

# Prevention of Radicalism at Islamic Boarding College

Mauhibur Rokhmanm, Samsul Wahidin, and Dwi Suharnoko

**Abstract** — This research aims to identify the background of radical thinking and behaviour among students at an Islamic Boarding College. We analysed through a qualitative descriptive approach by interviewing several key persons from the campus management, and some students indicated to be exposed to radicalism and radical behaviour. The Islamic struggle movement is synonymous with intellectual movement. Thus, radical movements and behaviour must be prevented as early as possible. The actors are the implementers at universities, starting from the study programs, departments, faculties, and university-wide levels. Several recommendations and suggestions were produced through this research to reduce radical understanding in the university environment with several humanist and psychological approaches. One of them is by deepening the Religion and Islamic compulsory courses such as *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* courses, regular recitations at the faculty and university level to deepen understanding of Islam, as well as educational materials for defending the country and love for the homeland, as well as citizenship materials and others relevant to the mindset of today's students.

**Keywords** — college student perception, curriculum, Islamic boarding college, lecture attitude, religious education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The radical behaviour of students in higher education is an interesting phenomenon that has continually developed. The collapse of the New Order and the fall of Suharto pushed radical behaviour of students in higher education. After the fall, there were no more control, no more supervision, and all sects and ideologies flooded Indonesia with no obstruction.

Radicalism begins with narrow fanaticism in understanding an event, life values and religious understanding. After that, an intensive approach is carried out through mentoring activities or small groups until they are brainwashed to believe that their and their group's actions are right and justified and consider the others wrong, heretical, and even unbelievers. When this is set, the brainwashing will introduce more radical ideas and even carry out physical radicalism movements, resulting in terrorism movements.

Radical understanding stems from family environment and educational background such as general education; religious education is also an important variable in shaping radical behaviour. From the beliefs and thoughts obtained in

the immediate environment, namely the family, school and also social interactions through non-academic extra-campus activities outside like religious organisations, student movement organisations, and student activity units; a student's behaviour is formed and becomes their "truth" and would prove to be difficult for an outsider to change.

In detail, the study's objective is to identify, analyse and discuss the symptoms of radical behaviour among students at the KH Abdul Chalim Institute (IKHAC), Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, Pacet, Mojokerto, Indonesia and to identify and analyse. This qualitative research was done by selecting several important informants at the campus management level, and students indicated to be exposed to radical ideas.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Social Behaviour

The paradigm of social behaviour initiated by Burrus Frederick Skinner pioneered its thought with an objective approach, giving a potent impetus to concepts and theories with a social-psychological basis. The new social-psychological basis applied causality, or cause and effect, involving factors outside of the human self as the dominant one, determining inclined behaviour as the actor's behaviour as a social actor [1]. This placed every existing social reality as a product that grows dynamically outside of a person (external factors). In short, the dominance of external factors through various methods, in large and small forces, can influence anyone and anything, especially on individuals that are a permanent part of social unity, such as in a community with all the networks and relationships that strengthen its structure.

For individuals shackled in the culture of their surrounding social environment, every event is considered as a stimulus that can form certain behaviours. Anyone who is considered unable to follow will be eliminated from the social order as punishment, and vice-versa will get easier in playing a role based on their competence if they keep up with ongoing changes [2].

Positive and negative reinforcement is more of a psychological filter in fostering behavioural repetition and gathering an individual's potential to develop a social environment or community and subsequently become the social capital to strengthen and maintain existing relationships [3]. In applying the principles of social behaviour, some norms become a space to build mutual agreement, unite the growing interests of common concern, and finally gets formulated in daily behaviour that reflects the set of supporting potential skills, provide facilities to develop abilities in mutually agreed stages, prioritise equality in building relationships between existing individuals, provide mutual benefits, share necessary

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information, uphold established values, facilitate the establishment of reciprocal relationships, enhance cooperation within the internal and external, and strengthen individual networks through conventional and virtual forms [4].

### B. Radical Behaviour

Radicalism is not automatically associated with terrorism; however, radicalism is the foundation of terrorism. Terrorism is an act that is carried out intentionally to cause fear among the public or force the government to do or do not do something or damage the existing political, economic, and social structures. Islamic Radicalism is radicalism related to Islamism, namely the belief, discourse and activism that aims to change the existing political, economic, social and cultural systems into an Islamic system. For Islamists, Islam is understood not only as a religion but also a political ideology, which stands parallel to other major political ideologies [5], [6].

Several causes trigger radicalism in Islam. Among them are colonialism, the emergence of a secular nation-state, geostrategic struggles, state-religion relations, and the struggle for economic-political space and access (power struggle) [7]. The momentum of Islamism occurred after the defeat of the Arab world in the 1967 War against Israel, magnifying the fragility of the ruling regimes and their failure to fulfil development promises. The evolution of Salafism driven by the Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Jama'at Islami with founding figures Hasan al-Banna and Mawdudi laid the foundations of the Islamist movement [8].

Sayyid Qutb envisioned taking control of the state to its extreme: takfir and revolution through violence. Subsequently, several splinter groups were born, such as Hizb al-Tahrir, Islamic Jihad, Jamaah Islamiyah, and Jamaah al-Takfir (responsible for the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat). Geostrategic factors further triggered the emergence of Islamic radicalism. The jihad ideology developed among the Ikhwan after the execution of Qutb in 1966 spread to various parts of the world as a by-product of Saudi Arabia's campaign to strengthen its geostrategic position as the centre of the Islamic world by spreading Wahhabism. The apolitical variant of silent Salafism developed as a consequence of the internal dynamics in Saudi besides the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution. This is the fundamental evolution in the emergence of radicalism in the Islamic world [9].

The growth of the Islamist movement in Indonesia rests on the anti-communist campaign of the New Order, accompanied by countering Christianization, which is increasingly eroding the faith of Indonesian Muslims. The discourse of Islamic revival as a result of the repression of Islamic activism, including da'wah among students and young *santri*, seems to be indicated by the outbreak of the Iranian revolution under the banner of *tarbiyah*, along with the emerging trans-national Islamic movements, including the Ikhwan al-Muslimin, Hizb al-Tahrir and Salafi. Some of these transnational movements have accelerated the growth of domestically produced radical Islamist movements in Indonesia, first represented by the emergence of the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) [10].

### C. Radicalism, Extremism and Fundamentalism

Armed conflict among Muslims with different views or sects and violence carried out by Islam radicalists to followers of other religions has caused damage and destruction, both life and property, as well as destroying Islamic radicalism in the perspectives of the Middle Eastern countries in particular and humanity in general. Those occurrences do not reflect the true teachings of Islam because the essence of Islamic teachings is *rahmatan li al-'alamin*, or mercy for all nature. However, political, economic, cultural, military, both regional and global factors have caused bloody conflicts and undermined these human values, justice, and civility. Islam as a religion has universal and comprehensive teachings, contain elements of complex teachings, with certain parts being exclusive (aqidah) and in other parts (social relations) being inclusive [11].

Exclusivism here is a belief in the superiority of the truth of Islamic teachings and negating the teachings of other religions; thus, different tendencies of actions and beliefs may appear in a plural society. Fundamentalism in Islam is a movement that opposes westernisation and is presented as an alternative for the Muslim community. Extremism of fundamentalists is internally caused by several factors, including the tendency to understand texts in literal terms, excessive attention to *furu'iyah* issues, lack of insight into the nature of Islam, and the weakness of historical, scientific discourse in social life. Externally, fundamentalism appears in the Islamic world due to several factors, including imperialism, westernisation, Christianisation, government systems, economic inequality, secularism, liberalism, and especially the unjust attitude of the West in conflicts in the Middle East, especially between Palestine and Israel.

To prevent the growth of radicalism, we must first understand the root causes of its growth, namely the understanding or flow of fundamentalism [12]. Epistemologically, fundamentalism is an understanding that tends to fight for something radically, where the perpetrators are adherents of conservative and reactionary religious movements who wish to return to the original religious teachings as written in the holy book [13].

Islamic fundamentalism is a social phenomenon in various countries due to the swift currents of modernisation and dissatisfaction with social values that are considered deviating from the true teachings of Islam. Fundamentalism is a political protest movement expressed in religious terms that often uses radical actions. Fundamentalists have an epistemological view that Islam is the only way of life that must be upheld, disregarding the rights of other groups or religions. The views of these fundamentalists have created a social order to realise God's truth, as they believe Islam is a superior religion consisting of beliefs and worship procedures and as a way of life and cultural order, able and worthy of managing all humanity.

The fundamentalism movement in Islam also has the following characteristics. First, they are driven by an immense hatred of the West. Second, they insist on restoring the glory of past Islamic civilisation. Third, they aim to apply Islamic law in the state order. Fourth, they propagate that Islam is a religion and a state. Fifth, they make the past a revolutionary guide to the future [14].

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

#### A. Informant and Key Persons

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. Several key informants were selected from the IHKAC campus management to collect data, such as the vice chancellor for academics, the vice chancellor for student affairs, teaching staff and students indicated to have been exposed to radical behaviour and radicalism.

#### B. Research Tools

To assist in conducting in-depth interviews with several informants, a list of questions was developed to ensure that the interview was done orderly and obtained the required information [15].

Important questions posed to campus management included curriculum, extra-campus activities, recruitment of lecturers and staff, targeting of graduates, tracking of graduates and structured preventive actions taken by the campus to prevent the development of radical understanding and behaviour among Islamic boarding school students [16].

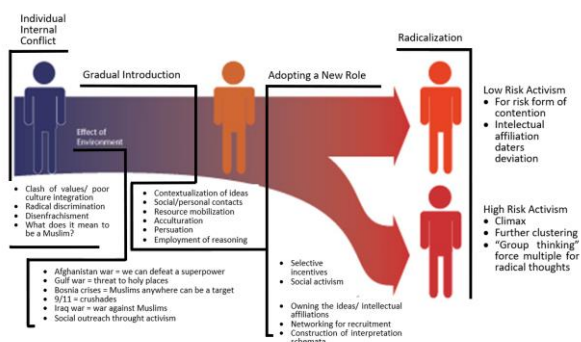


Fig. 1. Patterns of radical beliefs.

Fig. 1 above shown pattern of radical beliefs, some questions are built based on the flow [17]. Meanwhile, questions for students indicated to have been exposed to radical ideas and behaviours include formal and non-formal educational background, family background, family economic level, network of friends and organisations, as well as student views on radical Islamic phenomena among students and possible efforts by the campus to prevent the growth of radicalism in the Islamic Boarding School (*pesantren*) environment.

### IV. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to determine the student's level of exposure to radical ideas through several parameters such as education level, economic level, community social interaction, and organisational experience. This research enabled us to determine the factors that allow students to accept radical ideas easily.

Another purpose of the research is to provide direction and recommendations so the campus can take appropriate and proportionate preventive actions to ensure radical beliefs and acts of radicalism do not develop widely on campus.

### V. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### A. Campus Management Keyperson

This research found several points on the prevention of radical behaviour in the KH Abdul Chalim Institute, Pacet, Mojokerto, Indonesia, as follows; The learning method at the KH Abdul Chalim Institute refers to the curriculum nomenclature from DIKTIS, from the Ministry of Religion. The lecturer recruitment method is carried out online based on the needs of the lecturers or teaching staff in each study program. Recruitment is done independently and does not involve the Amanatul Ummah Foundation team. Non-academic learning is quite diverse, ranging from Banjari, Scouts, Pencak Silat and internal campus organisations such as student associations for study programs and regional student associations. Other student organisations include PMII, IPPNU, and PERGUNU. Overall, the curriculum and learning methods at the IHKAC campus blocks any opportunity for radical belief and behaviour to enter the campus. Likewise with non-academic activities controlled by the Foundation, thereby minimising the potential for radicalism to enter campus.

The target of graduates follows the direction of the Caretaker of the Islamic Boarding School. However, so far, the target of Bachelor graduates is for them to work professionally based on the respective scientific field pursued while studying at IHKAC. Alumni tracking is done through the website and google form and can be found on the official site of the IHKAC campus. It can be concluded that the target of graduates is very normative and oriented to the achievement of graduates, with strict alumni tracking to track the current condition of the alumni. There is no close correlation between the achievements of graduates and the opportunity for radical beliefs and behaviour to enter.

Radicalism can enter the IHKAC campus through other gaps, namely new students from outside the Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*) and Master Degree students. New students enrolled at IHKAC are very diverse and come from all provinces in Indonesia, both for Bachelor and Master Degree. With various prospective students, especially representative scholarship students from each province, there needs to be a filter in regulations and policies to ensure prospective new students are not exposed to radical ideas from outside the *pesantren*.

The KH Abdul Chalim Institute (IKHAC), located within the Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, does not provide opportunities for radicalism to enter with the strengthening of academic and non-academic curricula, strict recruitment of teachers, strengthening of graduate targets and tracking of alumni. However, students from outside the region and outside the *pesantren* environment may breach radicalism in the *pesantren* environment as radical ideas may have contaminated their previous educational environment.

#### B. Exposed College Student

Interviews with several student informants related to the radical behaviour of students in universities revealed interesting notes for further study. Questions given to key informants from students were divided into two groups, internal factors from the family; family educational background, level of economic welfare, individual education



level, social status and family social activities, then external factors; organisation, study and social interaction followed by the individual and families, ideas and concepts of movements, and others.

Economic background is often the reason for the limited financial capacity of a person or a group of people. Exposed students mainly originate from financially limited families. Being poor or financially weak has been used by radical beliefs to enter among students. They need attention, need support, especially those who can help them financially. It is known that some of the informants were scholarship students sent by their regions to study at the KH Abdul Chalim Institute. This study found that economic factors are often the reason for the limited financial capacity of a person or group of people. Weak economic capacity also impacts the desire to obtain financial assistance through activities that followed the student. An individual's social need to be recognised also triggers a student to take a stance and seek identity and recognition within the group, community, and society. An individual's need to be recognised is one reason a student is active in campus activities.

However, sometimes students are unaware that structured recruitment activities in campus organisations, especially those active in certain activities on campus, have specific targets, especially when conveying ideas that tend to be radical. To ensure the smooth running of these activities, they may take refuge under the auspices of the campus mosque *takmir* organisation. However, in IHKAC, they take refuge under regional organisations, which in their regular meetings not only discuss kinship based on regional similarities but also convey certain doctrines that lead to radical ideas and impact the radical behaviour of students in Islamic boarding schools.

### C. Preventive Effort

Like a carrom game, every carrom seed that hits another carrom will affect a group of carrom seeds far away—being economically weak with a lack of proper religious education, in the end, back radical beliefs of Islamic Movement to enter, which is often motivated by the desire to overthrow the government in radical ways. To overcome radicalism on campus, several routine preventive activities are carried out for students and teaching staff in the university environment, such as: preserving peaceful, cool and loving Islamic activities by encouraging reciting and religious studies in every tertiary institution, starting from the study programs and faculties by bringing in *ahlussunah wal jama'ah scholars* to provide an understanding of the related teachings of Islam of *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy for the whole world). Another routine is by providing more student activities by increasing talents and abilities through sports, research and self-development. Higher education leaders should regularly control campus facilities such as worship facilities, mosques, prayer rooms, and meeting rooms. They can also limit the spread of radicalism, do not give complete freedom to certain groups of students because mosques, prayer rooms, and even student centres; those areas belong to the community, not to certain groups. It is necessary to re-strengthen courses related to national strengthening; for example, Islam, Pancasila, citizenship,

history, and social science must be strengthened in the context of nationality and love for the homeland.

In addition to the roles carried out institutionally through educational institutions, families and the community environment, students are also required to have strong immunity and deterrence when facing the influence and invitation of radical terrorism. Students can do several things to counteract the influence of radical ideas and teachings, namely; Instill the spirit of nationalism and love for Indonesia, enrich moderate, open and tolerant religious insight, fortify self-confidence by always being alert to provocations, incitements and terrorist recruitment patterns both in the community and cyberspace, building networks with peaceful communities both offline or online to add insight and knowledge and join peaceful groups to flood the virtual world with messages of peace and love for the Republic of Indonesia.

## VI. CONCLUSION

External factors principally influence the radical behaviour and understanding of students at IHKAC. Conceptually, the curriculum, learning materials, non-academic activities, recruitment of teaching staff, and alumni tracking do not provide an opportunity for radical beliefs to develop within the IHKAC campus. Students' radical understanding is triggered by several internal factors such as poverty or economic weakness, weak religious understanding, and social factors of wanting to be recognised. The external factors behind the symptoms of radicalism among students of the KH Abdul Chalim Institute, Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, Pacet, Mojokerto, East Java, turned out to be more influenced by structured studies conducted by lecturers from alumni and seniors, as well as involvement with other organisations that often conveys and inserts certain doctrines and radical beliefs with practical political nuances.

Based on the field research, internal factors in the pesantren environment do not have a common thread in conveying radical beliefs and behaviour among students, especially in radicalism in the Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School environment. This is due to the very strict teacher recruitment process, coupled with the curriculum at the KH Abdul Chalim Institute, which is indirectly affiliated with the ideology of *Ahlussunah wal Jama'ah, rahmatan lil alamin*, which has closed the gap for the possibility of spreading radicalism on the campus environment either directly or indirectly.

As a result, it is the duty of every stakeholder, especially religious courses, to have preventive efforts against the spread of radicalism. It should promote, in particular and to a greater extent, the morals, the values and the ideals of *Islam rahmatan lil alamin* (Islam is a mercy and goodness for the whole world). The present research highlights the current attitude of college students exposed to radicalism in the Islamic boarding college.

The notion of radicalism among students at the KH Abdul Chalim Institute, which is allegedly was going to enter through courses, learning methods, and extra-curricular activities, was not proven. Strict rules were issued by the caretakers of Islamic boarding schools and in this case Prof.

Dr. KH Asep Saifuddin Chalim, MA which closed the gap for radicalism to enter the pesantren environment. Efforts to prevent radicalism through deradicalisation can be carried out through compulsory learning activities in the pesantren environment showing very positive and significant results.

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