

# Religious Moderation Values in The COVID-19 Vaccine Phenomenon in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The emergence of the COVID-19 vaccine has raised pros and cons among the public regarding the permissibility of its use. Apart from these pros and cons, the religious moderation aspect is a concern that should not be ignored. This article aimed to reveal the priority values of religious moderation in the pros and cons of vaccinations for the Muslim community in Indonesia. The approach used was particularistic by trying to draw conclusions from the facts of the pros and cons of the assumption of the Muslim community regarding the use of vaccinations to prevent the possibility of being infected with COVID-19. The results of the study found that from the various existing problems, the pros and cons related to vaccination, the rule of law in a state and the influence of Islamic law in discussing it to produce a fatwa product issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council as a legal entity and recognized by the state. The phenomenon and its various kinds of drama must be stopped by considering the aspects of religious moderation values in the life of the nation and state. This was necessary for the sake of survival and protecting the environment and Muslim families from the possibility of being infected with COVID-19. Vaccines existed to maintain common prosperity, not only for Muslims. In-depth studies were needed in the future to provide comprehensive, actual and credible information in order to avoid hoax issues with the presence of the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Keywords:** Religious Moderation, Vaccination, COVID-19.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2020, Indonesia and the whole world were shocked by the massive and complex impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The nation is faced with a problem that concerns all human beings in the world. The disease outbreak reportedly first originated in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019. The epidemic then spread to almost all parts of the world.

Coronavirus is the name of the disease given by the International Organization of the World Health Organization (WHO). The disease was previously known as the "2019 Novel Coronavirus". However, on 11 February 2020, WHO changed its name to "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)". The virus that causes this disease is "Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-Cov-2)". Viruses and the diseases they cause often have different names, and this is because they have different processes and purposes. Viruses and diseases often have different names, and this is because they have different processes

and purposes. While the name of the disease is given to make it possible to discuss prevention, transmission, severity and treatment of disease.

Indonesia has entered a COVID-19 emergency period. The efforts must be made more serious, systemic, and massive so that the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts can be overcome; one of them is through vaccination. Among the purposes of vaccination are to reduce transmission, sufferers, and deaths from COVID-19 and create a herding community. However, not all elements of society agree with vaccination. Some Muslims refuse for theological reasons. The group also refused immunization (Mu'ti, 2021).

However, the vaccination effort has received a pro and contra response among the community (Rachman & Pramana, 2020). There was a debate, and even now, there are two parties who reject it and those who accept it. Then is it true that Indonesia is part of the countries identified by WHO as an 'ant-vac' or anti-vaccination locus? (Azra, 2021) Pros consider that vaccination is the

maximum effort of the Indonesian government to provide a sense of security and a way out against residents from the spread of COVID-19. The contra explains that vaccination can cause side effects because its efficacy has not been tested. In fact, these circles question the sanctity and halalness of the COVID-19 vaccine product.

Regardless of the pros and cons, the government and the public need a COVID-19 vaccination to break the chain of transmission. Therefore, scholars through the Indonesian Ulema Council institution are expected to contribute objective thoughts that convince the public of the government's steps to implement the vaccination. It is hoped that this will have implications for the attitude of religious moderation for all Indonesian people with the recommendation for the Covid-19 vaccination.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study was qualitative with a particularistic approach. This approach was used to draw conclusions from the facts of the pros and cons of the assumptions of the Muslim community regarding the use of vaccinations to prevent the possibility of being infected with COVID-19. Therefore, religious moderation in this study was intended as a measuring tool in dissecting the pros and cons of society about Covid-19 vaccination. The sources of data were obtained from credible informants, the latest journals, relevant online news.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

On January 11, 2021, the Indonesian Ulema Council issued a fatwa on the COVID-19 vaccine. The fatwa product stipulated two legal provisions, namely the Covid-19 vaccine produced by Sinovac Life Sciences Co. Ltd. China and PT Bio Farma (Persero) had halal and sacred laws (Indonesian Ulema Council, 2021). The Covid-19 vaccine produced by Sinovac Life Sciences Co. Ltd. China and PT Bio Farma may be used by Muslims as long as their safety is guaranteed according to credible and competent experts (Indonesian Ulema Council, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, various lines of religious life experienced their own challenges so that moderate religion became an absolute priority (Syatar et al., 2020). The most worrying thing about the impact of Covid-19 from a religious perspective is the emergence of a phobia of the teachings of Islam itself. Islamophobia appears a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bakry et al., 2020).

The Indonesian Ulema Council Fatwa Commission took the argument from 3 verses of the Koran. One of the three verses is the word of Allah in Surah al-Baqarah verse 173:

“He has only forbidden you ‘to eat’ carrion, blood, swine, and what is slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah. But if someone is compelled by necessity—neither driven by desire nor exceeding immediate need—they will not be sinful. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” ((Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019))

From the above verse, Allah SWT absolutely forbids anything mentioned in verse such as carrion, blood, pork or swine and animals that are not slaughtered in the name of Allah. However, the permissibility of consuming the haram is for Muslims in an emergency without exceeding the limits according to their needs. In context, the COVID-19 vaccine can be said to be something of an emergency because it can prevent massive pandemic transmission through in-depth studies from experts in their respective fields.

The Indonesian Ulema Council Fatwa Commission reveals several hadiths; one of them is the hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari hadith number 5678:

"There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment."

The hadith instructions suggest that Muslims believe that every plague has vaccinations that can prevent transmission. Therefore, Islamic teachings contain the principles of justice and human benefit when an epidemic occurs. The Indonesian Ulema Council sets the hadith as one of the arguments in issuing a law (*istinbat*) regarding the COVID-19 vaccine product.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. *Protecting the Soul with Covid-19 Vaccination*

The government has officially issued a circular to vaccinate COVID-19 since January 2021. The vaccine's main purpose is to break the chain and prevent COVID-19 (Setiawan, 2021). COVID-19 has a very fast spread impact. COVID-19 can infect the respiratory system. Many cases cause mild respiratory infections such as the flu or severe respiratory infections such as lung infections. In fact, it results in death and is handled differently from the usual death (Team, 2020).

The data on death cases in Indonesia due to Covid-19 as of October 13, 2021, was 142,811 people (Guritno, 2021). This fact further strengthens that Indonesian citizens are required to carry out vaccinations in addition to maintaining health protocols.

In Islam, it is known as *maqāṣid syarī'ah* (Al-Syatibi, 2003). *Maqāṣid syarī'ah* is the wisdom desired by God in all conditions of *tasyri'*. The desire is not only limited to one kind of sharia law but all forms of sharia law that its purpose and meaning are included in it. Also

includes legal meanings that are not recorded in various laws but are recorded in other forms (Asyur, 2001). In this *maqāṣid*, there are levels known by several terms, namely *al-kulliyāt al-khams*, *al-ḍarūriyāt al-khams* or *al-maṣāliḥ al-khams* which contains guarding religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), guarding the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), guarding reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), guarding offspring (*ḥifẓ al-nasab*) and protecting property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) (Al-Syatibi, 2003).

The workings of the five levels in the *maqāṣid* that must be maintained must run according to the order/level. Protecting religion should take precedence over everything else; guarding the soul must take precedence over reason and descent, and so on. However, in the current COVID-19 pandemic, protecting the soul is more important because there is no alternative. This is different from maintaining a religion that has an alternative through *rukḥṣah* (lightening). For example, performing congregational prayers by guarding in the mosque can be done temporarily and wearing masks when praying. This is done to prioritize maintaining the soul during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **4.2. The Value of Religious Moderation in Awareness of COVID-19 Vaccination**

The head of the Research and Development Center, Treasures Literature of Religious Literature and Organizational Management (LKKMO) of the Ministry of Religion, Arskal Salim, revealed that the more people know about the benefits of vaccines, the more religious people are willing to be vaccinated. This conclusion is based on the results of the National Online Survey conducted by the Ministry of Religion's LKKMO on February 11-18, 2021, involving 3,015 respondents throughout Indonesia in 34 provinces.

In general, most Indonesians receive the Covid-19 vaccine well despite the pros and cons in society. This is because the Indonesian people practice strong religious moderation. Thus, in the aspect of receiving the Covid-19 vaccination, several values of religious moderation are found as citizens' awareness:

##### **National Commitment**

National commitment is a very important indicator to see the perspective and religious expression of a person or group towards the government's recommendation for COVID-19 vaccination. The committee is receiving the COVID-19 vaccination.

##### **Tolerance**

Tolerance is the willingness to give and receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Do not disturb other parties who have different views regarding vaccines even though they have different opinions.

##### **Anti-radicalism and violence**

As for anti-radicalism and violence, it becomes a balanced and fair attitude and expression that prioritizes, respects and understands wisely the reality of differences in society regarding the Covid-19 vaccination.

##### **Accommodative/Open to accept**

Accommodation becomes flexible attitudes and behaviour. Acceptance of this vaccine is based on the benefit of self and soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), which is part of *al-ḍarūriyāt al-khams* (Syatar et al., 2020). Referring to the Central Indonesian Ulema Council Fatwa Number 4 of 2016, the vaccination law is allowed (Ichwan & Nashih, 2018). Vaccination is an effort to create immunity against certain diseases to prevent disability or death. In this case, the vaccine used must meet the purity requirements, halal, not contain haram elements such as gelatin from pigs. As for in a true emergency situation, then these elements may be used as long as there are no holy and halal vaccine elements found.

Azyumardi Azra suggested that the government should use public figures such as ulama, politicians, traditional leaders, and celebrities to carry out vaccination campaigns. The educative persuasion method is more likely to win in winning the hearts of the people than the autocratic method, which is more likely to cause an unexpected back reaction. (Azra, 2021)

The implementation of the principles and values of religious moderation in responding to the COVID-19 vaccination is more related to the government's readiness and strategy, which is expected to be able to internalize the values of moderation into candidates and recipients of the COVID-19 vaccination.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Various existing problems, the pros and cons related to vaccination, the rule of law in a state and the influence of Islamic law in discussing it to produce a fatwa product issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council as a legal entity and recognized by the state. The phenomenon and its various kinds of drama must be stopped by considering the aspects of religious moderation values in the life of the nation and state. This is necessary for the sake of survival and protecting the environment and Muslim families from the possibility of being infected with COVID-19. Vaccines exist to maintain common prosperity, not only for Muslims. In-depth studies are needed in the future to provide comprehensive, actual and credible information in order to avoid hoax issues with the existence of the COVID-19 vaccination.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Abdul Syatar, initiated the idea, constructed the research designed, collected the data, analysed the data.

Chaerul Mundzir, assisted in interpreted data, enhanced the idea and constructed the data.

Muhammad Majdy Amiruddin assisted in data analyses, enhanced the work flow.

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