanbali school of law⁽²⁾. This school of law is distinguished by its strong presence in the

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- (1) There are many general studies related to COVID-19 and its effect on the Islamic moral aspects such as this important study: Ayman Shabana, "From the Plague to the Coronavirus: Islamic Ethics and Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 5 (2021) p.4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340060>.
 - (2) 'Abd Al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allāh Āl-Thānī, & Jāsim ibn Muḥammad Al-Jābir. 1440 A.H.. *Tārīkh Al-madhāhib Al-fiqhīyah fī Qaṭar*, (in Arabic), 2nd ed., Doha: Āfāq lil-Nashr, p.39.

daily life, especially after the emergence of Wahhabism in Najd which represented a major renewal within the Hanbali school.

Life was very simple before the oil period⁽¹⁾, where the general affair of the population was grazing for Bedouins, limited trade for urbanites, and some marine economic activity represented in diving in search of pearls⁽²⁾. Therefore, the fatwa was characterized by simplicity, as it dealt with daily and seasonal matters in religious regulations that focused mostly on prayer, fasting, zakat, marriage, and some financial contracts.

With the establishment of institutions in the modern state in Qatar, the idea of institutionalizing religious fatwa emerged. In the year (1958), Sharia-based courts were established, headed by Mufti 'Abdullah bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud⁽³⁾, and their tasks were limited to religious education, managing mosques, issuing fatwas, and organizing the religious affairs during the seasons of Ramadan and Hajj.

The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs was established by the Emiri Act No. (1) of 1992⁽⁴⁾, consequent to which the tasks of Sharia courts were abolished by the Emiri Act No. (9) of 1993. Accordingly, the fatwa became the responsibility

(1) Shafi Al-Hajri, "The Will of Sheikh Qasim bin Mohammed Al Thani, the Founder of the State of Qatar (1827-1913) A Descriptive and Analytical Study", (in Arabic), Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies 37 (1), pp.51-76, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.29117/jcsis.2019.0229>.

(2) Mufid Al-Zubaydī, Tārīkh Qaṭar Al-mu'āṣir (1913-2008), (in Arabic), Jourdan, Dār al-Manāhij, p.18, 2010.

(3) 'Abd Al-Raḥmān Āl- Maḥmūd, Sīrat 'Abd Allāh ibn Zayd Al-Maḥmūd, (in Arabic), Doha, n.d..

(4) 'Alī Aḥmad Mansūr, et. al., Mawsū'at Al-tashrī'āt Al-Qaṭariyah, (in Arabic), Doha, Al-Majlis Al-A'lā lil-Qaḍā', p.714, 2011.

of the units of this new ministry. So, it can be said that the fatwa authorities in the State of Qatar are divided into two streams:

The Official Fatwa Bodies: These are mainly represented in the Fatwa Board of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. As the ministry developed, new scientific cadres were introduced into it, and a Fatwa Department was established. One of its tasks was issuing fatwas through its online platform⁽¹⁾.

1. providing live fatwa and aiding governmental institutions and bureaus with sound consultations. An outstanding group of researchers and scholars work at the online platform which is distinguished by its permanent presence in answering the religious questions of Muslims.
2. **The bodies affiliated to the Ministry:** These are the bodies that support the Ministry in its educational, awareness-raising and fatwa work, and they are divided between official bodies and other civil ones, such as:
 - a. Sheikh 'Abdullah bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud Center which is approved by the Qatari e-government and provides fatwas over the phone or online. As stated in its description: "the center provides religious advice, consultations and fatwas over the phone in different languages especially Urdu, Pashto, Hindi, and Bengali, due to the large presence of these communities in expatriate labor.
 - b. The International Union of Muslim Scholars: This is a large scholarly union founded by Sheikh Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaraḍāwī in 2004. It has been based in Doha since then and headed

(1) The official site of Islamweb net is: (islamweb.net).

now by professor Nur al-Din al-Khadami with a council of professionals and academics who work in the State of Qatar⁽¹⁾.

- c. Media organizations, such as the Holy Qur'an Radio, Noor Al-Islam Radio, Qatar TV and Al-Rayyan TV. These host scholars and professors of the College of Sharia in Qatar in addition to other sheikhs of the Ministry of Endowments who provide religious views and directives. Their fatwas do not deviate from the general pattern in the State of Qatar.
- d. Al-Balagh Cultural Association: This is a da'wah-oriented association that runs the well-known website, "Islam Online" Which is the first da'wah-based website to be launched in the world, basically thanks to Sheikh Yusuf Al- Qaraḏāwī⁽²⁾.
- e. Mosques: They are either Friday-only or regular-prayer mosques, in which imams play an important role in performing Islamic rituals, providing the neighborhood with spiritual needs, and strengthening religious ceremonies and social activities.

3. Religious fatwas about COVID-19 in Qatar (description and analysis).

With the rapid spread of COVID-19 disease in December (2019) in its catastrophic form after its first appearance in China, the procedures for closures, quarantines, and emergencies were

(1) The official site of the International Union of Muslim Scholars is: <https://www.iuumonline.org/ar>.

(2) The official site of al-Balagh Cultural Association is: <https://balaghcs.org/>.

unprecedented in the world since World War II. Religious fatwa was ready to take its strong and remarkable place in response. It is noticeable that most of the fatwas were issued in the first half of the year (2020) when people were confined to their homes, and panic prevailed because of this unexpected and unwelcomed visitor.

Governmental bodies responded to the many fatwas issued during the pandemic. A flood of fatwas was issued from the official authorities, including the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, its platform (Islamweb), the International Union of Muslim Scholars, and other platforms such as Islam Online. These fatwas were further enhanced when the Ministry of Health provided statistics and guidelines.

The fatwas were not local only, as the fatwa bodies in Qatar received questions from abroad, from non-Qataris, or from Qataris who were blocked from home because of the quarantine and travel restrictions.

Sources of the fatwas included all the books of Islamic jurisprudence, especially the sources of the Hanbali school of law represented in the books of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim. These sources were mostly moderate in rulings.

Topics of the fatwas varied according to the developments of the pandemic and the related restrictions. Initially, fatwas focused on the prayer and the closure of mosques, fasting and its related rituals such as the Tarawih prayer and l'tikāf (religious seclusion during the month of Ramadan) with the advent of the month of Ramadan, then fatwas were related to sacrifices in the month of Dhul-Hijjah. With the reopening of mosques with imposed social

distancing, fatwas addressed the medical, financial and social issues of concern.

For the limitation of the study, I will only confine the study to the fatwas related to medical, ritual, and social issues.

3.1 Medical fatwas.

Most of these were in response to questions posed by health practitioners, especially in issues of purification and prayer at times of crowded medical treatment and caring for patients, where ablution is not possible under the usual conditions. Fatwas allowed them to pray without either ablution or tayammum – analogous with those losing both purifiers - in exceptional cases where it is not possible to uncover the face for tayammum or ablution. Likewise, the person infected with COVID-19 who is unable to perform ablution, does not find someone to help him, or can't find dust for tayammum, they can also pray without either⁽¹⁾. (Fatwa # 425053 and Union's fatwa # 6). Those persons (the practitioners and the patients) were allowed to combine the two joint prayers or make up for missed prayers if it was not possible for them to pray in time due to preoccupation with treatment (Fatwa # 423004 and Union's fatwa # 6).

The issues of sterilization with the use of alcohol also received a number of questions. Fatwas stated it this case of alcohol use is pure according to some opinions by Muhammad Rashid Rida, and the fatwa of the Islamic Fiqh Academy that states: "It is

(1) It should be noted here that all the fatwas cited in this article which are taken from the the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs site will be cited as: (Fatwa #) followed by its number, if the fatwa is from another authority, I will specify its origin.

permissible to use medicines that contain alcohol in consumable proportions required by the pharmaceutical industry where there is no substitute for it, provided that it is prescribed by a trustworthy doctor. It is also permissible to use alcohol as an external disinfectant for wounds, as a killer of germs, and in external creams and lotions.” (Fatwa # 420430) Accordingly, mosques cleaned by alcohol were also considered pure and valid for prayer.

The most critical queries came from outside the State of Qatar in the issue of priority among patient in resuscitation and respiration devices, and the possibility of drawing lots among patients to see who gets them first, and the ethicality of removing these devices from those whose life was hopeless. In addition, there were the issues related to rights in life, and not reviving one soul by killing another as Muslims are equal in terms of rights in life. Fatwas adopted the position of following the consensus of doctors in such cases (Fatwa #420442).

In addition, fatwas considered a person who does not follow health precautions, especially wearing the mask, to be committing a religious prohibition, following the fatwas issued by the Jeddah Council, the European Council for Fatwa, and Al-Azhar Al-Sharif. (Fatwa # 440419)

The authorities in Qatar issued fatwas that receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is not breaking the fast of the fasting person. If infected by the disease, a patient is permitted to break the fast, but they need to make up for these days after recovery. (Fatwas # 441220 and 441805)

Fatwas unanimously stated that it is obligatory to follow the

doctors' instructions, and that violating them is a violation of Sharia. Fatwas also emphasized the importance of quarantine for those infected with COVID-19. "It is not permissible for a patient to violate the sanitary quarantine, as it would be a cause of transmitting the disease to healthy people" (Union's fatwa #12). They recommended taking the vaccination, and explained: "not taking the vaccination is not suicide, nor is it self-killing, but the Muslim is sinful if he forsakes it while the need is common, harm to others is inevitable and vaccines are available and safe." (Fatwa # 449764). Fatwas prohibited giving a vaccination certificate to those who did not take it because it was cheating (Fatwa # 450484), and recommended adopting the opinions of doctors alone, especially when it comes to the effects of the vaccine on women's monthly menses. (Fatwas # 454102).

3.2 Ritual fatwas:

3.2.1 Congregational Prayers:

Most of these fatwas were around not attending congregational prayers for fear of infection, and the reprehensibility of masking. Fatwas explained that it was permissible to miss the congregational prayer because infection and communicable diseases are permissible excuses for that, and that the ruling on the reprehensibility of masking became abrogated temporarily for prevention. Fatwas even prevented the infected person from attending mosques for prayer by analogy to the ruling of the leper (Fatwas # 414331, 52652 and 64200). These were followed by fatwas stating that it is permissible to make prayer rooms in homes as a matter of preserving the congregation, but they are not as sacred as the mosque (Fatwas # 415444 and 423517). In

addition, the fatwa of the International Union of Muslim Scholars was that it was not permissible to pray in congregation (at mosques), for these unusual circumstances. This fatwa was issued by al-Raisouni and al-Qaradaghi, on 15-4-2020⁽¹⁾.

Fatwas justified the closure of mosques to limit the spread of the virus because as medical specialists confirm that in such gatherings the infection is inevitable. (Fatwa # 417253). There were many questions about distancing in congregational prayers. Fatwas indicated its permissibility because congregation is a desirable tradition, but it should be avoided to reduce contact and infection (Fatwas # 420427, 423259, 424390, and the Union's fatwa #15). Fatwas authorized absence in congregation during times of infectious diseases even if people go out to seek their needs, shop or work (Fatwas # 443068, 414331 and 423232).

There were also fatwas concerned with not responding to the call to prayer (Azan) when the mosques are closed, and the way to chant it. Fatwas recommended not to disrupt the chanting of the Azan because it is an essential ritual (Fatwas # 416818 and 423898). Some fatwas invalidated the view of following the imam via television or live broadcast (Fatwa # 417844) contrary to those who validated it. Some fatwas were related to washing on Friday, and whether it remains a tradition when the Friday prayer is suspended (Fatwa # 416860).

The International Union of Muslim Scholars however preferred that the Friday prayer not be completely suspended, and that it be held with only three persons, as a matter of reviving the ritual

(1) This fatwa is in the official site of the International Union of Muslim Scholars: (<https://www.iumsonline.org/ar/ContentDetails.aspx?ID=11329>).

and not abandoning it altogether (Union's fatwa # 10), but it stated that it is not permissible to perform the Friday prayer by watching television, radio, or other means of communication, and that it should be replaced by the noon prayer as long as the circumstances persist (Union's fatwa # 3).

3.2.2 Washing of the deceased:

There were fatwas which declared that all Muslims who die because of the pandemic are considered martyrs if they died patiently according to the hadiths in Sahih Al-Bukhari⁽¹⁾ and other sources (Scholars' union Fatwa # 2). Such fatwa made people feel tranquility and condolence for their dead beloved ones.

The issues of funerals, washing and burial of the deceased received a lot of questions for fatwa due to the causalities of the pandemic. The issue of washing the deceased in particular was more important at the beginning of the pandemic when medical researchers had not decided yet on the transmissibility of the virus after death. The fatwa stated: "a deceased must be washed but all necessary precautions must be taken to prevent the disease from being transmitted to others when washing. If it is possible to perform complete washing, then it is sufficient to pour water over the body from a distance by not touching the body. If this is not possible and it was proved that using water is risky of infection, then tayammum (dry wash using dust) is enough by touching dust to the face and hands of the deceased. Jurists

(1) Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, (in Arabic), ed. Muḥammad Zuhayr Al-Nāṣir, Beirut: Dār Ṭawq Al-najāh, hadith no. 3474, 1422 A.H..

stipulated that whenever a body cannot be washed, tayammum should be performed, and if tayammum is not possible either, then it is waived, but the funeral prayer should be observed. So, a deceased is prayed on even if the body is not washed, or tayammum was not performed for it. (Fatwa # 416968, and the Union's fatwa # 13).

This fatwa was backed by the union's fatwa which approved the substitution of washing with pouring water from afar, otherwise the obligation of washing would be waived. That fatwa also permitted burial in coffins, but strongly prevented the burning of the dead, whatever the circumstances." (Union's fatwa # 4). The union thanked the non-Islamic countries that took into account the religious specificities of Muslims.

Another fatwa stated that it is permissible to restructure cemeteries by building a second floor for necessity, regardless of the original ruling that prohibits this, is due to the large number of deaths in the pandemic (Fatwas # 428977, 29974, 2994339, 141116, and 106206). It was stated: "gathering more than one dead body in one grave should be the first step. If this is not enough, then building a second floor can be done based on necessity. The fatwa referred to the views of Imam Juwainī and Nawwawī who said that it is desirable to get every dead person is in one grave, but when it is difficult to single out every dead person in a grave, two or three can be buried together in a grave⁽¹⁾." Such fatwas was mainly directed to other countries not

(1) Sharaf Al-Dīn al- Nawwawī, *Rawḍat Al-ṭālibīn*, (in Arabic), ed. Zuhayr Al-Shāwīsh, 3rd ed., Beirut: Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, p.138, 1991.

Qatar as the number of casualties in Qatar was not big as we can recognize from the numbers in 14/11/2022⁽¹⁾.

With regard to fasting, fatwas had a consensus that COVID-19 was not a permission to break the fast, except for those who are infected and unable to fast, so their ruling becomes the ruling of the sick person who is authorized to break the fast. They have to make up those days after the month and after recovering from the disease (Union's fatwa # 10). The fatwa added that fasting in fact enhances physical immunity according to the views of doctors and specialists.

3.3 Social Fatwas:

These were numerous due to their connection with the necessities and needs of everyday life, including fatwas related to marriage and divorce (Fatwa # 416890 and 433813).. Such social issues were also closely related to the suspension of wedding ceremonies due to the quarantine and social isolation during the pandemic. Likewise, fatwas recommended banning mourning councils and limiting them to the means of social networks in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic (Union's fatwa # 2).

In general, fatwas prohibited all social or recreational activities during the time of the pandemic, and considered the person who

(1) See the Ministry of Public Health's site, State of Qatar: <https://sehhty.com/qa-covid/> & the Ministry of Public Health site, State of Qatar: <https://covid19.moph.gov.qa/EN/Pages/default.aspx>.

does not comply to the health procedures and restrictions to be casting oneself and contacts into annihilation, which is strongly prohibited in Islam (Fatwa # 417817). Fatwas recommended not to isolate from parents but to take due precautions when contacting them, because the epidemic is not a justification for forsaking them, which is one of the paths of disobedience (Fatwa # 419788 and 419899). Persons may follow the funeral of their deceased parents if there is no harm (Union's fatwa # 13), as Islamic values attach great importance to caring for the family, especially parents and offspring.

Many fatwas were related to psychological readiness and religious preparation to deal with the pandemic, and not to succumb to rumors or fall into fear of them (Fatwa # 415966). In the same vein, the state was supported in the right to monitor the situation and legislate the necessary procedures (Fatwa # 417253). In a similar manner, some fatwas permitted the dissemination of Friday sermon recordings over different media means provided that these do not replace the suspended ritual of the congregational Friday prayer. (Fatwa # 417811)

4. The Field study (instrumentation and analysis).

4.1 Population and sample:

The population study is consisted of all members of Qatar University, including faculty, staff and researchers, during the academic year 2022-2023. The multi inverse Post stratified sampling design was used, where in the first stage the e-version of the questionnaire was sent to all members of the population, and in the

second stage the questionnaire was resent to the members of the strata whose response rates were low compared to others in the original population with a number of reminders sent until a percentage representative of the population was reached⁽¹⁾.

Members of the population were divided into several groups (male employees, male faculty, female employees and female faculty). The link to the questionnaire was sent during November 2022 to all members of the research population, $n = 3,160$ ⁽²⁾ (contact data with them was obtained from the Department of Research and Institutional Effectiveness - Qatar University). After the initial responses received at this stage for each group, the questionnaire was sent again to the participants whose response rates were low. After a number of reminders, the total number of respondents to the questionnaire from all groups was [$n = 244$ persons], 66% of whom were males compared to 34% for females. As for their distribution according to occupation, faculty members were 53% compared to 47% from employees. The sample ages ranged from 20 to 65 years. Figure (1) shows the distribution of respondents according to their gender, nationalities, occupation, and age group.

(1) M. Hasan. "Developing A two-phase post-stratified inverse sampling to reduce the nonresponse bias for students' satisfaction survey in Qatar University", Online published Master's Thesis, Qatar, Qatar University, June, 2019. https://qspace.qu.edu.qa/bitstream/handle/10576/11664/Mahmood%20Ahmed%20_OGS%20Approved%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

(2) Qatar University. "Institutional Research and Effectiveness Report , Fall 2022.

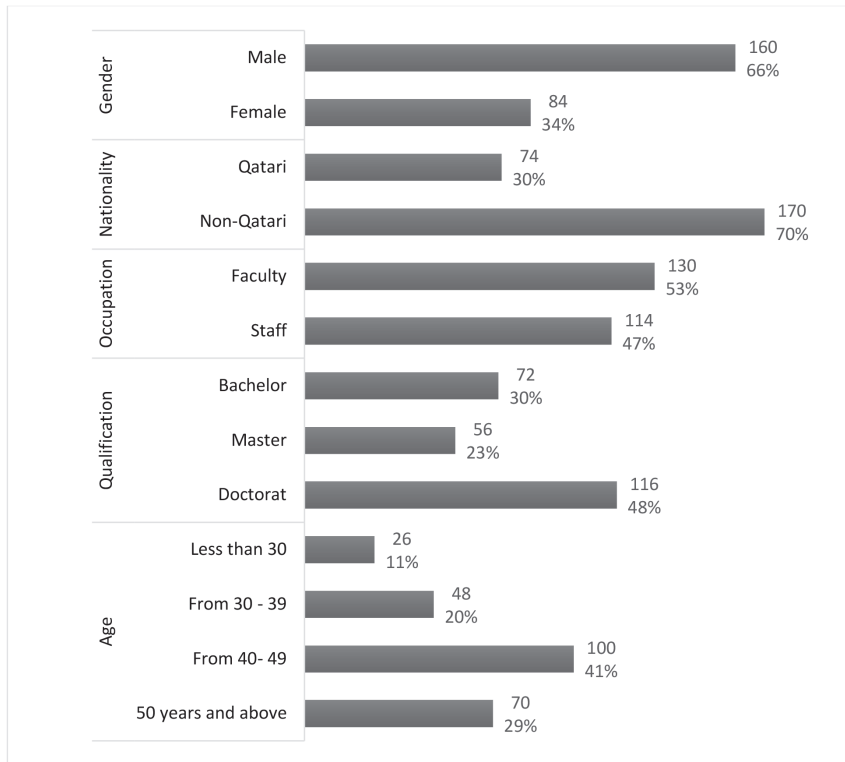


Fig. (1): Percentages of respondents according to gender, nationality, occupation, educational qualification, and age.

4.2 Instrument:

To answer the questions of the study, a questionnaire was designed entitled “The Impact of Crises and Emerging Risks on the Values System.” The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: one for demographic data, the second for questions on the pandemic, and the third for questions on the effect of the pandemic on the system of values. The first section included questions related to demographic data (gender, nationality, occupation, and age group) to ensure that the sample was representative of all segments of the population. The second

section included questions related to vaccination and attitudes towards it. The third main section was divided into four subsections related to the impact of the pandemic on the system of values. The first subsection was related to the extent to which fatwa authorities responded to developments in medical research on COVID-19, consisting of 8 items that required a response on a Likert scale (strongly responding= 4, responding to some extent = 3, not responding to a certain extent = 2, Do not respond at all = 1). The second subsection was related to compliance to the fatwas issued by religious authorities, consisting of items phrases that required a response on a Likert scale (strongly comply = 4, somewhat comply = 3, somewhat didn't comply= 2 I never complied=1).. The third subsection was related to the extent of compliance to the precautionary measures required by the official authorities during the Covid pandemic, consisting of 11 items that required an answer on the Likert scale (Always complied= 4, complied to an extent = 3, didn't comply to some extent = 2, never complied = 1). The fifth subsection section was related to the extent of the participants' contribution to raising awareness of the seriousness and spread of the disease, consisting of 3 phrases that required an answer on a Likert scale (I contributed significantly = 4, I contributed at a moderate degree = 3, I contributed at a weak degree = 2, I did not contribute at all = 1). In addition, there was one open-ended question about the views of participants regarding the impact of the pandemic on people's behavior and values.

Before administering the questionnaire, its content validity was verified by reviewing it by a group of experts in the field of

measurement and evaluation. After the required modifications from the arbitrators and obtaining a formal approval from the QU-IRB Committee (Qatar University Institutional Review Board), the questionnaire was designed electronically using the (Blue survey) program. The reliability coefficient was also calculated using Cronbach's alpha as one of the most appropriate methods for calculating scales with ordinal responses. This was done through the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, 28) program. Through the data obtained after applying the questionnaire, the reliability coefficient was (0.885), which is a high value that expresses the validity of using the questionnaire for data collection. This value indicates that if the questionnaire is to be administered to another sample, there would be a similarity between the results of this sample and the study sample by 88.5%.

4.3 Statistical methods:

To analyze the data collected for this study from the questionnaire, some descriptive statistical methods were employed, such as frequencies, percentages, weighted mean scores per percent, for statements that require a response on a Likert scale to facilitate interpretation. Comparisons were made with regard to gender and nationality. Results of the questionnaire were presented in graphs followed by tables to present the results according to gender and nationality,. The qualitative analysis method was used for the open questions by coding the responses and marking the similar responses.

4.4. Results of the field study:

4.4.1. What is the prevailing attitude among participants towards vaccination?

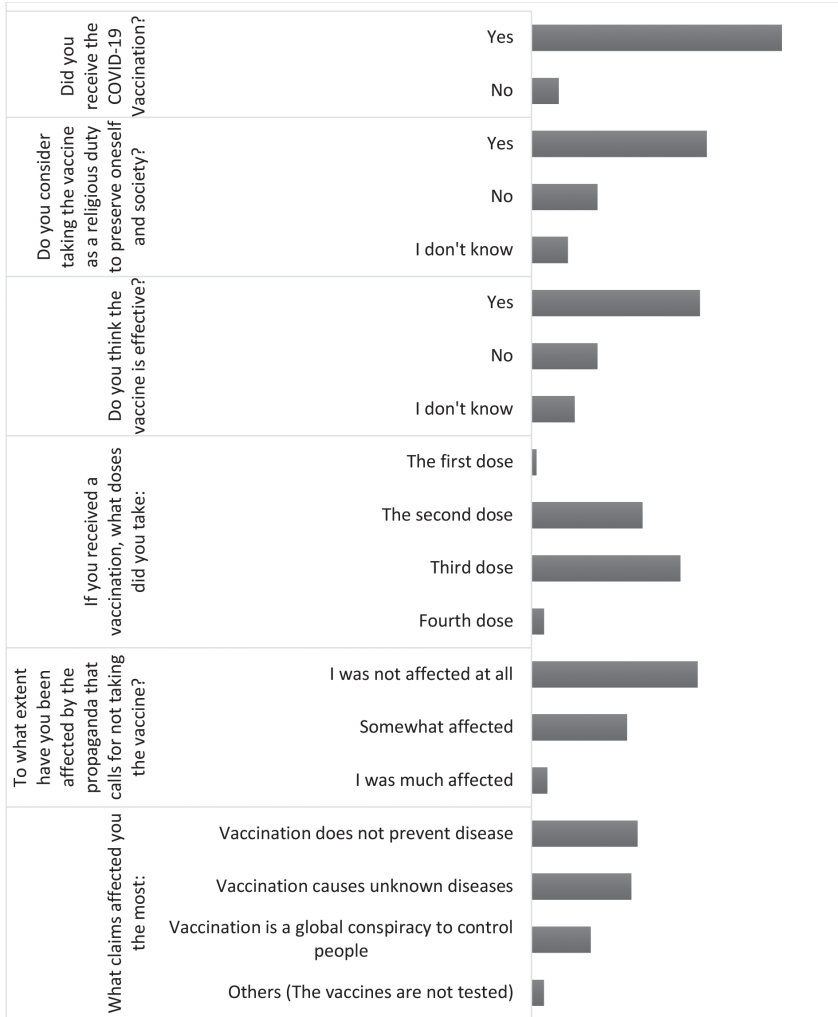


Fig. (2): Percentages of the sample's response to questions related to vaccination.

Figure (2) shows that (90%) of the respondents took the vaccine, (63%) consider taking the vaccine as a religious duty,

compared to (24%) who do not consider taking it as a religious duty, while (13%) do not know whether it is religiously obligatory to take it or not. Approximately 61% of the respondents consider the vaccine to be effective, compared to 24% who do not, while 16% are not sure. More than half of the sample (53%) received three doses, compared to 40% who received two doses, while only 2% received one dose of the vaccination. Approximately 40% of the respondents were affected by the media calling for not taking vaccinations. They were mostly affected by the claims that is that vaccination does not prevent disease (38%) or that it causes diseases (36%), while only 21% believe that vaccination is a global conspiracy.

4.4.2. What are the sources of obtaining fatwas related to COVID-19?

Figure (3) shows that 59% of the respondents have read or listened to religious fatwas related to the COVID-19. we also find that the authorities whose fatwas were viewed by the respondents are, in order: the fatwas of famous scholars (49%), the official fatwa bodies in the State of Qatar and the Ministry of Endowments (41%), the media (30%), The Union of Muslim scholars (21%), Islam Web (15%), private religious sites (13%), mosque imams (8%) and the Islamic Fiqh Academy of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (7%).

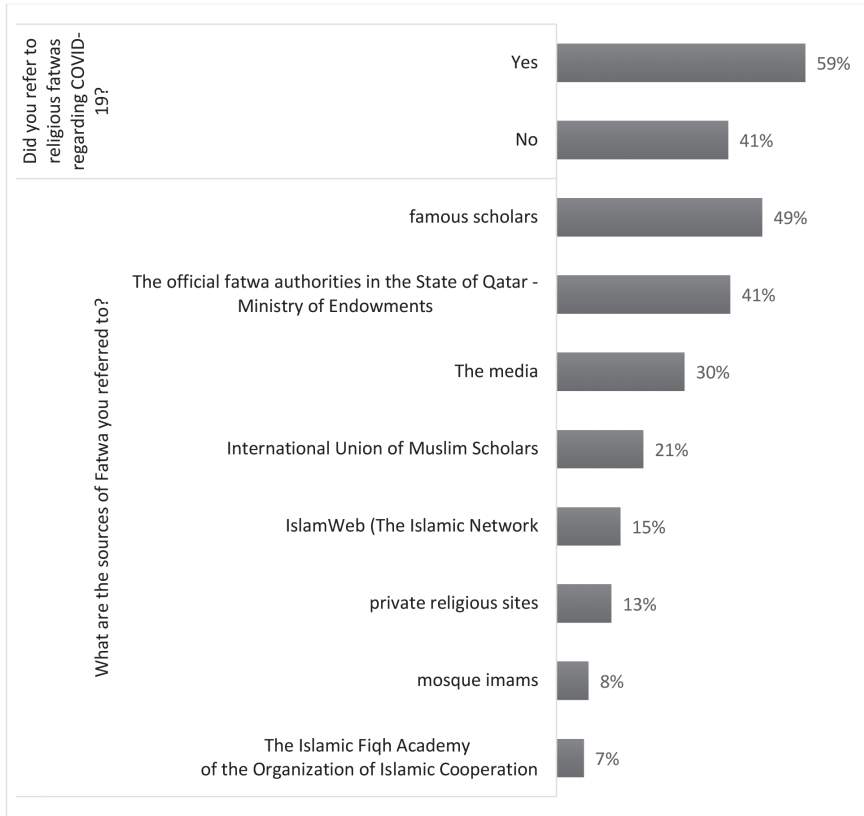


Fig. (3): Percentages of respondents' response to fatwas sources

When reviewing the results by gender and nationality, the results show that males are more knowledgeable than females of fatwas (65.4% versus 47.6%), and non-Qataris are more knowledgeable than Qataris (63.3% versus 40.9%).

The order of the fatwa sources that were used does not differ much from the previous general arrangement for non-Qataris, with the following exceptions: fatwas of the Islamic Fiqh Academy of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation were referred to by female participants before mosque imams (9.5% vs. 7.9%), and fatwas of Islamweb (the Islamic Network) was before the

International Union of Muslim Scholars for males (13.8% vs. 10.3%), as well as for Qataris (18.8% vs. 12.5%).

4.4.3 How did you comply with the fatwas issued by the religious authorities related to COVID-19?

Figure (5), shows that the extent of the sample's commitment to fatwas issued by religious authorities related to the COVID-19 pandemic reached 75%, and the relative average of compliance with fatwas issued by official authorities in the State of Qatar was the highest 84%, followed by the relative average of compliance to fatwas issued by the International Union of Scholars Muslims, fatwas issued by famous scholars (74%), then the Islamic Fiqh Academy (73%), and in the last place the media and private religious websites (67%).

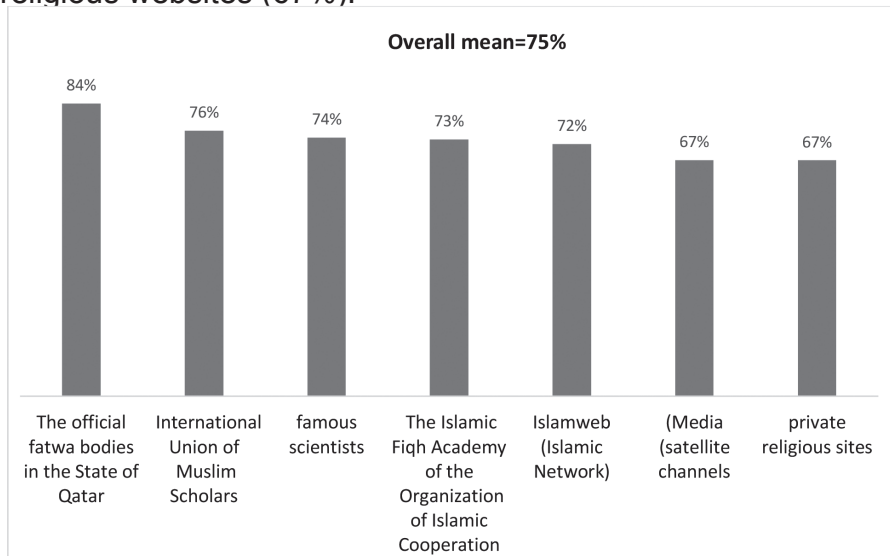


Fig. (5): Weighted average (%) of your compliance to the fatwas issued by religious authorities related to COVID-19.

When comparing the previous results with regard to gender and nationality, its clear that males and non-Qataris are shown to have a higher weighted average of compliance to fatwas issued by religious authorities (78%, 77%) than the weighted average of females

4.4.4 How did you comply to the restrictive measures imposed during the pandemic?

Figure (6) shows that the total relative average of compliance to the precautionary measures during the COVID-19 pandemic reached (90%). This high percentage may be due to the strict measures taken by the state against violators of the required measures, such as financial fines and summoning before the Public Prosecution. When reviewing the extent of compliance according to each procedure, it is found that the relative average of compliance to distancing in congregational prayers was (95%) due to the strict control in mosques and the designation of places for each worshiper. The majority also adhered to praying at home instead of going to the mosques during the times when it was not allowed to pray congregationally (94%). The relative average for not coming in contact with patients was (93%), refrain from attending social occasions (88%), distancing in public places (87%), and distance in workplaces (84%).

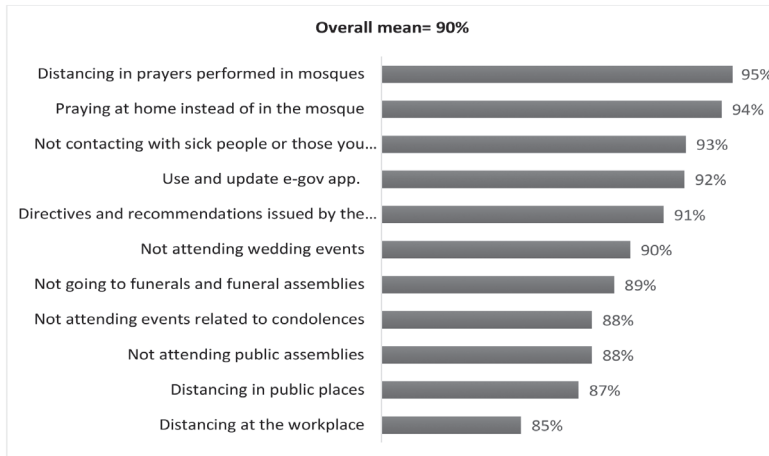


Fig. (6): Weighted average (%) of the extent of compliance to precautionary measures during the pandemic

A closer look at the weighted average of commitment to precautionary measures by gender or nationality as shown in Table (1), shows that there are no significant differences in the extent of adherence to precautionary measures that can be attributed to gender or nationality (the overall average ranged between 87% and 91%).

Table (1): Frequencies and weighted average (%) of compliance to precautionary measures during the pandemic

	Gender				Nationality			
	M		F		Q		Non-Q	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
How did you comply to the restrictive measures imposed during the pandemic?								
Overall mean	160	89%	84	91%	44	87%	200	90%

4.4.5 How did you contribute to raising awareness or humanitarian work during the pandemic?

Figure (7) shows that (65%) of the participants believed that they had a positive role in confronting the pandemic as (79%) of them contributed to raising awareness of the seriousness and spread of the disease. It was found out that (54%) of the respondents contributed to humanitarian work related to COVID-19 inside Qatar, such as donations and volunteering, compared to (55%) who contributed to humanitarian work related to COVID-19 outside Qatar.

It was noted from table (2) that there are differences between males and females in contributing to humanitarian work, whether inside or outside Qatar, as the contribution of males (56%) was higher than the contribution of females (49%). The contribution of non-Qataris (56%) was higher than that of Qataris (46%).

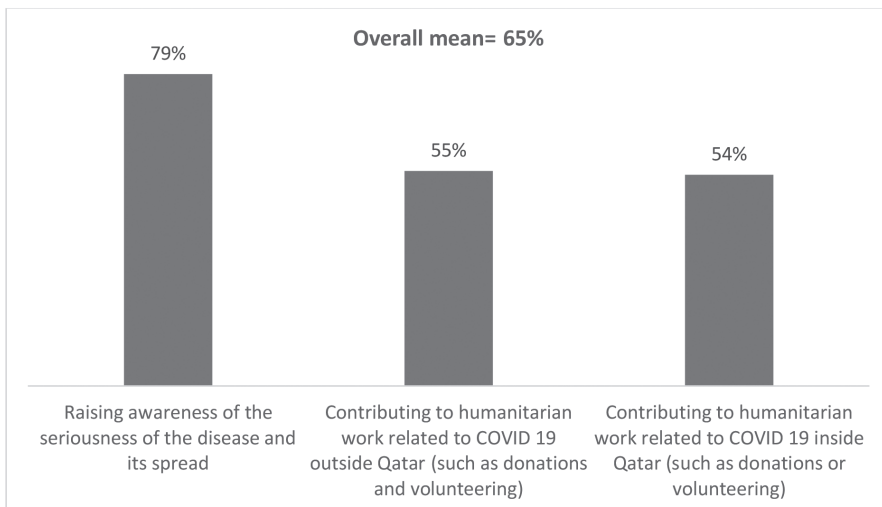


Fig. (7): Weighted average (%) of contribution in confronting the pandemic.

Table (2): Frequencies and weighted average (%) of contribution in confronting the pandemic.

	Gender				Nationality			
	M		F		Q		Non-Q	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Contribution in confronting the pandemic.								
Raising awareness of the seriousness of the disease and its spread	160	79%	84	80%	44	73%	200	81%
Contributing to humanitarian work related to COVID 19 outside Qatar (such as donations and volunteering)	160	56%	84	51%	44	48%	200	56%
Contributing to humanitarian work related to COVID 19 inside Qatar (such as donations or volunteering)	160	56%	84	47%	44	44%	200	56%
Overall mean	160	65%	84	65%	44	59%	200	66%

1- The answer to the open question related to views on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's behavior and values.

4.4.6. Answers to the open-ended questions regarding participants' views regarding the impact of the pandemic on people's behavior and values.

This question was answered by 144 participants whose

responses were analyzed qualitatively and their answers were classified into positive effects and negative effects after they were coded and grouped according to similarity. Analysis showed the following:

A. The positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's behavior and values:

Some respondents' response indicated that COVID-19 has reinforced the following values:

Religious values: Returning to God Almighty, hasting to repent, and increasing worship and supplications, especially during the early period of the pandemic and with the intensity of the fear of death, which awakened people, and made them pray and supplicate to God to release and remove this calamity (60%), so they modified their behavior, and showed some positive aspects, such as: compassion, helping the affected, maintaining ties of kinship (49%), spread of solidarity and sponsorship (Takaful) (20%), and recognizing the many blessings of God that they were heedless of (18%). Responses also showed the extent of man's need for religious awareness (15%), the status of religious scholars, preachers and muftis (15%), the value of contemplating the many and great blessings of God that vanished during the pandemic and thanking God for them after the pandemic is over (10%).

Health values: Caring for health became the first value, so many changed their healthy behaviors (28%), increased the concern for cleanliness and sterilization (70%), cared for strengthening the body's immunity by various means, maintaining new healthy habits (18%), valued the role of medical teams (9%), became more aware

of viral diseases (6%) and more skeptical of stories of intimidation about the disease and its consequences (5%).

Social values: The pandemic made people increase of the sense of social responsibility (49%), appreciated the value of communicating with others (39%), increased their awareness of the importance of physical contact with each other and that it is a blessing from God Almighty (4%), increased the behavior of cooperation and compassion (22%), and revealed the importance of cooperative teamwork among individuals and countries to confront this pandemic (17%).

Economic values: The pandemic made people think about priorities and reduce spending (34%), taught them the falsehood and fragility of material life, human weakness and meagerness, and that life continues despite pain (12%), led to people's harmony, compassion and sympathy, led to appreciating one's time and the time of others and organizing work according remotely (19%).

B. The negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's behavior and values:

Some respondents' response indicates that the pandemic had the following effects:

- **Religious effects:** Confusion among some due to some contradictory religious fatwas on the subject (12%), laziness in worshipping among some, especially young people, due to the ban on congregational religious rituals (7%).

- **Social effects:** some social values were deteriorated because of the total reliance on social media due to social

distancing and increased social isolation that led to poor social relations (16%). Some also believe that the pandemic contributed to the rupture of social relations (14%), reinforced the trend towards isolation and neglecting social occasions (12%), the inhuman treatment even from the patient's relatives as some ran away from the infected , and isolated them in a solitary room and looking at them as enemies. Also, due to the fear of infection, some people became psychologically obsessed and afraid of any physical contact because of the possibility of infection (28%).

- **Economic effects:** idleness in work resulting from the lockdown period (5%), stopping work in some institutions led to a deterioration in economy (51%), which in turn affected people's behavior, so there has been economic exploitation of people by the commercial establishments (12%), rise in food prices (23%). People relied on electronic applications in transactions instead of leaving homes (27%).

- **Health effects:** Hospitals were unexpectedly crowded, which led to a kind of unintended indifference among health institutions and medical staff, which made patients feel the severity of the calamity (29%).

- **Educational effects:** Students became accustomed to laziness and their academic level weakened as schools and universities were disrupted and some moved to remote learning (6%).

- **Psychological effects:** Selfishness was what motivated people to capture medicine and food in the beginning (4%), for some this generated: panic, fear and anxiety (2%), indifference and lack of a sense of responsibility (6%), frequent transmission

of rumors and undocumented news, indulging in conspiracy theories, and exaggerated frustration (7%).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

This article has clearly demonstrated the effect of Covid-19 on moral commitment and the role of Islamic fatwas in promoting morality in the Qatari society. These fatwas have addressed many important areas related to medical, ritual and social issues which affected people's daily life. A closer look at the results shows that the COVID-19 pandemic uncovered many issues in society, including the importance of religious values related to a person's need for religion which was evident in the return of 60% of the respondents to God Almighty with supplication and worship. The respondents had a positive attitude towards improving the relationship of Muslims to their ties of kinship (64%), improving their relationship with each other, and their relationship with other people (61% and 56%, respectively). The pandemic also caused an increase in the sense of social responsibility among 49% of the respondents.

65% of the respondents believe that the pandemic was a divine punishment due to the corruption of man on earth, and that it is not only a decree of destiny in contrast to 39% of the respondents who believed so. The study also showed the importance of the role of religious scholars in society, especially in times of crisis when people refer to them and their fatwas and guidance for enlightenment. Because of the pandemic, 18% of the respondents felt an increase in recognizing the blessings of God Almighty which they were heedless of.

As for religious fatwas, they contradicted at the beginning of the spread of the disease, which caused confusion among people, especially with regard to the method of burying and washing the deceased.

The pandemic caused students to be lazy in seeking their studies, and their academic levels was dramatically lowered as clearly felt by the teachers. The negative media also had bad effects which caused some people to panic about taking vaccines while the conspiracy theory prevailed. Panic also appeared economically in the storage of foodstuffs. One of the negative manifestations of the pandemic is the fear of healthy people of those infected with COVID 19 in an annoying way, especially from their relatives, which led to isolating patients in inappropriate ways.

To sum up, just as COVID-19 showed positive moral aspects in our societies, it revealed negative and selfish aspects of individuals and societies, which requires a return to reviving good morals and spreading them among people.

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1 - Official authorities should care to provide information related to pandemics first and foremost, and confront rumors using all available means (Satellite channels, mosques, social media, fatwa bodies)
- 2 - Religious scholars and fatwas authorities should address the human values especially the ones related to religion, solidarity, health among other values during the occurrence of pandemics, for their influential role on individuals and societies.

- 3 - Commitment to morals and high values in our societies should be promoted through the education systems.
- 4 - Awareness of the seriousness of infectious diseases and the importance of quarantine should be emphasized when the disease outbreaks.
- 5 - The culture of voluntary work should be reinforced, especially in the field of emergencies.
- 6 - Precautionary measures required by the official authorities should be supported by religious validation.
- 7 - Similar studies are suggested to be conducted in other Arab and Islamic communities and to validate the results.

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فصلية علمية محكمة تصدر عن مجلس النشر العلمي - جامعة الكويت

أثر كوفيد-١٩ على الالتزام الأخلاقي ودور الفتاوى الإسلامية في نشر الأخلاق، حالة قطر

أ.د/ عبد الله عبد الرحمن الخطيب

كلية الشريعة والدراسات الإسلامية - جامعة قطر

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