



Islamic Education in Facing the Challenges of Radicalism and Extremism among the Younger Generation

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the role of Islamic education in facing the challenges of radicalism and extremism among the younger generation. Using a qualitative approach, this study analyzes various strategies implemented by Islamic educational institutions to form a moderate and inclusive religious understanding. The data was obtained through in-depth interviews with educators, scholars, and students in several Islamic schools and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The results of the study show that Islamic education that emphasizes the values of tolerance, social justice, and openness to diversity can play a significant role in preventing radicalization among adolescents. In addition, the active involvement of parents and the community in religious education was also found to be an important factor in shaping the character of the young generation who are resilient to the influence of radical ideology. This study concludes that holistic and contextual Islamic education is indispensable to face the increasingly complex challenges of radicalism and extremism in the modern era.

Keywords: *Islamic Education, radicalism, extremism, young generation, moderation, Indonesia*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran pendidikan Islam dalam menghadapi tantangan radikalisme dan ekstremisme di kalangan generasi muda. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis berbagai strategi yang diterapkan oleh lembaga pendidikan Islam untuk membentuk pemahaman keagamaan yang moderat dan inklusif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pendidik, ulama, serta siswa di beberapa sekolah Islam dan pondok pesantren di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam yang menekankan nilai-nilai toleransi, keadilan sosial, dan keterbukaan terhadap keberagaman mampu berperan signifikan dalam mencegah radikalisasi di kalangan remaja. Selain itu, keterlibatan aktif orang tua dan masyarakat dalam pendidikan keagamaan juga ditemukan sebagai faktor penting dalam membentuk karakter generasi muda yang tangguh terhadap pengaruh ideologi radikal. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan Islam yang holistik dan kontekstual sangat diperlukan untuk menghadapi tantangan

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radikalisme dan ekstremisme yang semakin kompleks di era modern.

Kata Kunci : Pendidikan Islam, radikalisme, ekstremisme, generasi muda, moderasi, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Radicalism and extremism are increasingly worrying phenomena among the younger generation, both at the global and national levels (Hanifatulloh, 2021; Kenedi & Hartati, 2022). In Indonesia, this phenomenon poses a serious threat to social stability and security, given the large number of young people and easy access to information through social media (Kurnia Y, 2017; Primarni, 2024). Radical groups often exploit the psychological and emotional vulnerability of adolescents, leading them to adopt extreme views that are contrary to the human values and diversity that are the foundation of the Indonesia nation.

Islamic education, as one of the main pillars in the formation of the character and morals of the young generation of Muslims, has a strategic role in facing this challenge (Fauzian dkk., 2021). Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic schools and Islamic boarding schools, have great potential to form a moderate, inclusive, and in accordance with Pancasila values. However, the challenges faced by Islamic education are not simple. There are concerns that a less contextual curriculum and rigid teaching can make it difficult for students to understand Islamic teachings holistically, making them vulnerable to radical narratives.

In addition, the complex social, political, and economic dynamics in Indonesia also affect the perception and understanding of the younger generation towards religion. In the midst of globalization and modernization, the younger generation is often caught up in an identity crisis, which radical groups can use to recruit new members (Luthfiah, 2024; Nizar, 2015). Therefore, Islamic education needs to be reviewed and strengthened in order to be able to become an effective fortress against radicalism and extremism.

This research combines the perspectives of education, sociology, and religious studies to understand how Islamic education can play a role as a deterrent to radicalism. With a multidisciplinary approach, this research provides a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic educational institutions in a broader context.

While many previous studies have

focused on the ideological or political aspects of radicalism, this study specifically examines the role of Islamic education in shaping religious understanding among the younger generation. This research explores how educational institutions can function as the first bastion in forming a moderate character and preventing radicalization from an early age.

Indonesia, as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a unique social and cultural context. This research makes a new contribution by examining specific cases in Indonesia, offering insights that can be applied in the context of Islamic education in other countries that have similar situations.

This research not only focuses on problem analysis, but also offers practical data-driven recommendations for the development of curriculum and teaching methods in Islamic education. This aims to provide concrete solutions that can be implemented by educational institutions, policy makers, and the public in fighting radicalism and extremism.

Through this research, it is hoped that effective strategies that have been and can be applied by Islamic educational institutions in shaping the young generation that have resistance to radical ideologies can be identified. This research also aims to provide recommendations to stakeholders in developing curricula and teaching methods that are more relevant to the challenges of the times.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with *the library research method* (Creswell, 2009; Sugiono, 2015). Primary data sources are taken from journals and books that have a focus on Islamic education in dealing with radicalism and extremism among young people. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources are taken from other writings such as magazines, articles, and other writings that are related to research topics.

Data is collected through observation and documentation. After being collected, then the data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis. Initially, the data was selected and sorted, then categorized, then interpreted so as

to produce the results of the analysis needed to find a *research statement thesis*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Education as an Ideological Fortress

Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools and schools, play a significant role in shaping a moderate religious understanding among students (Firdaus & Fauzian, 2020). A curriculum that emphasizes the values of tolerance, compassion, and brotherhood between religious communities has proven effective in preventing radicalization (Nasrowi, 2020). This discussion highlights the importance of a holistic and inclusive curriculum in Islamic education. The curriculum must not only focus on theological aspects, but also on social values that support a harmonious community life. Islamic education that emphasizes critical awareness has also been proven to be able to equip students with the ability to reject extreme ideologies that are contrary to the teachings of peaceful Islam.

Islamic Education as an Ideological Fortress refers to the role of Islamic education in shaping and maintaining the ideological identity of Muslims (Abas, 2018). In this context, Islamic education is seen as a means to instill values, beliefs, and principles that are in accordance with the teachings of Islam to the younger generation. This is especially important in the midst of the challenges of globalization, pluralism, and secularization, where foreign values and ideologies can affect the way Muslims think and act (Anekasari, 2017).

Islamic education plays a role in instilling strong morals, morals, and Islamic values in students, so that they can distinguish which are in accordance with Islamic teachings and which are not. The inculcation of Islamic values in education is a systematic process carried out to shape the character and behavior of students in accordance with Islamic teachings. This process encompasses various aspects that are integral to daily life, aiming to produce individuals who are

not only intellectually intelligent, but also moral and noble.

Through education, students' Islamic identities are strengthened so that they feel proud of their religious identities and are not easily influenced by other ideologies. Islamic education is a tool to counter the influence of secularism and extreme pluralism that can erode Islamic beliefs.

Islamic education also aims to empower Muslims to be able to face the challenges of the times by adhering to Islamic principles. Islamic education not only focuses on aspects of worship and spirituality, but also on the development of a broad Islamic insight, including in the fields of science, economics, politics, and social. Thus, Islamic education as an ideological fortress functions to maintain the sustainability and purity of Islamic teachings in the lives of the people, as well as prepare a generation that is able to face the challenges of the times without losing their Islamic identity.

The Role of Teachers and Ulema in Preventing Radicalization

Teachers and scholars in Islamic educational institutions have a very important role as religious authority figures trusted by students. Their attitude and approach in conveying Islamic teachings greatly affect students' understanding of religion (Fahmi dkk., 2021).

The role of teachers and scholars as role models is crucial in shaping students' character and religious understanding (Aditya & Hidayani, 2023). Teachers who have a deep understanding of Islam and are able to teach religion with an approach that is relevant to contemporary social contexts, can reduce students' vulnerability to radical narratives. Therefore, training and professional development for teachers and scholars is key in strengthening Islamic education (Abdillah dkk., 2023).

Teachers and scholars have a crucial role in preventing radicalization, especially among the younger generation. They are authoritative figures in spreading moderate and peaceful

Islamic teachings, as well as guiding society not to be influenced by extremist ideas.

Teachers and scholars are responsible for teaching Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and Hadith with a contextual and moderate understanding. They must ensure that students understand Islam as a religion that teaches peace, tolerance, and compassion. In the context of formal education, teachers can use curricula that have been designed to prevent radicalization, including materials that address the dangers of extremism and the importance of interreligious tolerance.

Scholars and teachers must be a real example of Islamic teachings that are rahmatan lil alamin (mercy for all nature) (Basyit, 2018). By being an example in moderate attitudes and behaviors, they can have a positive influence on students and worshippers. They must be firm in rejecting all forms of violence and extremism, both in word and deed, and in promoting dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.

Teachers and scholars can initiate dialogue between followers of different religions to reduce prejudice and increase mutual understanding. This dialogue is also important to prevent misunderstandings that are often a source of radicalization. In da'wah, scholars must convey an inclusive message of Islam, which embraces differences, and rejects ideas that teach hatred or violence. Teachers and scholars must equip students and worshippers with critical thinking skills so that they are not easily influenced by radical ideologies. This includes teaching how to identify and reject extremist narratives that often spread on social media.

Strong moral education can be a bulwark against radicalization (Cuandra dkk., 2022; Maksin, 2022; Primarni, 2024). Teachers and scholars should focus on teaching ethics and values that promote harmony and peace. Teachers and scholars must be sensitive to signs of radicalization in their environment, whether in schools, madrasas, or the wider community. These signs can be changes in behavior, mindsets, or statements that show support for extremist ideologies. If symptoms of

radicalization are found, they should intervene in a thoughtful manner, such as providing a correct understanding of Islam and involving relevant parties such as families and educational authorities.

Teachers and scholars can work with the government and security agencies to prevent radicalization through coordinated prevention programs. They can also work with NGOs engaged in the prevention of extremism to organize anti-radicalism education and training activities. Through these roles, teachers and scholars can contribute significantly to preventing radicalization and forming a more tolerant, peaceful, and harmonious society.

Family and Community Involvement

The involvement of family and community in students' religious education greatly affects the effectiveness of radicalism prevention (Aryani & Wilyanita, 2022). Students who have strong support from their families and are involved in a positive community tend to have a more moderate understanding of religion.

Islamic education is not only the responsibility of educational institutions, but also families and society (Fauzian & Fauzi, 2018). This discussion emphasizes the importance of synergy between formal and non-formal education in shaping students' character and religious beliefs. The support of families who are active in their children's religious education can strengthen resistance to the influence of extreme ideologies.

Family and community involvement is very important in countering radicalism and extremism. The family is the smallest social unit that plays a role in shaping the character and basic values of individuals, while society provides a social environment that can strengthen or change these values (Rahayu dkk., 2020). Parents need to provide a moderate and balanced understanding of religion to children from an early age (Arlina dkk., 2023; Fauzian dkk., 2021; Purwaningsih & Syamsudin, 2022). This includes teaching that Islam is a religion that advocates peace, tolerance, and respect for

differences. Parents must be an example in applying religious values in daily life. The moderate and tolerant attitude shown by parents will be followed by children.

Parents need to supervise their children's activities, both in the real world and in cyberspace. The use of the internet and social media needs to be monitored to prevent children from being exposed to radical content (Hasanah & Huriyah, 2022). Harmonious and emotionally supportive families tend to produce mentally strong individuals and are not easily influenced by extreme ideologies. Parents need to understand and recognize the signs of radicalization so that they can act quickly if there are symptoms that lead to radicalism.

The community needs to be empowered through education and socialization about the dangers of radicalism and extremism. This can be done through recitations, community discussions, or seminars involving religious leaders and community leaders (Afifi & Abbas, 2023; Hanifatulloh, 2021). Prosperous societies tend to be more stable and less susceptible to the influence of radical ideologies. Economic empowerment programs can help reduce this vulnerability. Holding social activities that involve various groups in the community, such as community service, charity activities, or joint sports, can increase solidarity and reduce social divisions that can be exploited by radical groups. Strong and positive social networks in society can help detect and prevent radicalization by providing support to vulnerable individuals.

Community leaders can also play a role in educating community members about the signs of radicalization and ways to deal with it. Families and communities need to collaborate with schools to ensure that moderate values are taught and practiced in an educational environment. Families and communities also need to work with the government, NGOs, and security agencies to get support in preventing radicalization. With the active involvement of families and communities, efforts to prevent radicalism and extremism can be more effective,

creating a safe and conducive environment for the younger generation to develop properly.

Utilization of Technology and Social Media

The use of technology and social media as educational tools shows positive results in spreading messages of moderation and anti-radicalism (Maksin, 2022; Muhammad, 2021). Several Islamic educational institutions have begun to utilize digital platforms to educate students and the public about the dangers of radicalism.

The use of technology as an innovative Islamic education tool is able to reach the younger generation who are very familiar with the digital world. This discussion underscored the importance of proactively utilizing social media to disseminate moderate religious content and build an online community that can be a positive discussion space for students. The use of technology also allows for a wider and faster dissemination of messages, so it can be an effective tool in countering radical propaganda.

The use of technology and social media in countering radicalism and extremism is becoming increasingly important in the digital era (Abdullah dkk., 2022; Afifi & Abbas, 2023; Bunt, 2003). Technology and social media, which are often used by radical groups to spread extremist ideologies, can also be used as effective tools to counter radicalization. Social media can be used to spread messages of moderation that emphasize the teachings of Islam that are peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive (Kenedi & Hartati, 2022; Rahmawati dkk., 2023). These campaigns can be short videos, infographics, articles, or podcasts that are engaging and accessible to young audiences.

Scholars and community leaders who are known to have moderate views can collaborate with content creators to create material that opposes extremist narratives, using language that is easily understood by the wider community. Through e-learning platforms, webinars, and online modules, the public can be

educated on the dangers of radicalism, how to recognize extremist propaganda, and measures to protect themselves.

The public needs to be provided with knowledge on how to identify valid information and avoid hoaxes or propaganda spread by extremist groups on social media. Technology can be used to monitor radical content circulating on social media. Algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) systems can detect suspicious content and provide early warnings. Developing an app that provides information about moderate Islam and the dangers of extremism can help users, especially young people, get a trustworthy source. These applications can include interactive features such as quizzes, educational videos, and online discussions.

People need to be equipped with knowledge about digital security to protect themselves from online threats that have the potential to lead to radicalization, such as phishing or hacking. The public also needs to be educated about the importance of maintaining privacy and personal data to avoid manipulation by malicious parties. With the right use of technology and social media, people can be more vigilant against the threat of radicalism and extremism, and more effective in spreading messages of peace and tolerance. Collaboration between governments, educational institutions, communities, and technology companies is essential to ensure that these efforts are successful.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Islamic education has a crucial role in facing the challenges of radicalism and extremism among the younger generation. Islamic education that emphasizes the values of moderation, tolerance, and diversity has proven effective in preventing the spread of radical ideology among teenagers. A holistic and contextual curriculum is very important in forming a balanced and non-extreme understanding of religion. Teachers and scholars in Islamic educational institutions play a central role in guiding students to understand Islamic teachings in a moderate manner. Their quality and teaching approach greatly influence

students' religious views, so training and professional development for teachers and scholars is an urgent need. The synergy between formal education at school and non-formal education at home and community is very important to strengthen the resilience of the younger generation to radicalism. Family support and involvement in a positive community help form a strong character and a moderate understanding of religion. Overall, effective and contextual Islamic education has great potential to become a major bulwark against radicalism and extremism among the younger generation. To achieve this goal, cooperation between the government, educational institutions, families, and society as a whole is needed.

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