

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS FATWAS IN INDONESIA: AN ANALYSIS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT AND BIOPOLITICS DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Abstract: This study analyzes the role of religious fatwas issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah in supporting the Indonesian government's implementation of health protocols and vaccination programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, low compliance with some protocols and programs persists among segments of the Indonesian population. Understanding the impact of these religious pronouncements on compliance behavior is crucial for effective pandemic management. This study employs the concepts of self-government and biopolitics from Michel Foucault's perspective to analyze how religious fatwas issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah shape and influence the religious understanding of Indonesian society during the COVID-19 pandemic. It specifically focuses on fatwas related to pandemic protocols and vaccination programs, investigating how they address contestations within religious discourse. The analysis demonstrates that these institutions are aware of the need for religious narratives to be inclusive and adaptive to the challenges faced by Indonesian society. By integrating scientific knowledge into their pronouncements, fatwas from MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah have played a crucial role in guiding religious awareness within the public sphere. This research concludes that, during the pandemic, religious fatwas can effectively position religious discourse and scientific knowledge proportionally, promoting public health and social cohesion.

Keywords: Pandemic, Religious Fatwas, Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran fatwa-fatwa keagamaan yang dikeluarkan oleh MUI, NU, dan Muhammadiyah dalam membantu pemerintah Indonesia dalam melaksanakan protokol kesehatan dan program vaksinasi selama era

pandemi. Faktanya, tidak semua warga Indonesia patuh terhadap protokol kesehatan dan program vaksinasi yang ditetapkan oleh pemerintah Indonesia. Studi ini menggunakan konsep *self-government* dan *biopolitics* perspektif Michel Foucault. Kedua konsep tersebut digunakan untuk melihat bagaimana fatwa MUI, NU, dan Muhammadiyah dapat mengontrol dan mengarahkan pemahaman keagamaan masyarakat Indonesia selama era pandemi. Fatwa-fatwa keagamaan yang dikeluarkan oleh MUI, NU, dan Muhammadiyah memainkan peran penting dalam membantu pemerintah dalam menyikapi dan merespons kontestasi wacana keagamaan selama era pandemi di Indonesia. Ketiga lembaga ini menyadari bahwa wacana keagamaan selama era pandemi harus mempertimbangkan wacana medis. Dengan narasi keagamaan yang dianggap inklusif dan adaptif terhadap masalah yang dihadapi masyarakat Indonesia selama pandemi Covid-19, fatwa dari MUI, NU, dan Muhammadiyah mampu membentuk dan mengarahkan kesadaran keagamaan masyarakat Indonesia di ruang publik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa fatwa-fatwa keagamaan, khususnya di era pandemi, mampu memposisikan wacana keagamaan dan pengetahuan saintifik secara proporsional.

Kata Kunci: Era Pandemi, Fatwa Keagamaan, MUI, NU, Muhammadiyah.

INTRODUCTION

This research investigates how fatwa institutions, such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), influence the Muslim community's response to government regulations related to health protocols and vaccination programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has significantly impacted not only socio-political life but also the way religious teachings intersect with public sphere concerns in Indonesia.¹ For the majority Muslim population, religious principles permeate social life and serve as a form of legitimacy for navigating public space.² Consequently, social-religious institutions, through fatwas, sermons, and community outreach, play a crucial role in shaping and guiding Muslim mindsets regarding public health issues.³

Within the Indonesian state system, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) serves as the official body issuing fatwas, while in the social realm, numerous religious institutions exist, with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah being the most prominent. These three entities hold significant authority in addressing religious concerns faced by Indonesian Muslims through Islamic legal rulings known as fatwas.⁴ Although not legally binding, fatwas wield considerable influence in shaping Muslim thought patterns and constructing models of social interaction within Indonesian society.⁵

1 Mark Chaves, 'The Impact of Covid-19 on Religious Practice and Belief' (2021) 11 Religion, Brain & Behavior 1; Rajendra K Ghandari, 'Pandemic and Religion: The Impact of Covid-19 on Religious Rituals and Faith' (2021) 60 Journal of Religion and Health 1237; Susan J. Palmer, 'Covid-19 and the Impact on Religious Life: A Study of the Pandemic's Effects on Religious Practice and Belief' (2021) 36 Journal of Contemporary Religion 195.

2 Kuntowijoyo, 'Religion, State and Society: Exploring the Role of Religion in the Political and Social Life of Indonesia' (2011) 1 Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies 141; Greg Fealy and Sally White, 'Religion and Identity in Contemporary Indonesia' (2008) 67.

3 Robert W Hefner, 'Religious Authority and Political Power in Indonesia' (1998) 57 Journal of Asian Studies 387; Greg Fealy, 'The Authority of Religious Institutions in Contemporary Indonesia' (2003) 34 Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 213.

4 See Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Lembaga-Lembaga Penyelenggara Fatwa Di Indonesia*.

5 Azyumardi Azra, 'Fatwa, State, and Society: The Position of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia in the Indonesian Political System' (2002) 30 Asian Journal of Social Science 245.

MUI was founded by the Indonesian government in 1975 with the aim of providing *fatwas* that conform to Islamic teachings.⁶ Muhammadiyah, established in 1912, emphasizes a modern and progressive interpretation of Islam⁷ while NU, founded in 1926, prioritizes the integration of Islamic teachings with local customs.⁸ Each institution possesses a specialized body dedicated to managing and issuing fatwas: MUI's Fatwa Commission (KF), NU's Bahtsul Masail Institution (LBM), and Muhammadiyah's Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid (MTT). When mapped with the typology of authority from Khaled Abou El Fadl's perspective, KF's authority is coercive given its official designation and close ties to the state, while that of LBM and MTT is persuasive, relying on their respective institutions' credibility and networks within the community.⁹ This theoretical distinction translates into practical differences in their areas of influence.

Fatwas issued by MUI through KF, established by the government but operating with a degree of autonomy, carry significant weight and expect national adherence.¹⁰ In contrast, fatwas issued by NU through its Bahtsul Masail Institution (LBM) and Muhammadiyah through its Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid (MTT) primarily hold authority within their respective communities – Nahdliyin and Muhammadiyah members. While collaboration and dialogue exist, competition for religious authority can emerge, leading to instances where fatwas from different institutions ignite controversies or complicate social issues.¹¹

In response to the Covid-19 outbreaks that have taken a great toll on Indonesia, the three *fatwa* institutions have played their own part in the new normal campaign during the pandemic through a variety of *fatwa* decisions. Existing research on pandemic-related fatwas in Indonesia by scholars like Aji and Habibaty,¹² Shodiqin,¹³ and Rusyana.¹⁴ has primarily focused on MUI's fatwas, analyzing their content, public responses, and Ulema strategies for virus mitigation. However, a comparative analysis of how NU and Muhammadiyah, alongside MUI, navigated the complex religious discourse through their own fatwas remains largely unexplored.

- 6 Nadirsyah Hosen, 'Fatwa and Politics in Indonesia' in Arskal Salim dan Azyumardi Azra (ed), *Shari'a and politics in modern Indonesia* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2003).
- 7 Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Sejarah Muhammadiyah* (Pustaka Pelajar); Harun Nasution, *Muhammadiyah: Sebuah Pemikiran Dan Gerakan Kebangsaan* (PT Raja Grafindo Persada); Ahmad Najib Burhani, *Muhammadiyah: Sejarah Dan Perkembangan* (Pustaka Pelajar).
- 8 Sally White; Fealy, Greg, 'Nahdlatul Ulama: Traditionalists, Reformists and the State in Indonesia'; M. C. Ricklefs, 'The Founding of Nahdlatul Ulama: Islamic Revival and the Politics of Traditionalism in Java, 1912-1926'.
- 9 Khaled Abou El Fadl, 'The Authoritative and the Authoritarian in Islamic Discourses', *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution, and Progress* (Harvard University Press 2005).
- 10 Azyumardi Azra (n 5).
- 11 Mun'im Sirry, 'Fatwas and Their Controversy: The Case of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI)' [2013] *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*.
- 12 Ahmad Mukri Aji and Diana Mutia Habibaty, 'Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Tentang Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Dalam Situasi Terjadi Wabah Covid-19 Sebagai Langkah Antisipatif Dan Proaktif Persebaran Virus Corona Di Indonesia' [2020] *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Syar-i*.
- 13 Shodiqin, *Model Pemberdayaan Jamaah Masjid Menghadapi Dampak Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)* (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati 2020).
- 14 Rusyana, *Fatwa Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Di Saat Pandemi Covid-19 Di Indonesia Dan Mesir* (UIN Gunung Djati 2020).

Methods

This qualitative research¹⁵, focusing on document analysis¹⁶, investigates fatwas issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah during 2020-2021. *Fatwa* decisions on health protocol and vaccination issued by these religious institutions were critically analyzed using the self-government and biopolitics concepts from Michel Foucault's perspective.¹⁷

Foucault's notion of self-government examines how individuals regulate themselves and take responsibility for their own actions. However, this concept can also be employed to understand how powerful entities – in this case, religious institutions–can shape and influence individual behavior through pronouncements and guidelines.¹⁸ Similarly, the biopolitics framework examines how power structures, including religious institutions, can utilize discourses and regulations to manage populations and influence individual bodies in the name of public health and well-being. This research specifically aims to analyze how these fatwas mobilize biopolitical concepts in terms of population control, individual responsibility, and the negotiation of power dynamics between religious institutions and state authorities.¹⁹

Result

Religious fatwas issued by MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah during the pandemic served as important tools to shape Muslim communities' attitudes and actions towards government health protocols. Applying Foucault's perspective on self-government, this research analyzes how these institutions, through their fatwas, encouraged individual responsibility and internalization of norms alongside promoting adherence to official guidelines.

Using Foucault's concept of self-government, this research analyzes how MUI's fatwa during the pandemic aimed to shape both adherence to government health protocols as promoted by the Indonesian Medical Association (Ikatan Dokter Indonesia) and understanding of religious practices among Indonesian Muslims. Similarly, NU's series of edicts on daily Muslim practices emphasized internalized responsibility for protecting oneself and the community through measures like mask-wearing. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah's establishment of the MCCC exemplifies a proactive approach to self-governance, coordinating health initiatives and supporting members during the pandemic.

Foucault's concept of biopolitics provides a framework for understanding how states exert control over populations through the management of life.²⁰ This control can manifest in various forms, including regulating birth and death rates, influencing reproductive choices, and shaping public health initiatives.

15 JW Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (SAGE Publications 2018).

16 K Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (SAGE Publications 2014).

17 Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College de France, 1982-83* (Palgrave Macmillan; St Martin's Press 2010); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (Michel Senellart ed, Palgrave Macmillan 2010).

18 Irene Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self Government* (Monash University 2019).

19 Sven-Olov Wallenstein, 'Introduction: Foucault, Biopolitics and Governmentality', *Foucault, Biopolitics and Governmentality* (Soderton Univerity 2013).

20 Michel Foucault, 'Social Must Be Defended; Lectures at the College de France' (2003).

In the context of Indonesia's COVID-19 vaccination programme, the fatwas issued by MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah played a vital role in biopolitical governance. These pronouncements, declaring vaccination as religiously permissible ("halal"), served as a convenient mechanism for the state to address vaccine hesitancy rooted in religious concerns. The authority and reach of these Islamic organisations, representing a significant portion of the Muslim population, granted their fatwas considerable legitimacy. This, in turn, strengthened the state's hand in mandating vaccination and ultimately achieving its biopolitical goals of herd immunity and population management. The fatwas, therefore, functioned as a bridge between state power and religious authority, allowing the state to leverage religious knowledge and influence to control Muslim bodies and achieve its biopolitical objectives.

Discussion

Fatwa, Covid-19 and the Contestation of Religious Discourse in Indonesia

The term "fatwa" (plural: fatawa), meaning "explanation" (*al-ibanah*) in Arabic, holds significant weight in Islamic jurisprudence. Traditionally, fatwas were issued by individual muftis, renowned scholars with expertise in religious legal matters.²¹ These pronouncements aimed to provide guidance on specific questions posed by individuals (*mustafti*).

However, the rise of the nation-state has reshaped the landscape of religious authority. Muftis are no longer solely individual figures, but often institutionalized within bodies like Indonesia's Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) or Muhammadiyah. This shift has not only altered the composition of the mufti but also the process of fatwa issuance. In addition to the existential changes from individual to institutions, the process of *fatwa* making in the modern time is different from that of classical era. During the classical era, fatwas were often the product of individual *ijtihad* (*al-ijtihad al-fardiy*), while the modern mufti system in the nation-state often operates through collective *ijtihad* (*al-ijtihad al-jama'iy*) where experts from diverse backgrounds collaborate to reach a consensus.²² While classical era disagreements centered around individual scholars, contemporary contestations involve rival institutions vying for influence and legitimacy within the Muslim community.²³

- 21 Muhammad Shuhufi et al., "Islamic Law and Social Media: Analyzing the Fatwa of Indonesian Ulama Council Regarding Interaction on Digital Platforms," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (31 Desember 2022): 823, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.15011>; Nawir Yuslem, 'Sharia Contextualisation To Establish the Indonesian Fiqh' (2020) 5 *Petita : Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah*.
- 22 Aznan Hasan, "An Introduction to Collective Ijtihad (Ijtihad Jama'i): Concept and Applications," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 20, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 26-49, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v20i2.520>; Muhammad Siddiq Armia and Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia, 'Introduction: Maintaining the Constitutional Rights to Create a Better Society' (2023) 8 *Petita : Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* 69; Muhammad Siddiq Armia and Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia, 'Introduction: Form Over Substance, Achieving Objectives While Preserving Values' (2023) 8 *Petita : Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* i.
- 23 'Adnin Ibrahim and Asmak Ab Rahman, 'Methodology of Ijtihad Jama'i: A Mechanism for Contemporary Fatwa Issuance' (2022) 6 *Malaysian Journal Of Islamic Studies (MJIS)* <<https://journal.unisza.edu.my/mjis/index.php/mjis/article/view/202>>; Johari Ab Latiff, 'Halal Certification Procedure In Malaysia And Indonesia' (2020) 5 *PETITA: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syari'ah* <<http://petita.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/petita/article/view/102>>; Rahmat Budiman, 'Theoretical Review Of Islamic Legal Sources According To The Misrepresentation Theory Of Hallaq' (2020) 5 *PETITA: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syari'ah* <<http://petita.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/petita/article/view/100>>.

Fatwa decisions involve a discourse among diverse experts from various disciplines, including religious scholars, medical professionals, and sociologists. While the ultimate pronouncement relates to Islamic legal principles, the analysis and evaluation of issues draw upon diverse expertise and perspectives.²⁴ This enables fatwas to fulfill their crucial functions: firstly, providing accessible clarification (*tabyin*) by applying religious principles to contemporary situations, and secondly, offering clear guidance (*taujih*) that is relevant and adaptable to the needs of the Muslim community.

Tabyin clarifies existing religious laws and their applicability to new situations.²⁵ During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, fatwas employing tabyin might analyze religious texts to determine the permissibility of specific medical interventions or social distancing measures. *Taujih*, on the other hand, offers practical guidance and direction in navigating contemporary challenges.²⁶ In a Pandemic context, religious *fatwa* may also have a role of instructing and directing people in dealing with the Covid-19 outbreaks. As such, experts from diverse discipline must collaborate in the *fatwa* making to ensure that fatwas provide clear, relevant, and religiously grounded guidance to serve as practical reference.²⁷

Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim population, with over 229 million adherents. These adherents have high level of religiosity and public adherence to Islamic precepts in their social life. Recognizing the need for religious legitimacy to ensure societal acceptance and program success, the Indonesian government often consults with and involves key religious institutions like Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) and Muhammadiyah in its decision-making processes. While the Indonesian government possesses the political power to determine strategic steps in national and state affairs, it often cannot afford to completely separate itself from key religious institutions. This is due to the significant influence these institutions hold on public life and their ability to mobilize support for or resistance against government policies.²⁸ Conversely, policies lacking religious legitimacy can face significant public rejection and even disobedience, potentially leading to ineffectiveness.

The Indonesian response to the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the complex interplay between different knowledge authorities. While the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Indonesian Doctors Association (IDI), crafted health policies like social distancing and vaccination programs, their implementation often faced contestation from various segments of the Muslim community. One notable area of divergence stemmed from differing views on the compatibility of health protocols with religious practices. While MUI issued fatwas endorsing mask-wearing and social distancing, certain religious groups challenged their interpretation, citing potential conflicts with specific rituals or beliefs. Similarly, the vaccine rollout faced resistance from those questioning its halal status and its perceived limitations in light of the concept of divine

24 Amien Abdullah, *Fresh Ijtihad: Manhaj Pemikiran Keislaman Muhammadiyah Di Era Disrupsi* (Suara Muhammadiyah 2019); Cekli Setya Pratiwi, 'Indonesia's Legal Policies Amid Covid-19' [2022] *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights*; Vol 6 No 2 (2022): December 2022 DO - 10.19184/jseahr.v6i2.27799 <<https://jurnal.unej.ac.id/index.php/JSEHR/article/view/27799>>.

25 Ibnu Manzur, *Lisan Al-'Arab* (Dar Al-Ma'arif), 145.

26 *ibid.*

27 Heri Fadli Wahyudi and Fajar Fajar, 'Metode Ijtihad Komisi Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Dan Aplikasinya Dalam Fatwa' (2018) 13 *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam* 120; Yuslem (n 21).

28 Amos Sukanto and S Panca Parulian, 'Religious Community Responses to the Public Policy of the Indonesian Government Related to the Covid-19 Pandemic' (2020) 8 *Journal of Law, Religion and State* 273 <https://brill.com/view/journals/jlrs/8/2-3/article-p273_273.xml>.

fate. Some segments of the Muslim community vehemently rejected the program, invoking religious narratives that emphasized God's ultimate control over health outcomes, regardless of human interventions like vaccination.²⁹

In addressing concerns about health protocols and resistance against vaccination programs, both the government and IDI recognize that their spheres of influence – political power and medical expertise – may not be sufficient on their own.³⁰ They acknowledge the need for collaboration with religious institutions, whose understanding of faith-based perspectives and communication channels hold significant role. Within this collaborative space, fatwa pronouncements from prominent religious bodies – MUI through its Fatwa Commission (KF), NU through its Board of Religious Scholars (LBM), and Muhammadiyah through its Central Fatwa Council (MTT) – play a crucial role in shaping public discourse. While all three institutions hold authority in issuing religious fatwas, their distinct organizational identities and orientations inevitably influence their pronouncements. MUI, for instance, often navigates a closer relationship with the government, while LBM and MTT primarily represent their respective organizational viewpoints.

Analyzing the Role of Fatwas in Shaping Self-Governance During the COVID-19 Pandemic
The Indonesian government's establishment of health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic aimed to regulate social interactions and mitigate the spread of the virus. These protocols served as a framework for monitoring, managing, and fostering responsible behavior within public spaces.³¹ Recognizing the crucial role of religious guidance in shaping behavior, the government partnered with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to issue pronouncements (*tabyin*) and directives (*taujih*) to support nationwide preventative efforts. This collaboration resulted in several notable fatwas, including Fatwa Number 14 of 2020, which provided 11 specific guidelines for conducting religious practices during the pandemic.³²

Drawing on Michel Foucault's perspective on self-government, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) utilized its fatwa during the COVID-19 pandemic to influence Muslim communities' understanding and implementation of religious practices. Point 1 emphasizes that maintaining health and avoiding harm, including COVID-19 exposure, is a core Islamic principle, aligning with public health initiatives. Points 6 and 7 offer specific guidance regarding Friday prayer, discouraging the practice in high-prevalence areas while encouraging it in areas with better control. These fatwas suggest MUI's approach to provide a clear understanding about the importance of compliance with health protocols within the context of the pandemic to mitigate public resistance.

Point 9 of MUI fatwa emphasizes the importance of following medical protocols in handling COVID-19-exposed corpses, particularly during bathing and shrouding,

29 Ahmad Zaenuri, 'Fiqh Conception of the Jamā'ah Tablīgh's Da'wah during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Study of the Da'wah Movement of the Jamā'ah Tablīgh in Gorontalo' (2020) 1 Journal of Islamic Law (JIL) <<http://e-journal.iainptk.ac.id/index.php/jil/article/view/68>>.

30 Ruslan Sangaji and others, 'The News of the Covid-19 Vaccine in the Media and Public Resistance in Indonesia: A Study of Islamic Law' (2021) 5 SAMARAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam.

31 Gugus Tugas Percepatan Penanganan Covid-19, 'Protokol Percepatan Penanganan Pandemi Covid-19 (Corona Virus Disease 2019)' (2020).

32 Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 'Fatwa Tentang Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Dalam Situasi Wabah Covid-19' (2020) <<https://mui.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fatwa-tentang-Penyelenggaraan-IbadahDalam-situasi-Wabah-Covid-19.pdf>>.

through collaboration with authorized personnel as issued by IDI. This guidance highlights MUI's role in directing Muslims towards responsible behavior that protects individuals and communities from harm using some theological discourses. Point 9 also indicates that Muslims are deprived of freedom to prevent them from arbitrary steps that may pose any harms during the pandemic situation. Meanwhile, recognizing the importance of spiritual well-being during the pandemic, point 10 encourages Muslims to engage in religious practices such as worship, repentance, and remembrance of God. These practices are presented as potential sources of comfort and strength while navigating the challenges of the pandemic.

The fatwa proposes several recommendations:³³ (1) the government implementing significantly stricter regulations on the movement of people and goods into and out of Indonesia, with exceptions for medical personnel and essential supplies; (2) Muslims actively cooperating with government policies regarding isolation and treatment for infected individuals to prevent further outbreaks; and (3) adopting proportionate measures towards infected individuals and those exposed to COVID-19 in accordance with established health protocols. This includes promoting community acceptance of individuals declared negative or recovered from the virus. Analyzing these recommendations through Foucault's lens of self-governance, points 2 and 3 highlight MUI's role in influencing Muslim understanding and adherence to both government policies and health rules established by the Indonesian Medical Association (IDI).

Correspondingly, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, NU issued a series of appeals, instructions, and edicts (fatwas) regarding health protocols, targeting both its organizational structures (*jam'iyah*) and followers (*jamaah*) at all levels. These pronouncements can be chronologically mapped as follows. On March 11, 2020, PBNU issued the first edict, a proactive notice postponing the National Deliberation (Munas) and National Conference (Konbes) NU, initially scheduled for March 18-19, 2020, in Sarang. Then, following this postponement notice, on March 12, 2020, PBNU issued the "NU Peduli Covid-19" protocol guidelines as the second edict. On March 25, 2020, PBNU instructed all NU *jamaah* to prohibit mass worship activities like *tahlilan*, *diba'an*, and *lailatul ijtima'* in public spaces as the third edict. Finally, on April 3, 2020, PBNU issued the fourth edict, a circular appealing to its followers to perform tarawih, *tadarrus*, and other Ramadan and Idul Fitri rituals at home, in accordance with government health protocols.

NU's initial pronouncement on postponing the National Deliberation (Munas) and National Conference (Konbes) demonstrates its prioritization of the health and well-being of Nahdliyin within the pandemic context. This decision indirectly influences the decision of Nahdliyin to comply with the government's health protocols. Notably, the second edict outlining the NU Peduli Covid-19 protocol showcases NU's capacity as a social organization to direct its members' responses to the pandemic. This initiative contributes to facilitating the implementation of government health protocols within the Nahdliyin community through its own guidelines and recommendations, potentially influencing self-governance practices related to health during the pandemic.³⁴ While there may be instances where individuals within Nahdliyin face challenges in adhering

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Nazar Nurdin, Fenny Bintarawati, dan Ulfatun Nihayah, "Isolasi Mandiri Dalam Islam: Kritik Metodologis Fatwa LBM PWNU Jawa Tengah Tentang Anjuran Isolasi Saat Wabah," *JIL: Journal of Islamic Law* 2, no. 1 (7 Februari 2021): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v2i1.145>.

to government health protocols, NU's pronouncements serve as valuable resources for guiding and supporting their communities through this public health crisis.

Beyond simply maintaining and directing, NU's third and fourth edicts actively influenced the socio-religious lives of its members in an effort to safeguard their well-being during the pandemic. This was evident in the challenging decision to discourage deeply rooted religious traditions deemed potentially risky in the context of COVID-19. Similarly, the fourth edict focused on shaping understanding of religious practices traditionally performed in public spaces, such as tarawih and Idul Fitri prayers, encouraging their independent and individual observance at home. From an organizational perspective, the comprehensive implementation of these edicts across all levels of NU's structure is evident in the coordinated efforts of its autonomous agencies (Banom) like Ansor, Muslimat, and Fatayat, as well as its management at provincial, district, sub-district, and village levels. This demonstrates PBNU's multifaceted intervention and its reliance on its grassroots members for effective pandemic mitigation within the Nahdliyin community.³⁵

In the pandemic context, NU's application of various scientific methods (*Ikhtiar 'ilmi*), including epidemiological research and collaborative discussions with health experts, and its emphasis on collective *ijtihad* (*Ijtihad ijtima'i*)³⁶ demonstrably led to the widespread and systematic adoption of preventive measures within its membership across all organizational levels. This suggests the development of a strong scientific attitude in NU's approach to problem-solving, particularly during crisis situations.³⁷ As outlined by Masdar Hilmi in "Sikap Ilmiah Hadapi Pandemi"³⁸, this scientific attitude encourages NU members to utilize inductive reasoning as a tool to understand and analyze social realities like the pandemic. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of evidence-based reasoning in formulating dynamic and innovative religious interpretations and productive religious law relevant to contemporary challenges.³⁹ This aligns with Ignas Kleden's⁴⁰ notion of combining systematic theological principles with contextual awareness as an exclusion postulate (*istitsna'*) for the implementation of elastic and emergency-sensitive religious teachings, thus ensuring religious teachings remain relevant and adaptable to evolving social circumstances. Notably, NU fatwas, grounded in this approach, have facilitated the implementation of government health protocols within the Nahdliyin community, offering an alternative framework for interpreting religious obligations during the pandemic.

35 'Anggaran Dasar Dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga Nahdlatul Ulama. Lajnah Ta'lif Wan Nasyr Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama. ND.'

36 Nadirsyah Hosen, 'Nahdlatul Ulama and Collective Ijtihad' (2004) 6 New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies 5; Samy Ayoub, 'Creativity in Continuity: Legal Treatises (Al-Rasā'il Al-Fiqhiyya) in Islamic Law' (2023) 34 Journal of Islamic Studies 305 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etac063>>.

37 Muhammad Irfan Wahid, 'Dari Tradisional Menuju Digital: Adopsi Internet Oleh Nahdlatul Ulama Selama Pandemi Covid-19' [2020] Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat; Vol 16, No 1 (2020): JURNAL STUDI AGAMA DAN MASYARAKAT <<https://e-journal.iain-palangkaraya.ac.id/index.php/jsam/article/view/1745>>.

38 Masdar Hilmy, 'Sikap Ilmiah Hadapi Pandemi' *Kompas Id* (Jakarta, 4 April 2020) <<https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2020/04/04/sikap-ilmiah-hadapi-pandemi>>.

39 'Kritik Nalar Fiqh NU: Transformasi Paradigma Bahtsul Masail', *Kritik Nalar Fiqh NU: Transformasi Paradigma Bahtsul Masail* (Lakpesdam 2002).

40 Ignas Kleden, 'Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Teologi Kontekstual' [2018] Jurnal Ledalero.

Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah, as a socio-religious organization engaged in *dakwah*, education, charity, and social work,⁴¹ has always positioned itself as a civil society in providing direction and assistance to those in need, whether it be religious, economic, educational, or social disasters. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Muhammadiyah took several steps to protect all levels of society. Referring to Najib Burhani,⁴² Muhammadiyah took at least two steps. First, Muhammadiyah used prayer and *dakwah* as a theological foundation to provide guidance on how to worship safely during the pandemic. Second, Muhammadiyah activated its charitable giving institutions to help those who were economically vulnerable as a result of the pandemic. In addition, Muhammadiyah issued several appeals in response to the pandemic, including Edict Number 02/MLM/I.0/H/2020 on Corona Virus Pandemic 2019.⁴³

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Muhammadiyah issued several edicts, including Fatwa Decision Number 1, which instructed the postponement or modification of mass gatherings within its communities, including recitations, seminars, meetings, and social activities. These restrictions emphasize online participation or reduced attendance options. Sociologically, these pronouncements, along with calls to maximize religious practices at home during Ramadan and Idul Fitri, as highlighted by Mark Woodward,⁴⁴ demonstrate Muhammadiyah's concern for the well-being of its members. Analyzed through Michel Foucault's lens of self-government, Fatwa Decision Number 1 aligns with Muhammadiyah's commitment to empower its members to navigate the pandemic through responsible self-regulation and adherence to its guidelines, similar to what MUI and NU's approach.

Muhammadiyah's guidance for its members through Fatwa Decision Number 5 extends beyond religious matters to encompass educational practices within its network of schools, and universities. This decree emphasizes strict adherence to government health protocols at both central and regional levels for Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah organizational environment, recognizing the vulnerability of educational institutions to COVID-19 exposure. Further illustrating its commitment to public health, Fatwa Decision Number 6 directs Muhammadiyah's healthcare enterprises to tailor their COVID-19 response measures to align with the Ministry of Health's guidelines, considering the specific needs of their assemblies, institutions, and autonomous organizations. Importantly, this directive also establishes the Muhammadiyah Covid-19 Command Center (MCCC) tasked with coordinating the implementation of these programs and actions, demonstrating the organization's comprehensive approach to mitigating the pandemic's impact within its communities.

41 Mustafa Kemal Pasha & Ahmad Adaby Darwan, *Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Islam Dalam Perspektif Historis Dan Ideologis* (LPPI 2000); Ratno Lukito, 'Shariah and the Politics of Pluralism in Indonesia: Understanding State's Rational Approach to Adat and Islamic Law' (2019) 4 Petita : Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah 14 <<http://petita.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/petita/article/view/8>>; Murdan, 'Hukum Islam Dalam Kerangka Sistem Hukum Masyarakat Modern' (2016) 1 PETITA: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syari'ah.

42 Ahmad Najib Burhani, *Comparing Tablighi Jamaat and Muhammadiyah Responses to Covid-19* (ISEAS Perspective Yusof Ishak Institute 2020).

43 Situs web Muhammadiyah. Selain itu, Muhammadiyah juga mengeluarkan beberapa edaran lain yang berhubungan dengan aktifitas keagamaan lainnya seperti ibadah puasa, salat Idul Fitri dan Idul Adha, yang tertuang dalam Surat Edaran Muhammadiyah Nomor 06/EDR/I.0/E/2020 tentang Tuntunan Ibadah Puasa, Salat Idul Fitri, dan Idul Adha pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19.

44 Mark Woodward, 'Religious Holidays in the Plague Year: Lesson from the Indonesian Muhammadiyah Movement' (*IbTimes.id*, 2020) <<https://ibtimes.id/religious-holidays-in-the-plague-year-lessons-from-the-indonesian-muhammadiyah-movement/>> accessed 2 April 2020.

Beyond regulating religious practices, Fatwa Decision Number 8, grounded in a prophetic hadith advocating caution during times of illness, seeks to guide Muhammadiyah members' behavior by discouraging travel to high-risk areas and activities with significant COVID-19 exposure potential. Such measures, as observed by health scholar Falahuddin,⁴⁵ not only safeguard its members but also actively support the government's health protocol implementation. Further emphasizing its dedication to public welfare, Muhammadiyah established the Muhammadiyah Covid-19 Command Center (MCCC),⁴⁶ for humanity missions.

A Biopolitics Analysis of Fatwas on COVID-19 Vaccination

On January 13, 2021, the Indonesian government, acting through Decree HK 02.02/4/1/2021 issued by the General Directorate for Disease Prevention and Control, initiated the Covid-19 vaccination program, targeting 40.2 million Indonesians. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Health implemented a four-stage vaccination strategy based on vaccine availability, arrival timing, and security profiles. Stage 1 targeted medical professionals, including nurses and technicians, alongside students in healthcare fields. Stage 2 focused on essential workers like police officers, teachers, and public transportation staff, followed by government officials and employees in critical sectors like banking and utilities. Stage 3 prioritized individuals vulnerable due to geographical, social, or economic factors. Finally, Stage 4 encompassed the broader community and stakeholders, with vaccination schedules adjusted based on vaccine availability.⁴⁷

Following the government's COVID-19 vaccination program rollout, concerns arose within several Indonesian Muslim communities regarding the halal status of certain vaccines due to the potential presence of pig trypsin. Seeking legal clarification, the Indonesian Muslim Consumers Foundation (YMKI) initiated legal proceedings against the government over Article 2 of Presidential Regulation No. 99/2020. In its landmark decision No. 31P/HUM/2022 issued on April 14, 2022, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of YMK's petition, annulling Article 2 on the grounds that it contradicted Article 4 of the Halal Product Guarantee Act (No. 33/2014). Notably, Article 4 mandates that "all products entering, distributed, and traded within Indonesia must possess halal certification". The Supreme Court further asserted that the absence of any specific reference to halal status in Article 2 rendered it devoid of binding legal force. In essence, the Court's decision compels the government, specifically the Ministry of Health, the Covid-19 Mitigation Committee, and the Head of the Indonesian Drug and Food Authority, to actively guarantee and protect the halal status of any COVID-19 vaccines employed in the national vaccination program.

Concerns arose within the Indonesian Muslim community regarding the theological permissibility of vaccination during Ramadan, given the multi-year vaccination process.

45 Falahuddin, 'Respons Muhammadiyah Menghadapi Covid-19' (2020) 15 Jurnal MAARIF 139.

46 MCCC was established on March 14 2020 based on Decree Number 2825/KEP/I.0/D/2020. Among the MCCC's main tasks is coordinating various programs in the context of overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic by Muhammadiyah in various parts of the country.

47 Kementerian Kesehatan, 'Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pencegahan Dan Pengendalian Penyakit Nomor HK 02.02/4/1/2021 Tentang Petunjuk Teknis Pelaksanaan Vaksinasi Dalam Rangka Penanggulangan Pandemi Corona Virus Disease-19' (2021).

Addressing these concerns, key religious institutions like MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah issued fatwas to provide religious guidance.⁴⁸

MUI, partnered with the government, declared several COVID-19 vaccines halal through fatwas. For instance, Fatwa Number 2/2021 deemed three Sinovac vaccines and Fatwa Number 53/2021 approved Zifivax TM halal. Similarly, Fatwas Number 8/2022 and 9/2022 certified the halal status of Merah Putih and Recombinant SARS-CoV-2 vaccines, respectively. By issuing these fatwas, MUI and other institutions aimed to dispel theological doubts and encourage Muslim participation in the national vaccination program. The Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) issued religious rulings (fatwas) not only on halal vaccines but also on those considered haram (forbidden) or of undetermined status. Among these was Sinopharm, declared haram but permitted (*mubah*) under emergency conditions. AstraZeneca, manufactured by SK Bioscience Co. Ltd, was declared haram due to porcine trypsin use. However, in a notable fatwa (Number 14/2021), MUI allowed its use due to several factors like a severe public health emergency, unavailable alternative vaccines to create herd immunities, and government guarantees. This *mubah* status, the fatwa stipulated, would become void once these critical conditions ceased, highlighting the nuanced application of religious principles in addressing complex situations.⁴⁹

Similar to the aforementioned vaccines, Pfizer, although declared haram, was permitted for use (*mubah*) by MUI. However, the halal status of Moderna remains under review due to limited access to detailed production data acquired through multilateral channels. Notably, Indonesia received Moderna vaccines through the Covax/Gavi facility (a vaccine alliance co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO, and CEPI), where vaccines are donated or purchased at discounted rates for low- and middle-income countries.

MUI's fatwas consistently emphasize Muslim participation in the national vaccination program to achieve swift eradication of the Covid-19 pandemic and establish herd immunity. Additionally, they urge the government to prioritize the procurement of halal vaccines and carefully consider advice from relevant experts to minimize risks and ensure public safety. Similar to MUI, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) also issued fatwas on the halal-haram status of COVID-19 vaccines. Their Bahtsul Masail Decision Number 01/2021 deemed the AstraZeneca vaccine permissible (*mubah*) for use, considering both standard and emergency circumstances.⁵⁰ This decision was informed by consultations with medical and ethical experts, including the Head of the Drug and Food Authority, the Director of AstraZeneca, and their vaccine experts. NU subsequently assured the public about the *mubah* status and emphasized the mandatory nature of vaccination for Muslims to achieve herd immunity and curb the pandemic. Notably, their fatwas affirm strong support for the government's vaccination campaign and extend outreach efforts to both national and grassroots levels.

48 Fathorrahman Gufron, 'Kehalalan Vaksin Di Bulan Ramadhan' (2021) <<https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2021/04/13/kehalalan-vaksinasi-di-bulan-ramadhan>>.

49 Miftahus Sa'diyah, Mowafg Abraham Masuwd and Ach Faqih Supandi, 'Legal Problems Using AstraZeneca Vaccine: Hermeneutic Analysis of the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council' (2022) 3 Journal of Islamic Law (JIL) <<https://e-journal.iainptk.ac.id/index.php/jil/article/view/496>>.

50 Alhafiz Kurniawan, 'PBNU Keluarkan Fatwa Terkait Kehalalan Vaksin AstraZeneca' (*nu.or.id*, 2021) <<https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/pbnu-keluarkan-fatwa-terkait-kehalalan-vaksin-astrazeneca-TfTvo>> accessed 30 March 2021.

Likewise, Muhammadiyah also issued fatwas declaring vaccination mandatory for Muslims and the vaccines themselves halal. They view vaccination as a religiously recommended effort to combat the pandemic, aligning with Islamic teachings on protecting life and promoting a healthy society. This emphasis on the "holiness of man" underscores the ethical and religious imperative of promoting vaccine uptake.⁵¹

Conclusion

Viewed through the lens of Michel Foucault's concept of self-government, the fatwa rulings issued by MUI, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah can be seen as attempts to shape Indonesian Muslims' understanding of religious pronouncements during the pandemic. MUI's fatwas aim to frame interpretations within the national context, aligning with government policies and health guidelines from the Indonesian Doctors' Association (IDI). Similarly, the Bahtsul Masail of NU (LBM) and Majelis Tarjih of Muhammadiyah (MTT) operate within narrower discursive spaces, influencing religious approaches among their respective communities on pandemic-related issues. These pronouncements play a crucial role in shaping Muslim awareness in Indonesia. Notably, LBM and MTT fatwas also serve a pragmatic and political function. While MUI rulings may face some dissent, LBM and MTT pronouncements, with their perceived balanced perspectives on pandemic life, help keep NU and Muhammadiyah members aligned with the government's desired response. The fatwa rulings issued by Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) through Komisi Fatwa (KF), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) through Lembaga Bahtsul Masail (LBM), and Muhammadiyah through Majelis Tarjih (MTT) exhibit key similarities. Notably, all three institutions concur on the mandatory nature of vaccination for Indonesian Muslims. These provisions and recommendations, addressing both legal status and theological aspects of vaccines, facilitate government efforts to encourage public participation in the vaccination program without hesitation. Within the context of biopolitics, these influential religious institutions function as partners of the state, leveraging their authority on religious pronouncements to contribute to public health initiatives. The official pronouncements issued in the form of fatwas further strengthen the government's legitimacy in requesting widespread compliance with its efforts to achieve herd immunity and safeguard public health. Indonesian fatwas issued by MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah during the pandemic generally align with government regulations, carefully navigating religious principles, public health concerns, and legal norms. These pronouncements prioritize public safety and well-being, demonstrating a strong commitment to the community's welfare. Integrating scientific and medical perspectives on disease containment, they reflect the outcome of collaborative efforts between religious authorities, health experts, and epidemiologists to find common ground between religious norms and government policies. Furthermore, these fatwas embody a spirit of solidarity and unified resolve, signifying a collaborative approach to confronting the health crisis and ensuring societal sustainability in the face of emergency situations like pandemics.

51 Tim Redaksi, 'Majelis Tarjih: Vaksinasi Merupakan Bagian Dari Ikhtiar Yang Dianjurkan Agama' (*Muhammadiyah Or.Id*, 2021) <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tarjih-vaksinasi-merupakan-bagian-dari-ikhtiar-yang-dianjurkan-agama/>>.

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