

## **The Response of the Muslim Community to the MUI Fatwa Regarding the Covid 19 Vaccine**

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### **Abstract:**

The MUI fatwa related to vaccinations promoted by the government in handling the Covid-19 pandemic was responded to differently in the Muslim community. There are still groups of people who refuse vaccination, and this is a crucial issue that has not been resolved. This study aims to see the paradoxical response of the community to the MUI fatwa regarding vaccination. With the focus of the study on the response of the Muslim community to the vaccination fatwa. In particular, this paper would like to explain that the vaccination fatwa issued by the MUI was responded to by the public by rejecting, negotiating and accepting the vaccination fatwa. With a qualitative approach, data collection is done by interview and documentation. The community's response to rejection takes the form of neglect and coercion. The community's rejection factor is because they think vaccines contain *haram* elements, cause disease and death, and compulsion due to government policies that make it difficult for people to access those who are not vaccinated. Acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine began to grow after the high mortality rate that occurred in Indonesia and other countries in the world. This condition is also supported by the government which intensively disseminates the importance of vaccines. In addition, vaccine acceptance is also caused by the involvement of public figures, politicians and influencers who campaign for their photos on social media after vaccination. While the community's response to negotiations means accepting or rejecting the MUI fatwa regarding the covid vaccine, because there are conditions. Demands for Work and Public Access (BLT assistance, Transportation Access, Mall/Business The community chooses to accept with conditions and an interest in work/business and assistance in the form of social assistance and other government funds.

**Keywords:** *Community Response, MUI Fatwa, Government Policy on Vaccines, Pandemic*

### **Introduction**

The MUI fatwa related to vaccinations promoted by the government in handling the Covid-19 pandemic was responded to differently in the Muslim community. There are still groups of people who refuse vaccination is a crucial issue that has not been resolved. According to data shown by the Covid-19 task

force, the vaccination target has not been as expected, so far the number of people who have been vaccinated is still below 40% (<https://covid19.go.id/16-desember-2021>).

The target has not been achieved due to the low public response to vaccination. A survey conducted by researchers from the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (JHCCP) found that there are still 34 percent of Indonesians who do not want to get the COVID-19 vaccine. It was found that 40% of the age group 55 years and over were the most refusing the vaccine. Respondents expressed doubts about the safety of vaccines, worried about costs, religious reasons, and felt sure they didn't need vaccines. (<https://www.dw.com/id/3,13/10/2021>).

Thus, this study aims to look at the paradoxical response of the community to the MUI fatwa regarding vaccination. The public's rejection of the MUI fatwa related to the COVID-19 vaccine is driven by a lack of public knowledge, lack of information circulating in the community, and the government's lack of alertness to educate programs related to vaccination. (Nurdiana, Marlina, and Adityasning 2021;Astuti et al. 2021).

So far, many studies on public response to vaccination policies have been carried out. In Fajar Fathur Rahman's research, it was stated that people gave more positive responses than negative responses (Fajar Fathur Rahman, 2020). The existing tendency is more focused on three things. First, the response to public doubts with the existence of oblique issues about the impact of vaccines that cause death and re-infection with the virus. (Danil Alpito, at.all, 2021), the issue of long-term side effects of vaccines (Novita and Ramadhani 2021), hesitancy and misinformation about vaccines present major obstacles to achieving community coverage and immunity (Nining Puji Astuti, et al. . 2021). Second, the response to public awareness and knowledge (RUSMIATI 2021), this wrong perception arises because of the lack of good communication from the authorities such as health workers to convince the public about the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine (Nining Puji Astuti, et all. 2021) Third, the response is to accept with the condition that the vaccine is halal (Retna Siwi Padmawati, at.all. 2019). Of the three trends from previous studies, not many have seen the response of the Muslim community to the MUI Fatwa regarding the covid 19 vaccination.

The study aims to complement the previous shortcomings by focusing on the response of the Muslim community to the vaccination fatwa. In particular, this paper would like to explain that the vaccination fatwa issued by the MUI was responded to by the public with refusal. In addition, the community negotiated with the vaccination fatwa, there were even a number of Muslim communities who accepted the vaccination fatwa issued by the MUI.

The assumption built in this study is that the vaccination fatwa issued by the MUI has not been fully accepted in the Muslim community. There are still a group of people who refuse on the grounds of religious teachings and are not in line with religious ideology. The public's response to rejection was on medical grounds and concerned about the long-term impact of the vaccine. Meanwhile, the response to accepting the fatwa was due to understanding and awareness of the importance of vaccines to prevent the spread of the virus. Likewise, the negotiation response was carried out because the community was in need of vaccination. The need to obtain government assistance and become an administrative completeness requirement

that must be fulfilled. Thus, the vaccination program was responded to by a paradox in the community.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Public Response to Covid-19**

WHO has declared the novel coronavirus (SARS-Co-V-2) a global pandemic. The number of those showing symptoms of COVID-19 is increasing every day around the world with the virus infecting hundreds of thousands of people (Alqahtani, Alrasheed, and Alqunaibet 2021). With the discovery of the COVID-19 vaccine in mid-2021, it becomes an important, safe, effective, and efficient discovery in modern medicine. Fadda, Albanese, & Suggs (2020) also said that in this period, vaccines are a promising strategy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic through primary prevention. In fact, the COVID-19 vaccine can increase immunity and fight severe disease, including the new variant of COVID-19, namely the delta variant (Krause, P. R., Fleming, T. R., Peto, R., Longini, I. M., Figueroa, J. P., Sterne, J. A., ... & Henao-Restrepo 2021). Correspondingly, the public response to the discovery and dissemination of vaccines has been highlighted in several studies (Monselise et al. 2021; Ittefaq, Ahmad Kamboh, and Abwao 2021; Haynes et al. 2020; Fadda, Albanese, and Suggs 2020). The public response referred to here is a reaction or response to a problem (Alqahtani, Alrasheed, and Alqunaibet 2021). The majority of the public have openly expressed skepticism about vaccines and attributed a "conspiratorial" worldview. In Monselise, Chang, Ferreira, Yang, & Yang (2021) said that the public has negative perspectives and sentiments towards vaccines caused by misinformation and lack of literacy related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Furthermore, mentioning Chou & Budenz (2020) that the public response to the COVID-19 vaccine is divided into three forms, namely acceptance, rejection and negotiation. Rejection of vaccines is due to people's reluctance to receive available safe and recommended vaccines. This phenomenon is known as "vaccine hesitancy" or vaccine hesitancy, a growing concern during COVID-19. In fact, on social media the hashtag #antivaccine has become a popular campaign and hashtag (Kim, Song, and Lee 2020). Acceptance of COVID-19 began to develop after the government intensified socialization and dissemination of literacy on the importance of vaccines. In addition, vaccine acceptance was also caused by the involvement of public figures, politicians and influencers who campaigned for their photos on social media after vaccination. (Ittefaq, Ahmad Kamboh, and Abwao 2021).

Furthermore, the response to concerns and panic about deaths from COVID-19 encourages people to accept and negotiate with themselves that vaccines are primary prevention that must be done before the spread and symptoms of COVID-19 become more widespread. (Dolgin 2021). Monselise et al (2021) then classifies various public responses to the vaccination program: (1) negative sentiments (doubt, anxiety, worry); (2) positive sentiment (campaign the importance of vaccination); (3) neutral (conducting the process of negotiating and accepting vaccines as the main strategy for preventing covid).

### **Fatwa in Islamic Law**

Fatwas are opinions or interpretations produced by scholars regarding a matter, ranging from social, economic, cultural and political aspects. Fatwa is also defined as a structured answer, advice, or opinion (Khairani et al. 2019). Fatwa is closely related to law, as well as law is a unified concept of justice and togetherness (Asni and Sulung 2017). In overcoming legal problems, fatwas are one of the important mechanisms to find solutions to problems based on Islamic religious norms (Khairuldin et al., 2019). In this case, the fatwa is said to be essential in explaining the rules related to Islamic law, where the fatwa is a legal explanation and has the authority to interpret religious law. (Khairuldin et al., 2019; Nawi & Hamzah, 2014). In line with that, fatwas are a solution to people's statements relating to daily life according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, fatwas become a model for people to follow and refer to. (Khan et al. 2018) Thus the fatwa is a legal determination according to religious authorities (Iqbal et al. 2016)

Each fatwa contains an interpretation of sharia that is both informational and communicative (Ibrahim, Arifin, and Abd Rashid 2015). Not only that, the practice of fatwas in Islamic history is carried out individually, in this case coming from one person (mufti) and assisted by several scholars around him, such as in the Muslim countries of Jordan, Morocco and Malaysia. (Assyaukanie 2009). Another case in Indonesia, creating an organizational body with the establishment of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), this institution does not have a dominant figure, the leader only acts as the head of the organization. The highest authority in this institution is the Fatwa Commission which consists of several members of prominent ulama (Assyaukanie, 2009; Ansori & Ulumuddin, 2020). Therefore, the fatwa issued by the MUI is based on what is happening in the community, for example during the COVID-19 pandemic, the MUI issued a fatwa regarding the halalness of the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as the implementation of the use of the vaccine. (Turnip 2021) Thus, fatwas are a dynamic legal product that follows the pattern of development that exists in society.

### **Vaccines During Pandemic**

Vaccines are known as biological products that are effective and economical to prevent infectious diseases (Makmun and Hazhiyah 2020). Where vaccines are made from weakened germs (Girsang, A. M., Martini, M., & Yuliawati 2020). Accordingly, vaccines are the production of dead or weakened pathogens, substances that are introduced to the body by stimulating antibody production without causing disease (Muallifah 2018) Vaccines are substances that stimulate the response of the immune system to fight disease. In this case, it aims to provide strong adaptive immunity against antigens with the support of the inflammatory response caused by the virus carrier (Sari and Sriwidodo 2020).

Like only during the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccines can help to develop immunity, so vaccines become protectors that can protect against the COVID-19 virus (Syamaidzar, 2020; Agung, 2021) Thus, the COVID-19 vaccine is a biological preparation that provides immunity against certain infectious diseases. Dolgin (2021) said that the vaccination program is very influential in reducing the positive number of COVID-19 per day, besides that it can also prevent being exposed to or experiencing severe Covid-19 symptoms, protecting others in the sense that it can prevent humans from spreading the corona virus to others. If vaccination coverage

is high and evenly distributed in an area, herd immunity will be formed. According to (Nature Communication, 2021) Vaccination against COVID-19 during the pandemic is a "Public Goods" effort carried out by the Government as a mandatory business (Obligatory Public Health Functions) (Haynes et al. 2020).

Wake (2021) then stated the reasons for the importance of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely (1) minimizing the spread of the virus; (2) form antibodies; (3) creating herd immunity; (4) provide calm and reduce anxiety. In Indonesia, the most widely used COVID-19 vaccine is the Sinovac Vaccine which can be given to people aged 18-59 years in good health. Each resident will be given 2 vaccines with a minimum distance of 14 days. The dose in one injection is 0.5 ml given free of charge to the public and is not charged at all. This is done in order to accelerate the decline in the pandemic so that 70% immunization coverage is needed so that 'herd immunity' can be achieved in less than 1 year. (Dewi 2021).

## **Methods**

The MUI fatwa regarding the Covid 19 vaccine is based on what is happening in the community. The government's policy to cooperate with the MUI in order to make vaccination successful in Indonesia has received various responses among the Muslim community. The research focuses on looking at the response of the Muslim community to the MUI fatwa related to the vaccine. With a qualitative approach, data collection was carried out by interview and documentation. Interviews were conducted on teachers/lecturers, employees, private employees, and entrepreneurs in Medan City. Documentation carried out on the literature that supports research material originating from online media, online journals and books. Data analysis was carried out through three stages, as shown by Huberman and Miles (2010), namely data reduction, data display and data verification. The analytical method used includes restatement of data, and describing to find patterns and trends of the community towards the MUI fatwa related to vaccines.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Public Rejection of MUI Fatwa Regarding Vaccines**

The community's rejection response is in the form of neglect and coercion. The community's rejection factor because they consider vaccines to contain elements of haram, cause disease and death and coercion due to government policies that make it difficult for public access. *First*, for the community, the halal status of vaccines is a prerequisite for accepting and rejecting the MUI fatwa regarding the use of vaccines. The statement of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) that the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine may be used in an emergency even though it contains trypsin derived from pigs. (Kompas.com, 19/03/2021) adding to the reason for the community's refusal because of the controversy regarding the halal status of the elements contained in the vaccine.

According to informant, as Pak Ali said *"So far, I don't want to be vaccinated against COVID, because according to the information I got, the legal status is not halal and contains pork, because there is no information about the halal status"* (Interview with pak Ali. He was a teacher in private elementary school, he was at 58 age. Interview while post PPKM Level 4, April- Oktober 2021 in Medan). The process and elements contained in the vaccine also become the community standard for accepting the MUI fatwa regarding the use of vaccines. The public refuses for

reasons of the material elements of the vaccine which are not yet clear for use. As information from BPOM, while it is still in the review process, the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine is recommended not to be used. (kompas.com. 17/03/2021) *Second*, Vaccines Cause Health Effects and Even Death. Public refusal because of side effects that appear on some people who have been vaccinated. Several cases that occur in the community show that vaccines have mild or severe side effects. 19 is completely safe. (Alodokter.com, 23/11/2020).

This is related to Bu Aisyah encountered; *"I saw that many patients who were injected with the vaccine even got Covid. Because according to developing information, injected vaccines are still pro and contra about their safety status in health and medical circles. Interview with Bu Aisyah. She was a lecture in Islamic University, she was at 42 age. Interview while post PPKM Level 4, April- Oktober 2021 in Medan). Third*, the compulsion to comply with the fatwa on the use of vaccines is due to the rules and prerequisites issued by the government. The explanation above shows that the public's rejection of the MUI fatwa regarding the use of vaccines is due to the existence of vaccine products whose legal status is still not clear, in addition to the lack of certainty that vaccines will not cause side effects for the health of vaccine users and the existence of compulsion felt by the community related to difficulties in accessing vaccines. when they refuse the vaccine.

### **Public acceptance of the MUI fatwa**

Acceptance of the Covid-19 vaccine began to develop after the high mortality rate that occurred in Indonesia and other countries in the world. In addition, vaccine acceptance was also caused by the involvement of public figures, politicians and influencers who campaigned for their photos on social media after vaccination. (Ittefaq, Ahmad Kamboh, and Abwao 2021). *First*, public acceptance of the MUI fatwa regarding the covid vaccine for reasons of prevention against the spread of the virus.

*"As the informant stated that the number of cases of death caused by covid 19 in his neighborhood gave rise to fear. This concern gave rise to their desire to vaccinate. The high death rate in several areas due to the covid virus that was reported in the mass media and the spread of this disease virus made some informants willing to carry out rapid tests at their own expense for protection.(Interviews with some informants in several locations in Medan, interviews were conducted in pre and post PPKM Level 4, April- Oktober 2021"*

By accepting the MUI fatwa related to vaccination, preventing the spread of the virus will create herd immunity in the community. (DJIKP, Kominfo.go.id, 28/09/2021). *Second*, the public accepts the MUI fatwa regarding the covid vaccine to strengthen antibodies. Vaccination or immunization aims to make a person's immune system a goal to be achieved by giving the COVID-19 vaccine is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to this virus. the occurrence of severe symptoms and complications due to COVID-19.

Dolgin (2021) said that the vaccination program is very influential in reducing the positive number of COVID-19 per day, besides that it can also prevent being exposed to or experiencing severe Covid-19 symptoms, protecting others in the sense that it can prevent humans from spreading the corona virus to others. If vaccination coverage is high and evenly distributed in an area, herd immunity will

be formed. According to (Nature Communication, 2021) COVID-19 vaccination during a pandemic is a "Public Goods" effort carried out by the Government as a mandatory business (Obligatory Public Health Functions) (Haynes et al. 2020) Wake (2021) then stated the reasons for the importance of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely (1) minimizing the spread of the virus; (2) form antibodies; (3) creating herd immunity; (4) provide calm and reduce anxiety. *Third*, the MUI Fatwa is a policy reference for the government. The MUI fatwa is considered to have an important role in the success of the vaccination program. (kontan.co.id news, 17/10/2020). For the community, the position of the ulama and umara is a position that must be obeyed in the state.

*As the informant said, "we just follow the government's and MUI's decisions, because they will definitely find a solution for us. For Muslims, obeying the ulama and umara is a form of obedience worship. Carrying out the MUI fatwa related to vaccines is also a form of obedience. Interviews with informants in several locations in Medan, interviews were conducted in pre and post PPKM Level 4, April- Oktober 2021"*

### **Community Negotiations Against MUI Fatwa regarding Vaccines**

Community negotiation means accepting or rejecting the MUI fatwa related to the covid vaccine, due to conditions. Jobs and Public Access Demands (BLT assistance, Transportation Access, Mall/Business The community chooses to accept with conditions and an interest in work/business and assistance in the form of social assistance and social assistance). funds from other governments For people who are bound by the implementation must be vaccinated, then accept the MUI fatwa related to vaccines.

*This is as revealed by Anwar : "I took the vaccine because I wanted to work. Because the company asks for a vaccine certificate when I want to enter the office. Interview with Anwar, he was an employee in Medan MALL, he was at 24 age. Interwier while post PPKM Level 4, April- Oktober 2021 in Medan) "*

Negotiations are carried out in two forms, among others; Open negotiations are carried out on the basis of mutual and benefit considerations. Closed negotiations are carried out on the basis of the need for survival, for example to get assistance. Requirements are mandatory for every employee to be able to go to work and leave the house, for people who want to get social assistance from the government, and administrative requirements for community mobility.

### **Discussion**

#### **Public Rejection of MUI Fatwa Regarding Vaccines**

The unfinished Covid pandemic is still causing problems in the community. One of the problems that has received the most response is the vaccination program. The rejection of vaccines is due to people's reluctance to receive vaccines that are available safe and recommended. This phenomenon is known as "vaccine hesitancy" or hesitancy. vaccine doubt, a growing concern during COVID-19. In fact, on social media the hashtag *#antivaccine* become popular campaigns and hashtags (Kim, Song, and Lee 2020). For the community, the halal status of the vaccine is a prerequisite for accepting and rejecting the MUI fatwa regarding the use of vaccines.

### **Community Negotiations on MUI Fatwa Regarding Vaccines**

The response to concern and panic about deaths from COVID-19 encourages people to accept and negotiate with themselves that vaccines are primary prevention that must be done before the spread and symptoms of COVID-19 become more widespread (Dolgin 2021). Monselise et al (2021) then classified the various responses of the community to the vaccination program: (1) negative sentiments (doubt, anxiety, worry); (2) positive sentiment (campaign the importance of vaccination); (3) neutral (conducting the process of negotiating and accepting vaccines as the main strategy for preventing covid).

### **Public Acceptance of MUI Fatwa Regarding Vaccines**

The public's acceptance of the MUI fatwa related to the covid vaccine for reasons of prevention against the spread of the virus. As the informant stated that the number of cases of death caused by covid 19 in his neighborhood gave rise to fear. This concern gave rise to their desire to vaccinate. The high death rate in several areas due to the covid virus that was reported in the mass media and the spread of this disease virus made some informants willing to carry out rapid tests at their own expense for protection.

### **Conclusion**

The MUI fatwa related to vaccinations promoted by the government in handling the Covid-19 pandemic was responded to differently in the Muslim community. The community's rejection response is in the form of neglect and coercion. The community's rejection factor is because they think that vaccines contain elements of haram, cause disease and death and are compelled because of government policies that make it difficult for public access. Public acceptance of the MUI fatwa related to the covid vaccine for reasons of prevention against the spread of the virus and for strengthening antibodies. This vaccine can minimize the possibility of severe symptoms and complications due to COVID-19. Community negotiation means accepting or rejecting the MUI fatwa regarding the covid vaccine, because of conditions.

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