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Islam, Radicalism, and the Politics of Refusal: FPI's "Making Do" With the Vaccine Program (2020-2022)

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Purpose
This study investigated COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among members of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) during the 2020-2022 pandemic through Michel de Certeau's conceptual lens of "making do" (la perruque) and everyday tactics.

Method
Employing historical methods—including source criticism and oral history—primary sources were collected through interviews with FPI members from grassroots levels to field commanders, supplemented by analysis of social media narratives and contemporary news reports. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis informed by de Certeau's framework.

Result/Findings
The findings revealed that vaccine decisions made up tactical maneuvers rather than mere ideological rejection. Conditional acceptance—choosing Moderna over Sinovac, awaiting MUI fatwas, or complying only when workplace requirements demanded—exemplifies de Certeau's concept: practices that appear compliant while preserving autonomy. Active refusal manifested through creative circumvention, such as avoiding vaccine-mandated public transportation or sustaining alternative narratives amid official campaigns. The absence of clear directives from Habib Rizieq Shihab created space for diverse individual tactics.

Conclusion
This study concluded that FPI members "make do" by negotiating state authority using conditional compliance and active circumvention. This transformation causes public health interventions go beyond correcting disinformation and instead address the cultural frameworks and systemic skepticism that underpin these individual moves.

Keywords
Islam, Radicalism, vaccine hesitancy, FPI, Covid-19, making do.

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Abstrak

Tujuan
Studi ini menyelidiki keraguan terhadap vaksin COVID-19 di kalangan anggota Front Pembela Islam (FPI) selama pandemi 2020-2022 melalui lensa konseptual Michel de Certeau tentang "beradaptasi" (la perruque) dan taktik sehari-hari.

Metode
Dengan menggunakan metode historis—termasuk kritik sumber dan sejarah lisan—sumber primer dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan anggota FPI dari tingkat akar rumput hingga komandan lapangan, dilengkapi dengan analisis narasi media sosial dan laporan berita kontemporer. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik yang didasarkan pada kerangka kerja de Certeau.

Hasil/Temuan
Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keputusan vaksin merupakan manuver taktis daripada sekadar penolakan ideologis. Penerimaan bersyarat—memilih Moderna daripada Sinovac, menunggu fatwa MUI, atau mematuhi hanya ketika persyaratan tempat kerja menuntut—menjadi contoh konsep de Certeau: praktik yang tampak patuh sambil tetap menjaga otonomi. Penolakan aktif yang termanifestasi melalui penghindaran kreatif, seperti menghindari transportasi umum yang diwajibkan vaksin atau mempertahankan narasi alternatif di tengah kampanye resmi. Tidak adanya arahan yang jelas dari Habib Rizieq Shihab menciptakan ruang bagi beragam taktik individu.

Kesimpulan
Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa anggota FPI "beradaptasi" dengan menegosiasikan otoritas negara menggunakan kepatuhan bersyarat dan penghindaran aktif. Transformasi ini menyebabkan intervensi kesehatan masyarakat melampaui koreksi disinformasi dan malah mengatasi kerangka budaya dan skeptisisme sistemik yang mendasari langkah-langkah individu ini.

Kata kunci
Islam, Radikalisme, keraguan vaksin, FPI, Covid-19, beradaptasi.

الملخص

الهدف
تبحث هذه الدراسة في التردد بشأن تلقي لقاح كوفيد-19 بين أعضاء جبهة المدافعين عن الإسلام خلال جائحة 2020-2022، وذلك من خلال منظور ميشيل دي سيرتو المفاهيمي حول "التكيف" والتكتيكات اليومية.

المنهجية
باستخدام المنهج التاريخي، بما في ذلك نقد المصادر والتاريخ الشفوي، جُمعت المصادر الأولية من خلال مقابلات مع أعضاء جبهة المدافعين عن الإسلام، بدءًا من القاعدة الشعبية وصولًا إلى القادة الميدانيين، واستُكملت بتحليل روايات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والتقارير الإخبارية المعاصرة. وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام التحليل الموضوعي بناءً على إطار عمل دي سيرتو.

النتائج/المخرجات
تشير النتائج إلى أن قرارات اللقاح هي مناورات تكتيكية وليست مجرد رفض أيديولوجي. ويُجسد القبول المشروط - كاختيار لقاح موديرنا بدلًا من سينوفاك، أو انتظار فتوى من مجلس العلماء الإندونيسي، أو الامتثال فقط عند اقتضاء متطلبات العمل - مفهوم دي سيرتو: ممارسة التظاهر بالامتثال مع الحفاظ على الاستقلالية. يتجلى الرفض الفعال من خلال التهرب الإبداعي، مثل تجنب وسائل النقل العام حيث يكون التطعيم إلزاميًا، أو تبني روايات بديلة وسط الحملات الرسمية. وقد أتاح غياب التوجيه الواضح من حبيب رزق شهاب المجال أمام مجموعة متنوعة من التكتيكات الفردية.

الخلاصة
خلصت هذه الدراسة إلى أن أعضاء جبهة الدفاع عن الإسلام "تكيفوا" من خلال التفاوض مع سلطة الدولة عبر الامتثال المشروط والتهرب الفعال. وقد أدى هذا التحول إلى تجاوز تدخلات الصحة العامة مجرد تصحيح المعلومات المضللة، والتركيز بدلاً من ذلك على معالجة الإطار الثقافي والشكوك المنهجية الكامنة وراء هذه التصرفات الفردية.

الكلمات المفتاحية
الإسلام، التطرف، التردد في تلقي اللقاحات، الجبهة الشعبية الإسلامية، كوفيد-19، التكيف

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INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus and its variants have garnered both support and opposition on social media. Right-wing anti-vaccine advocates in various parts of the world openly express their positions online. The issues raised are uniform: distrust of the government, hoaxes and misinformation, and conspiracy theories, which are then disseminated globally. Right -wing groups from various religious backgrounds subsequently influence the general public. In Indonesia, the rejection of the COVID-19 vaccine by anti-vaccine clergy surfaced, for example, because of the issue of planting microchips to control humans (Pastor Lukas Sutrisno) (archive.ph/tlUWT, 2022). This article examines COVID-19 vaccine rejections among Indonesian Muslim mass organizations. Key terminologies include vaccine hesitancy (delaying vaccination) and vaccine refusal (active rejection) (Burke, 2021). In Indonesia, the term "anti-vaxxers" gained traction on Twitter through the hashtags #antivaksin, #tolakvaksin, and #vaksinharam.

Various studies identify the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) with radicalism and violence (Woodward & Nurish, 2016; Douglas-Wilson, 2016; Bruinessen, 2002). FPI was established for amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar (Mahmuddin, 2013), claiming to assist the government eradication of prostitution, gambling, alcohol, and drugs (Syaefudin, 2014). Beyond stated aims, FPI intends to implement Islamic law (Jahroni, 2004) through political movements (Marsus, 2020). The impetus behind FPI's establishment was awareness of marginalization, claiming Indonesia's government is tyrannical, police corrupt, and Muslims marginalized (Wilson, 2014).

Despite violence association, FPI's activities have not always received negative community responses. Lower-class groups contending with prostitution, alcohol, and thuggery daily feel represented by FPI's movement. Many members come from thug circles (Wahid, 2018), are poor, and have low education (Bruinessen, 2002). Following its rebranding as the Islamic Brotherhood Front on January 1, 2021, the organization intends to show its friendly side (Muhtadi, 2021). This new orientation also affects members' acceptance responses to the COVID-19 vaccine. FPI and their sympathizers' vaccine resistance emerged as early as October 2020, when the chairman of FPI Sumenep led street protests rejecting COVID-19 vaccines because they caused public distress (Syahbana, 2021). Subsequently, viral news reports circulated claiming that a member of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) had identified a man refusing vaccination in Sampang as an FPI member (YouTube, 2021); however, this claim was later clarified. Several FPI leaders were arrested for violating COVID-19 health protocols (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Indonesian Political Indicator (IPI) Executive Director Burhanuddin Muhtadi recommended appointing former FPI leader Habib Rizieq Shihab as COVID-19 vaccination ambassador. This recommendation was influenced by the significant number of FPI members refusing vaccines, with Muhtadi suggesting that making HRS vaccine ambassador might encourage compliance among his followers (Republika.co.id, 2021). IPI survey conducted from March 4 to 10, 2021 found that 73.2 percent of the 1,200 youth respondents aged 17-21 were willing to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination. The government's Covid spokesperson later stated that the government had collaborated with religious representatives in East Java through the administration of the AstraZeneca vaccine (https://www.cnnindonesia.com/, 2021).

Existing scholarship on radical Islamic movements has conceptualized organizations such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) as ideologically monolithic entities whose members uniformly reject state policies perceived as illegitimate or secular. This assumption extends to vaccine hesitancy research, where studies of right-wing vaccine refusal have been conducted extensively in European and North American contexts, yet leave significant space for examination in Indonesia's distinct socio-political landscape. In Europe, McNeil-Wilson (2020) identified six "crisis frames" through which far-right groups associate COVID-19—migration, globalization, governance, liberty, resilience, and conspiracy—and notably found that Telegram-based far-right members were more concerned

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with developing community resilience than producing misinformation, challenging prevailing assumptions about the primacy of conspiratorial discourse. The Indonesian case, however, reveals a more complex pattern where responses to COVID-19 vaccines vary considerably: members selectively choose certain brands while rejecting others, accept European or American vaccines while refusing Chinese ones, support domestically produced vaccines while rejecting foreign alternatives, or refuse vaccination entirely. These varied responses are shaped by intersecting factors including business competition, political orientation, religious considerations, and humanitarian concerns, mirroring global trends documented in Poland where fear of complications drives refusal (Babicki & Mastalerz-Migas, 2021), and in the United States where Parler platform analysis revealed 40% vaccine refusal attributed to side effects (28%), population reduction concerns (23%), and parental objections (Baines, 2021).

Political ideology emerges as a significant predictor of vaccine attitudes across diverse contexts. Wollebaek et al. (2022) found that vaccine resistance in Norway, despite high government trust, is primarily influenced by right-wing ideology and pre-existing political divisions, particularly among the most ideologically consistent members of society. This finding suggests that polarization through increasing ideological challenges may impede vaccine uptake and shows that vaccine communication must extend beyond scientific explanation to address ideological factors. Complementing this political analysis, Freeman (2022) and Uscinski and Enders (2020) examine COVID-19 conspiracy theories at global and state levels, identifying narratives involving deliberate spread by influential philanthropists (Bill Gates, George Soros) or powerful countries (China, Russia), while Sobo and Drążkiewicz (2021) focus on state-level conspiracies propagated through social media and family life. These frameworks illuminate the conspiratorial narratives embraced by FPI members in Indonesia, including suspicions toward China, global elites, and the Jokowi administration. In response to these challenges, Boodoosingh (2020) proposes involving anti-vaxxer groups in discussions about vaccine acceptance, Canyon and Kevany (2021) recommend coordinated government efforts through domestic security sectors and international collaboration, and Zainul (2020) advocates for a more lenient approach combining massive awareness campaigns about vaccine importance with clear communication about refusal consequences. These recommendations, while valuable, have yet to be systematically evaluated in the Indonesian context, where radical Islamic movements intersect with complex patterns of religious authority, political opposition, and everyday pragmatism.

The determinants of vaccine hesitancy extend beyond ideological orientation to encompass trust in institutions, information environments, and socio-economic factors. Goldenberg (2021) identifies trust issues as central to vaccine doubt, advocating for strengthened public trust in research institutions through interdisciplinary approaches spanning public health, science communication, history and philosophy of science, sociology of expertise, and health journalism. Contrary to assumptions that vaccine skepticism concentrates among marginalized populations, studies have found that skeptics in developed countries such as the United States (Yang, 2016), Canada (Parmar, 2019), Australia (Soekov, 2018), and New Zealand (Duff, 2019) are disproportionately represented among the affluent and well-educated who possess access to power and privileges. This paradoxical finding suggests that vaccine hesitancy is not merely a function of information deficit but reflects deeper cultural and political divisions. While vaccine refusal occurs within a relatively small population, Johnson et al. (2020) document how widespread internet access and social media amplification have enabled anti-vaccine campaigns to achieve disproportionate influence, with narratives often originating from individual cases that resonate with friends and family members who share similar experiences (Stasiuk et al., 2021).

The role of social media in shaping vaccine attitudes presents a dual character in existing literature. Puri et al. (2020) and Dror (2020) emphasize how platforms can increase health literacy and public trust when strategically deployed, yet Emtimkulu-Eyde et al.

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(2022) caution that easy internet access during the pandemic paradoxically created difficulties in cross-checking information, contributing to sustained vaccine reluctance and rejection. This tension between information abundance and misinformation persistence is further complicated by the structural tensions between government obligations and citizen rights, wherein communities seek to protect individual autonomy while governments exercise authority to maintain public health. Emtimkulu-Eyde et al. (2022) emphasize that increasing access to valid information remains essential, noting that even health workers sometimes exhibit hesitancy. Interestingly, the Wellcome Global Monitor (2019) found that four low-income countries—Bangladesh, India, Rwanda, and Ethiopia—demonstrated the highest confidence in vaccines globally, suggesting that economic affluence does not correlate with vaccine acceptance and challenging assumptions that vaccine hesitancy is primarily a problem of resource-poor settings.

While this literature has examined vaccine hesitancy about quantitative surveys focused on demographic correlates and attitudinal patterns, and scholarship on radical Islamic groups such as FPI has predominantly analyzed organizational ideology and political mobilization, few studies have explored how ordinary members navigate state health policies in their daily lives as creative agents rather than ideological adherents. Michel de Certeau's framework of "making do" (la perruque) and everyday tactics has been applied to various contexts of resistance—urban life, consumption practices, and colonial encounters—yet its application to public health compliance within radical religious communities remains unexplored. Historical methodologies incorporating oral history and lived experience are rarely employed in vaccine hesitancy research, which privileges epidemiological approaches that overlook subjective meanings and tactical practices. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how FPI members negotiated Indonesia's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination program, reframing vaccine decisions as everyday tactics rather than mere ideological opposition and recovering the lived experiences of FPI members as "hidden producers" who creatively appropriated state-imposed structures.

This study makes significant contributions across multiple domains. Theoretically, it extends de Certeau's framework into the under-explored domain of public health compliance within radical religious communities, demonstrating how ordinary members negotiate state power through tactical practices rather than ideological opposition alone. Methodologically, it introduces historical methods—particularly oral history and source criticism—to vaccine hesitancy research, which has been predominantly dominated by quantitative epidemiological approaches, recovering the lived experiences and subjective meanings of hesitant populations. Empirically, it provides the first in-depth historical study of FPI members' vaccine decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on interviews with grassroots members and field commanders whose voices have rarely been heard in academic discourse. Practically, the findings offer policymakers actionable insights: engaging religious authorities as intermediaries, recognizing the tactical agency of target populations, and designing community-level interventions that address underlying distrust rather than correcting misinformation. By reframing vaccine hesitancy as continuous negotiation between state power and individual autonomy, this study contributes to both deradicalization efforts and public health engagement strategies in post-pandemic Indonesia.

METHOD

This article employs Michel de Certeau's conceptual framework of "making do" *(la perruque)* and everyday practices (de Certeau, 2011), to examine how FPI members experienced and navigated government programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on de Certeau's distinction between strategies (institutional power) and tactics (creative practices of ordinary people), this historical study explores how FPI followers, as "hidden producers," appropriated state vaccination policies within the constraints imposed upon them.

Primary data were got through oral history interviews with FPI figures from lower levels, including paramilitary unit (Laskar) members and district commanders, capturing

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their lived experiences and everyday practices during the pandemic. Secondary data comprised various narratives from credible social media sources, including WhatsApp communications from FPI administrators, Twitter accounts, and Facebook, documenting how tactical responses were negotiated within the community.

Data analysis followed de Certeau's emphasis on everyday practices: identifying tactics of "making do" within state-imposed structures, grouping these practices into patterns of creative appropriation, and constructing an understanding of how FPI members preserved autonomy while navigating government vaccine mandates. This approach reveals that vaccine decisions made up tactical maneuvers—choosing specific vaccine brands, awaiting fatwas before complying, or circumventing requirements—rather than mere ideological rejection.

The research location is Jakarta, specifically the former FPI headquarters, selected because it is "the place where the phenomenon is experienced" (Creswell, 1998). Snowball sampling, a non-probability technique, was employed to collect data from this challenging -to-reach population. This method proved essential for accessing former FPI members and commanders who, following the organization's 2020 dissolution, became difficult to identify and contact through conventional sampling approaches.

RESULT/FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study advances a theoretical framework that departs from prevailing assumptions in the scholarship on radical Islamic movements and public health compliance. Existing literature has predominantly conceptualized members of radical organizations as ideologically monolithic actors whose behavior is determined by organizational doctrine and hierarchical leadership. Within this conventional framework, vaccine hesitancy among radical groups is explained through the lens of ideological opposition—resistance to state policies perceived as illegitimate, secular, or contrary to religious principles. However, this study proposes an alternative analytical approach grounded in Michel de Certeau's theory of everyday practice, which re-conceptualizes ordinary members of radical organizations not as passive ideological subjects but as creative agents who deploy tactical practices within spaces constrained by institutional power.

The Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) was officially established on August 17, 1998, at the Al-Umm Islamic Boarding School in Ciputat, South Tangerang. Founded by *habibs* (Prophet Muhammad's descendants), ulama, preachers, and activists, the collective appointed Habib Rizieq Shihab as its "High Priest" (Imam Besar), only four months after Soeharto's resignation, thus ended the New Order regime's firm suppression of radical movements. This temporal proximity suggests the organization's emergence was facilitated by the early Reformasi era's political permissiveness, as relaxed state control created space for marginalized Islamic identities. Following the 2020 dissolution, FPI has been ostensibly reconstituted as the Islamic Brotherhood Front (*Front Persaudaraan Islam*—FPI). While presenting itself as transformed toward education, *da'wah*, and humanitarian activities, continuity with the original organization remains significant. As Central Jakarta Commander Subhan acknowledged that despite superficial changes like modifying its banner, FPI's membership and leadership remain unchanged from the pre-dissolution period. "Yes, all members and administrators...are now the same...only changing names. Actually, everything is the same." This indicates rebranding represents a strategic response to external pressures rather than fundamental ideological shift.

The FPI has consistently articulated a vision aimed at assisting the government in areas it deems insufficiently addressed. However, various sources characterize the organization by its association with violence (Woodward & Nurish, 2016; Douglas-Wilson, 2016). Formally established to uphold *amar ma'ruf* (enjoining good) and *nahi munkar* (forbidding evil) (Mahmuddin, 2013), the organization claims to support government efforts against prostitution, gambling, alcohol, and illicit drugs (Syaefudin, 2014). Beyond stated aims, FPI seeks to implement Islamic law (Jahroni, 2004) through political mobilization (Marsus, 2020). A critical impetus for its founding was perception of Muslim mar-

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ginalization by tyrannical rulers and indiscriminate law enforcement (Wilson, 2014).

Since its establishment, FPI's activities, while frequently associated with violence, have often garnered significant community support. Lower-class groups contending with prostitution, alcohol, and thuggery have felt their interests represented by FPI's actions. Paradoxically, this resonance is reinforced because many members are themselves drawn from thug circles (Wahid, 2018).

During Joko Widodo's administration, FPI's role shifted from socio-religious to political. Rising discourses on communism and Chinese foreign workers, coupled with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok)'s political prominence, drove this transformation. FPI positioned itself as oppositional force to the government. Attacks on Ahok intensified following his Jakarta governorship and gained momentum from his blasphemy case, resulting in a two-year prison sentence (Indra, 2017; Fathy, 2019). This marked a turning point as FPI expanded nationally. The December 2, 2016 "Action to Defend Islam"—the 212 Movement (Abiyoso & Thohari, 2019)—catapulted Muhammad Rizieq Shihab onto the national political stage, significantly challenging government authority.

Despite Habib Rizieq Shihab's (MRS) 2017 self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia, his prestige endured through intensive FPI framing campaigns on social media and billboards, bolstering his symbolic capital and influence (Seto, 2019). Perceiving this as a threat, the government adopted a multi-pronged strategy to dismantle FPI's power. First, on June 20, 2019, it revoked the organization's legal status by refusing permit extension for failing administrative requirements. Second, authorities progressively removed FPI and MRS propaganda billboards. Finally, following MRS's 2020 return to Indonesia, he was arrested and imprisoned. These measures were collectively regarded as a coherent strategy for restoring national stability disrupted by FPI's mobilization.

On December 30, 2020, the Indonesian government formally dissolved the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) through a Joint Decree (SKB) issued by six state institutions, prohibiting all activities using its symbols and attributes. The dissolution was precipitated by the organization's failure to extend its legal permit and activities deemed to have disturbed public order. Six legal grounds justified the measure: inconsistency with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution; contradictory Articles of Association under Law Number 17 of 2013; failure to renew registration; contravention of multiple legal provisions; criminal involvement of 35 members in terrorism (29 convicted) and 206 in other crimes; and unauthorized community raids (sweeping). Following the decree, the government restricted FPI operations and sanctioned symbol use, contributing to reduced violence and public disruption. However, formal dissolution does not automatically terminate mobilization capacity. This was evidenced in the "KM 50 incident," where six former FPI members died following an alleged police shootout—an event remaining under investigation with unresolved legal conclusions.

The FPI maintained a hierarchical organizational structure typical of Indonesian mass organizations. At the apex was the Central Executive Board (DPP), led by the High Priest (Imam Besar). The structure comprised two primary councils: the Shura Council (*Dewan Syuro*), with 33 to 99 members overseeing advisory and supervisory functions, and the Tanfidzi Council (*Dewan Tanfidzi*), responsible for daily operations. Five special bodies supported operations: the Front Investigative Agency (FIA), Anti-Terror Front Agency (AFA), Front Cadre Agency (FCA), Front Expert Body (FEB), and Amil Zakat Agency (AZA). Five autonomous institutions operated at the technical level: the Immorality Watch Agency, *Da'wah* Organization, Economic Institute, Legal Aid Institute, and Humanitarian Institute (HILMI/Red Crescent).

According to FPI leadership, the organization's membership numbered in the hundreds of thousands across Indonesia, though this figure remains unverified because of voluntary affiliation and absence of formal registration. As Central Jakarta Commander Subhan explained, "There are hundreds of thousands of FPI members in Indonesia, but this number is not properly recorded, considering that FPI membership is voluntary." Members affiliated with various political parties including PPP, PBB, Golkar, and PAN. However, fol-

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lowing Habib Rizieq Shihab's mandate, leadership instructed members to support Prabowo Subianto in presidential elections, though Subhan noted that "only PKS has been consistent" in maintaining alignment with FPI's political aspirations.

Following the 2020 dissolution, tracking FPI membership has proven challenging. The Petamburan headquarters has stood vacant since April 2022, guarded by a rotating team of twenty—a precautionary measure, as "if there is a little crowd, it is immediately shut down." Laskar numbers in Central Jakarta fell from roughly 1,500 to 800–900, though the capital still hosts an estimated 2,000 members. Subhan observed that before Munarman's rise, the organization "was constantly beaten by the law." He also voiced frustration with former Religious Affairs Minister Yaqut Cholil Qoumas over his controversial comparison of the adzan to a dog's bark—a statement that has further distanced FPI from the current government. Despite these constraints, regional chapters in Banten and Madura persist and continue to organize.

Member Reception of the Vaccine Program

FPI members' acceptance of mandatory vaccination was characterized by hesitancy, yet ultimately driven by instrumental necessity. Vaccination became a prerequisite for accessing public facilities—including KAI railways, air travel, shopping centers, educational institutions, and government offices—as well as for government assistance eligibility. Legal sanctions and employer mandates left members with limited alternatives, illustrating tension between oppositional posture and practical daily needs.

A contributing factor to hesitancy was the absence of a clear fatwa from Habib Rizieq Shihab (MRS) on vaccination. As FPI's High Priest, MRS is venerated for his prophetic lineage (habib), deep religious knowledge (zuhd), and courage in executing *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (Husein, 2022; AKA, 2022). Despite this personal veneration, his silence created a polarizing environment, forcing members to defer halal determination to the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI). This leadership vacuum compelled followers to navigate vaccination through external religious authorities and practical considerations rather than organizational guidance.

Refusal Arguments

A central element underpinning vaccine refusal among FPI members and sympathizers is a profound distrust of the government. In the Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) metropolitan area, this sentiment is further compounded by the proliferation of misinformation on social media. Notably, halal certification emerges as the most salient argument among the various grounds for refusal. This resistance extends beyond the general membership to include medical personnel sympathetic to the FPI within circles such as the Alumni Brotherhood (PA) 212 and the National Movement to Guard Fatwa (GNPF) Ulama. Interview data show that individual FPI members often articulate multiple, sometimes overlapping, reasons for refusing vaccination. The following factors have been identified as influential in shaping vaccine refusal:

Doubt Regarding Vaccine Halal Status

The question of halal status makes up the primary argument underlying vaccine hesitancy among Indonesian Muslims generally. Ambiguity surrounding vaccine composition and manufacturing origin features prominently in their deliberations. Among former FPI members, this concern is articulated with particular intensity. As Ja'far, a former FPI Commander, stated:

"We refuse not only the COVID-19 vaccine but also other vaccines. My children are not vaccinated. We have researched that the vaccine comes from monkey brains. If the vaccine is halal, there is no problem, but if the vaccine is haram, including the one for Hajj (meningitis) vaccine, we prohibit it. If it is haram, when it becomes flesh in our bodies, it will no longer be valid to worship."

Zulkarnain, a former FPI commander (April 5, 2022), corroborated vaccine rejection

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based on alleged porcine derivatives, rendering vaccines not halal. This reflects theological reasoning extending beyond COVID-19 to all immunization, grounded in a belief that haram substances compromise religious observance validity.

However, Subhan (April 17, 2022) revealed a significant shift: initial refusal based on pig products gave way to acceptance after MUI's fatwa approved vaccines under emergency considerations. As former Central Jakarta FPI Commander, Subhan stated that deferring to MUI as the parent organization declaring vaccines halal, he believed the government program served public welfare. Practical necessity also drove compliance—vaccination facilitated children's school attendance, requiring proof via the *Peduli Lindungi* application. He emphasized selective cooperation: "We don't reject all government regulations... we also see the bright side. Jokowi is a legitimate government, the people's choice." This illustrates how religious authority and practical need converged to overcome initial theological objections.

Divergent Responses in the Absence of Clear Leadership

The absence of a clear directive from MRS regarding vaccination created space for divergent responses among FPI members. As Maman Suryadi, a former FPI Commander at the national level, explained in a 2022 interview, "Members are welcome to vaccinate if they have a need for mobility or access to public spaces. However, if members do not have these needs, then not getting a vaccine is not a problem." This pragmatic position delegated the decision to individual circumstances.

Maman acknowledged that lower-class FPI members exhibited greater vaccine resistance. In regions like Madura, where Kyai (religious leaders) and *pesantren* tradition remain deeply entrenched, hesitancy was pronounced. During the early pandemic, refusal was vehement because of misinformation, including claims that vaccines could "kill" a person's character. However, Maman emphasized that perspectives within FPI were highly varied. He himself received two doses of Moderna by April 2022, attributing his informed position to his wife's employment at the Ministry of Health.

Maman clarified FPI's theological position by invoking MRS: vaccination is permitted when serving public health and halal, with opposition directed specifically at haram substances—applying universally to all vaccines. This nuanced stance was overshadowed by vocal refusal from certain segments. Maman expressed grievances over perceived governmental injustice in health protocol enforcement. During FPI's Mawlid commemoration, several figures received eight-month prison sentences—longer than anticipated. Although the organization paid a Rp. 50 million fine, this did not avert imprisonment, reinforcing perceptions of selective enforcement.

This delegation of authority to MUI was echoed by Abdul Qadir, a former FPI Commander in Bekasi who also serves as Chairman of DDII Bekasi and maintains HMI affiliation. As he stated...

> *"Now we leave it to the MUI. They are responsible. We and our FPI friends follow Habib Rizieq Shihab's statement that the limit is halal or haram. We (FPI) who reject it consider the vaccine illegal. Moreover, we have to go back and forth to Cirebon, and there must be proof of the vaccine. In the beginning, the rules were still lax, but yesterday there really had to be proof of a vaccine. Again, yes, for FPI itself regarding the vaccine, the answer is that as long as it is halal, we agree and are allowed. But if it's illegal, we reject it."*

This statement illustrates the tension between theological principle and practical necessity. While deferring to MUI authority on halal certification, Abdul Qadir acknowledged that mobility requirements—specifically vaccine proof for travel between Bekasi and Cirebon—created pressure for compliance. His account reveals that enforcement intensified over time, with initial laxity giving way to stricter requirements. Ultimately, his position reaffirms conditional acceptance: vaccination is permissible if halal, but rejec-

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tion follows if deemed haram.

Government Distrust and Anti-Jokowi Sentiment

A significant factor underpinning vaccine refusal among FPI members is deep-seated distrust of President Joko Widodo's administration. Zulkarnain, a West Jakarta FPI Laskar commander, characterized vaccines as "a government game" (April 5, 2022), warning of danger given unknown vaccine contents. His distrust extended to the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM). Novel Bamukmin, Deputy Secretary General of PA 212, amplified this anti-government posture, accusing the regime of defending investor interests while permitting foreign workers from virus-origin nations (jpnn.com, 2020). Perceived inequitable treatment—contrasting the government's handling of the Shihab family with celebrity families—further fueled resistance. These accumulated grievances transformed vaccine refusal into symbolic opposition against an administration viewed as illegitimate and unjust, demonstrating how political alienation becomes enacted through health policy resistance.

Misinformation on Social Media and Reliance on Hoax News

The production and dissemination of misinformation, or hoaxes, regarding the COVID -19 vaccine on social media have persisted, receiving continued support from FPI sympathizers. According to the Indonesian government's official hoax buster portal, of the 545 identified hoaxes or misinformation circulating on Indonesian social media between March 16, 2020, and August 6, 2022, a total of 244 were specifically related to vaccines (covid19.go.id, 2022). This substantial proportion underscores the extent to which vaccine misinformation has permeated public discourse.

In the early stages of the pandemic, this phenomenon manifested as a denial of COVID -19's very existence by some FPI members and sympathizers on social media. A notable example is Dr. Eva Chaniago, Head of United Indonesia Doctors, a figure sympathetic to the FPI's perspective. Her response to the actions of TNI (Indonesian National Armed Forces) members against individuals refusing vaccines in Sampang, Madura, reflects the broader skepticism and resistance prevalent within these circles. Such elite-level endorsement of vaccine hesitancy, disseminated through social media platforms, has likely reinforced opposition to government vaccination mandates among the FPI's grassroots base.

At the end of 2020, a manipulated content in the name of the FPI field commander wrote, "If the governor needs our help, we will deploy troops to repel and catch Corona." https://covid19.go.id/p/hoax-buster/salah-gambar-korlap-fpi-jika-gubernur-butuh-bantuan-kami-kami-akan-kerahkan-laskar-untuk-mengusir-menangkap-corona. Specific suspicions regarding vaccine content have circulated among the public. One prominent example involves the alleged presence of the luciferase enzyme, which some have speculated functions as a government tracking device. Another instance derives from a viral video depicting a vaccination participant collapsing shortly after receiving the vaccine. Both claims, however, have been debunked as misinformation by the Indonesian government's hoax-buster portal (covid19.go.id). According to the site's clarification, the luciferase enzyme is not an ingredient in any COVID-19 vaccine; rather, it is used exclusively in laboratory research, where its bioluminescent properties assist researchers in tracking interactions between viruses and vaccine candidates. The portal explicitly refutes the notion that any coronavirus vaccine contains a tracking device.

Regarding the video of the unconscious patient, Andini (2022) conducted a fact-check published on the same government platform. The investigation concluded that the individual's loss of consciousness was not attributable to the vaccine but to a pre-existing pathological condition from which the patient had long suffered. The claim of death was likewise found to be false. These examples illustrate how unsubstantiated claims, amplified through social media, have contributed to vaccine hesitancy despite authoritative debunking by official sources.

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Influencer Narratives and Vaccine Efficacy Skepticism

Beyond the aforementioned figures, several social media accounts with substantial followings have actively shaped vaccine discourse among FPI members and sympathizers. The TikTok account "Dokter Tifa" (@doktertifa) provides a notable example. As archived on Perma.cc (July 18, 2022), the account posted a video asserting that the COVID-19 pandemic had effectively ended, citing the achievement of herd immunity due to over 90% of the Indonesian population having been exposed to the virus through either infection or vaccination. The message encouraged a return to pre-2020 normality, directly contravening official government assessments.

Official responses to such claims indicate these assertions were premature. Siti Nadia Tarmizi rejected the "pandemic is over" declaration, explaining that research across seven provinces—DKI Jakarta, Banten, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, and Bali—had not yet reached the minimum herd immunity threshold of 70%. Data cited in the text shows that two-dose vaccination coverage, an indicator of herd immunity, had only reached 64% in the Java-Bali and 54% nationally by late July 2022 (covid19.go.id, 2022). Persistent questions about vaccine effectiveness further fuelled public hesitancy. Low confidence in vaccines was exemplified by the Pfizer type achieving only 12% coverage, suggesting that scepticism remained a significant barrier to achieving broader immunization goals (covid19.go.id, 2022).

FPI supporters' COVID-19 vaccine skepticism is partly informed by experiences with the Hajj-required Meningitis vaccine. Former commander Ja'far (2022) admitted to circumventing that requirement through fraudulent documentation on multiple Saudi trips. Extending this skepticism, he doubted official COVID-19 death attributions, contending that many fatalities resulted from pre-existing conditions rather than the coronavirus. He further questioned the pandemic's unprecedented prolonged fluctuation, implying the extended crisis undermined official narratives. This reasoning reflects broader distrust of pandemic data among FPI sympathizers, reinforcing vaccine resistance through perceived historical precedent of evading prior mandates.

Dr. Tifa, an epidemiologist and prominent figure among FPI sympathizers, has amplified distrust by propagating theories about the virus's origin and dissemination. According to makassar.terkini.id (2022), she alleged the spread of a synthetic virus via bottles, predicting widespread exposure in Jakarta and beyond. Such claims escalate from questioning vaccine safety to challenging the pandemic's very nature, framing state policies as part of a nefarious design and deepening resistance among skeptical groups.

Mandatory Vaccine: Theological Refusal and Pragmatic Accommodation

The mandatory nature of the COVID-19 vaccination program has prompted speculation among FPI sympathizers regarding ulterior motives underlying government policy. Ja'far (2022) articulated a theological concern central to vaccine refusal: if a vaccine is not halal, then the religious worship performed by a vaccinated individual is rendered invalid. This perspective situates vaccine acceptance within a framework of ritual purity, wherein bodily integrity and the permissibility of substances introduced into the body directly affect the validity of Islamic observance. Ja'far's critique implicitly demands government transparency, insisting on honesty in vaccine communication and freedom of choice: "Yes, I see in the news that many are being forced to vaccinate. The government should give freedom to citizens." His statement reflects dual skepticism—toward coercive public health policy and the uniformity of medical opinion. By invoking conflicting medical advice, he legitimizes his refusal as reasoned choice grounded in religious principle and health considerations. This reasoning resonates with broader FPI narratives portraying sympathizers as victims of an overreaching state.

Subhan (2022) articulated conditional accommodation toward government vaccination, noting Habib Rizieq Shihab personally received the vaccine—countering narratives of uniform rejection. He emphasized FPI's internal diversity, encompassing Muhammadiyah, NU, Tablighi Jamaat, and Wahhabi-influenced groups, all bound by organizational

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rules. While a minority oppose vaccination, he stated: "if the government program is good for the people, then join the government." This conditional loyalty reveals that pragmatic considerations and leadership example can create space for compliance even within radical organizations.

Claims of WHO Voluntary Tradition and Online Anti-Vaccine Mobilization

Influential figures sympathetic to FPI, including Doctor Tifa, argued against mandatory vaccination, asserting that vaccination should remain voluntary based on a claimed WHO tradition dating to 1958. This framing delegitimized government vaccine mandates as deviations from established international health norms. This discourse extended beyond individual commentary to organized online campaigns. The Twitter account @MprAldo mobilized opposition to mandatory vaccination, disseminating content using the hashtag #PeopleMelawanMandatory (People Against Mandatory) and organizing street-level protests with other anti-vaccine activists. The rhetorical strategy invoked Islamic symbolism to influence followers. Typical appeals included "Bismillah…," "STOP VACCINE MANDATORY Session!!! Keep fighting and leave the results to ALLAH SWT…," and "ALLAHU AKBAR." These invocations framed vaccination resistance as a religious obligation. The account further urged followers to send messages to *habibs* and religious leaders, calling for unified opposition. This strategy reflects an effort to consolidate religious authority behind the anti-vaccine movement, positioning it as collective religious duty rather than mere policy dissent.

Sinovac Rejection and Government Inconsistency

Vaccine resistance among FPI figures centered on Sinovac, a Chinese-made vaccine whose uncertain halal status rendered it theologically unacceptable. FPI's legal and spokesman Munarman critiqued government inconsistency, arguing that coercion to accept Sinovac was inappropriate and that locally produced alternatives should be prioritized. He further contended that if vaccination were truly an emergency, mass mobilizations like the 2020 Pilkada and concerts should also cease (suara.com, 2020). This framing reinforced perceptions of selective and unfair government policy among FPI sympathizers.

Subhan rejected Sinovac on the assumption that China itself did not utilize the vaccine, opting instead for Moderna while acknowledging that workplace requirements compelled vaccination. Novel Bamukmin extended this critique by framing Chinese vaccine investment as evidence of the government prioritizing foreign commercial interests over public health, thereby fusing anti-Chinese sentiment with pandemic politics (jpnn.com, 2020).

Vaccine Side Effects and Social Media Amplification

Public fear of vaccine side effects, attributed to insufficient government communication, significantly contributed to hesitancy. Doctor Eva Sri Diana Chaniago, a prominent figure in FPI-sympathizing circles, identified fear of side effects as the primary driver of vaccine refusal (harianmassa.id, 2021). She argued that proper education and pre-vaccination examinations would reduce resistance, while noting that uneven vaccine distribution undermined herd immunity (talkberita.com, 2021).

Social media amplified claims about vaccine side effects, such as @GratisTerbaik citing a Swiss study alleging reduced male fertility. However, Suara.com reported that Pfizer and Moderna did not significantly affect male fertility, while WHO clarified that vaccines cause no fertility problems in either sex (covid19.go.id, 2022). These official rebuttals notwithstanding, such claims persisted online.

Despite these official clarifications, vaccines and their potential side effects has remained pervasive on social media over two years into the pandemic. The influential account @DokterTifa, for example, continued to call on the Ministry of Health to halt vaccine programs, specifically citing concerns about blood clots. This persistence of unverified claims alongside official rebuttals illustrates the challenge of communicating public

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health messages in a fragmented media environment where influential voices can sustain skepticism regardless of authoritative evidence.

Conspiracy Theories: China, Jews, and Global Elites

Conspiracy theories attributing ulterior motives to COVID-19 vaccines have further entrenched resistance among FPI sympathizers. Beyond suspicions surrounding China's dual role as both virus origin and vaccine investor, antisemitic narratives have also gained traction as grounds for refusal. Ja'far (2022) articulated this sentiment, stating: "This Covid-19 vaccine must be researched. This is actually a Jewish program or whose program? Why so forced if it is for health?" Such discourse frames vaccines not as public health measures but as instruments of foreign agendas, invoking longstanding conspiratorial tropes that attribute global events to covert influence.

Hate speech targeting China, Jewish communities, and American billionaire Bill Gates dominates vaccine-skeptical social media accounts. Gates features prominently in narratives concerning global population control (depopulation), positing vaccination campaigns as a guise for reducing the world's population. These conspiratorial framings transform vaccine refusal from personal health choice into resistance against perceived globalist schemes, thereby reinforcing ideological commitment to rejection among FPI sympathizers.

Tactical Compliance and Resistance: Theological Pragmatism

Vaccine decisions among FPI members made up tactical practices of "making do" *(la perruque)* within the strategic space imposed by state power. Theological pragmatism exemplifies such tactics: members accepted vaccination when religious authority—specifically MUI halal certification—aligned with practical necessity, such as mobility requirements and workforce participation. This conditional compliance allowed members to appear obedient while preserving autonomy by deferring to religious intermediaries rather than the state itself. Conversely, refusal employed alternative tactics: leveraging absent leadership from Habib Rizieq Shihab, exploiting governmental distrust rooted in perceived marginalization, and sustaining conspiratorial narratives as symbolic resources for everyday resistance. Engaging religious authorities as intermediaries and leveraging trusted medical professionals within FPI networks offer strategies to bridge state power with the tactical practices of skeptical populations, recognizing that public health engagement must account for the creative agency of ordinary members navigating imposed structures.

Tactical Responses to State Power

De Certeau's concept of tactics provides a powerful analytical lens for understanding FPI members' varied responses to Indonesia's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination program. De Certeau distinguishes between strategies—the formal operations of institutional power that create and control spaces (vaccine mandates, mobility restrictions)—and tactics, the creative practices employed by ordinary individuals who lack a proper institutional locus. For FPI members, who after the 2020 dissolution found themselves with diminished formal power yet embedded within state-imposed structures, vaccine decisions constituted diverse tactical maneuvers of "making do" *(la perruque).*

The absence of a clear directive from Habib Rizieq Shihab created what de Certeau terms a "space for tactics," enabling individuals to develop their own creative responses. Conditional acceptance exemplified such practice: members accepted vaccination not as capitulation but as calculated maneuvers—choosing Moderna over Sinovac, awaiting MUI fatwas, or complying only when workplace requirements demanded. These practices appear compliant on the surface while preserving autonomy by allowing members to comply on their own terms.

Active refusal similarly constituted tactical practice: members avoided vaccine-mandated public transportation by using private vehicles, sustained alternative narratives,

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or claimed medical exemptions—creatively circumventing state authority within spaces that remained available. Both acceptance and refusal represent "ways of operating" that allow the relatively powerless to navigate and subvert imposed systems. This tactical framing transforms vaccine hesitancy from a question of ideology versus misinformation into an investigation of how ordinary members continuously negotiate between state power, religious authority, and practical necessity, revealing that individual agency persists through the creative art of "making do."

CONCLUSION

Applying de Certeau's "making do" theory transforms how we understand vaccine hesitancy among radical groups. Rather than viewing FPI members as irrational ideologues or passive victims of misinformation, this study reveals them as "creative agents" who negotiated state power through everyday tactics. Their vaccine decisions were not simply "for" or "against" but emerged from continuous negotiation between imposed structures and individual autonomy. This reframing carries significant implications for public health policy: engagement strategies must acknowledge the tactical agency of skeptical populations rather than simply correcting misinformation or condemning resistance.

The findings reveal that vaccine decisions among FPI members constituted creative maneuvers within the space determined by state power, rather than passive acceptance or ideological rejection. Theoretically, this research extends de Certeau's framework to public health compliance within a radical religious community. His distinction between strategies—vaccine mandates, mobility restrictions—and tactics—creative practices navigating imposed structures—illuminates how hesitancy operated. FPI members acted as "hidden producers" creatively appropriating state programs. Conditional acceptance—choosing Moderna over Sinovac, awaiting MUI fatwas, or complying when workplace required—exemplifies practices appearing compliant while maintaining autonomy. Active refusal manifested through circumvention, such as avoiding vaccine-mandated public transport or sustaining alternative narratives. The absence of clear directive from Habib Rizieq Shihab enabled diverse individual tactics, with governmental distrust serving as resources for everyday resistance.

Recognizing that vaccine hesitancy emerges from negotiation between state power and individual autonomy requires engagement strategies acknowledging the agency of target populations. Engaging religious authorities as intermediaries aligns with de Certeau's insight that tactics operate within cultural frameworks; MUI halal certification proved critical in enabling compliance. Countering misinformation requires understanding how alternative narratives function as resistance resources, suggesting community-level engagement addressing underlying distrust.

Findings are specific to FPI members and may not generalize to other radical groups. Reliance on oral history introduces memory bias, as informants reflected on events two to three years later. The 2020 dissolution limited access to current members; snowball sampling may have produced a sample skewed toward those willing to speak. The researcher's positionality as an outsider may have influenced disclosure. Future studies should conduct comparative research across radical groups, employ longitudinal oral history, undertake ethnographic fieldwork in active regions, and apply quantitative methods to measure prevalence of tactical practices identified here.

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