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# Student Radicalism Ideology Prevention Strategy: A Study at an Islamic Boarding School in Jabal Nur, North Aceh, Indonesia

Student  
Radicalism  
Ideology  
Prevention  
Strategy

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aimed to explore what the Islamic boarding school does to protect their students from radicalism, violence, and fundamentalism.

**Approach** – For this research, both a qualitative approach and a phenomenological method were used to get the accurate results.

**Findings** – The study was conducted from April 2016 to December 2016. The Islamic Boarding School of Jabal Nur was taken up as a case for this study. The school has a lot of strategies to protect its students from radicalism, violence, and fundamentalism ideology. Those ideologies might damage their health mental and behavior. This research found that the strategies are: (1) applying the curriculum of the study according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama); (2) religious education based on the salafi method (al kitab alafar) which contains the deradicalization concept, and by this method, the students were trained to be a obedient; (3) foster care system or parenting done for 24 hours. The tutor was responsible for paying



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attention to their development, listening to their complaints, taking care of their mental and physical health, and guiding them at all times; and (4) the student (*santri*) was occupied by various extracurricular activities, such as Arabic calligraphy learning, language department center, sport activities, etc. Prevention efforts should also be based on the agreement between the students and their teacher. With these efforts, this study concludes that the radical ideology potential for *santri* (student) will not occur.

**Originality/Value** – The study of radicalism becomes an important discussion today, given the rise of terrorist threats in almost all countries.

**Keywords** Radicalism, ideology, Islamic Boarding School

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## 1. Introduction

The dispensation of radicalism ideology, often called Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*), is an educational institution that instills a radical understanding to its students. The indication that some of the actors of terror have the educational background of *pesantren*, background of the board/lecturer at the boarding school is found in the existence of the ideology of religious fundamentalism on the *santri* in some *pesantren*. This opinion can certainly be justified. The claim of a close variable between boarding school education and violence is a misconception. To understand the growth of radicalism ideology, we need to look at two other factors namely economic factors and political factors without making religious education a single reason for the growing radical understanding. This can be seen from the economic background of the perpetrators (terrorists) and their motives are very close to the political issues.

We also cannot turn a blind eye that radical understanding has been prevalent among young people. The Institute for Islamic Studies and Peace (LaKIP) conducted research between October 2010 and January 2011 on 59 private schools and 41 public schools in 10 areas of Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi).

The survey sampled 993 junior high school students and high school students. This survey shows that nearly 50% of students agree to violence or radical action for religion; 14.2% of the students said they agree with terrorist acts committed by Imam Samudra, Amrozi, and Noordin M Top; 84.8% of students also agreed with the enforcement of Islamic Shari'a. Meanwhile, 25.8% consider that *Pancasila* is no longer relevant as a state ideology (Fanani, 2013).

Other findings show a similar trend when asked whether *Pancasila* is still relevant as the basis of the state and as much as 25.8% or 26% answered irrelevant. Meanwhile, when asked whether to agree with the implementation of Islamic Shari'a as much as 84.8 (85%) answered agree (LaKIP, 2011). The reason why schools or boarding schools should be wary of being a fertile ground for growing radical understanding is because the world of education is a vehicle for transforming noble values to the learners.

The practice of transformation involves a variety of interrelated elements, not only for learners but also for educators, teaching materials, teaching methods, and stake holders or wider groups, including communities and governments (especially in this case, Kemendikbud). Close interaction with the stakeholders makes the world of education a dynamic and open social space, in the sense of receiving influence from wherever it comes, both positive and negative. Therefore, the reality that occurs in the world of education is not a reality that stands alone. It must be understood in relation to other realities that are taking place outside of itself (Gaus, 2013.)

This research is aimed to observe how the strategy undertaken by Dayah Integrated Jabal Nur located in the village of Paloh Lada, Dewantara North Aceh district, is engaged in

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warding *santrinya* from radical understanding and understanding how the students understand radical understanding. Dayah which was established since 2001 has 567 active students and all are lodged in dormitories. The learning system applied is by using an integrated education system in the morning until afternoon, and the general learning lesson refers to the curriculum of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) while the evening students learn to refer to the salafi curriculum that studies religion (Islam) through the classical (yellow) books.

This learning system was interesting to understand the transformation of *santri* knowledge. On the one hand, *santri* learn general lessons and at other time they study religion in different times also with teachers having different educational backgrounds. In their general educational pursuit, students are taught by teachers with a general education background which are all strata 1, whereas the religious learning is taught by teachers with salafi education background. The difference is whether it affects the understanding of a *santri* in looking at whether he is religious or not.

## 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method (Santakos, 1998). The qualitative descriptive method employs non-quantitative descriptive data collection and analysis, which aimed to explore the social relations, system, or events by providing background information about the issue in question. The data were obtained from primary and secondary resources, and the data were analyzed by using thematic analysis, which emphasized on the position of the idea in the material under investigation (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005).

## 3. Result and discussion

Although no one case was found related to terrorist acts at Islamic Boarding School JabalNur, but the radical understanding could have entered their ideology. Given they are vulnerable groups that are easily influenced. Therefore, boarding schools have an educational system that can protect them from the threat of such understanding. Among them is a foster system that puts forward a personal approach persuasively. However, it must be understood that radical action can happen to anyone in the ordinary group. Therefore before looking to the potential, the researchers first discussed some conditions that allow for the occurrence of radical understanding in the Islamic Boarding School in North Aceh.

The Coordinator Minister for Political, Legal and Human Rights (Menkumham) believes there are three roots of radicalism, which are poverty, marginalization, and arbitrariness. ([www.detik.com/news/berita/33907903/enko-polhukam-akar-masalah-radikalisme-adalah-kemiskinan](http://www.detik.com/news/berita/33907903/enko-polhukam-akar-masalah-radikalisme-adalah-kemiskinan) accessed at 21/10/2016). The worst conditions of poor people and acute poverty make it frustrating and easy to act beyond reason and healthy logic.

Zuly Qodir ((2013, p. 55–60) in his article said, “The sociological perspective on the radicalization of youth religion states that there are several factors that allow for the emergence of radicalism among young people in religion.” First is the mental healthy problem. Michael McCullough and Timothy Smith (2003), in their book *Religion and Health: Depressive Symptoms and Mortality as Case Studies*, wrote that youth’s healthy mental state was a very vulnerable condition, so that young people easily experience the shock of the soul (depression) caused by various factors in their daily life.

Second is the inequality economic factor. The economic gap that has been happening will easily create social anger. In the language of sociologists, economic inequalities will create social grievances for societies with economic abundance, especially if economic abundance is gained in non-transparent ways, for example, by corruption, abuse of state money,

bribery, and embezzlement tax. So, social grievances will easily emerge and then be organized in society.

Third, the socio-political conditions influence the change of behavior and the formation of religious organizations. Peter Beyer, a well-known sociologist of this century, explains that now and in the future changes in the world political policy, as part of the politics of globalization will bring about changes in the pattern of religious attitudes and religious organization. Fourth is the religious commitment of religious understanding. In the midst of many serious problems affecting this nation, the question of the necessity of people and groups in life is a demand that is almost always present. Religion cannot be seen in the perspective between profane and sacred.

Caregiver at Dayah Riskiyullah argued that students need to be invested with noble moral values. According to him, without a noble character one can behave as he likes without regard or compassion for others. For example, many reported acts of violence involving children who are still in school is because of the accumulation of the moral dilapidation of the learners. The moral order in question is not only limited to the theological order (*hablun minallah*) but also the relationship with fellow human beings as well as nature. Therefore, obedience to divine teachings gives birth to one's noble attitudes and deeds.

Referring to the data found in this study, it can be concluded that the de-radicalization of students can be done by protecting them from the entry of radical understandings, not by solving the economic and political problems as mentioned earlier. They also understand that the value gained through the learning process in the Islamic boarding school may change at some point, if the primary problem (source) is not resolved. Thus, the Islamic boarding school phenomenon associated with various terror cases in the homeland was not done by the *santri* who are in the lodge but the graduates who were born from the boarding school perhaps. The problem, then, is not the weakness of nonviolent values adopted by a person but the complexity of life's problems. So it is easy to infiltrate with ideals that contrast with compassion, which should be the core of Islam.

The teachers also realize that they have not been able to develop their alumni well, especially with regard to economic improvement. However, according to them the effort can be done with various learning programs based on entrepreneurship so that when they graduate they should have the entrepreneur spirit. This is as revealed by Riskiyullah in the interview, quoted as follows:

“If it is true that the economic problem is the source of the root of radical understanding, we try to build the Dayah's curriculum and nuance based on entrepreneurship. The hope is that when they (*santri*) graduates they should establish a business independently and can help other people”

Abdul Muttalib (32) secretary of the salafi education program has a different perspective – that radicalism was born out of the shallowness of religious knowledge or misunderstanding of the teachings of Islam. Those who commit violence in the name of religion need a review of what they understand about Islam, because none of the Islamic teachings justify harm done to others, except with the ways and conditions that are in perfect accordance with the guidance of Islam. So, the radicalism ideology in the Islamic boarding school was not developed well because there is no guidance and learning that leads to violence.

Thus, the potential for radical development in the Islamic boarding school is too small. If there are students who have radical understanding, this is due to other factors that affect a person to do violence. As stated below:

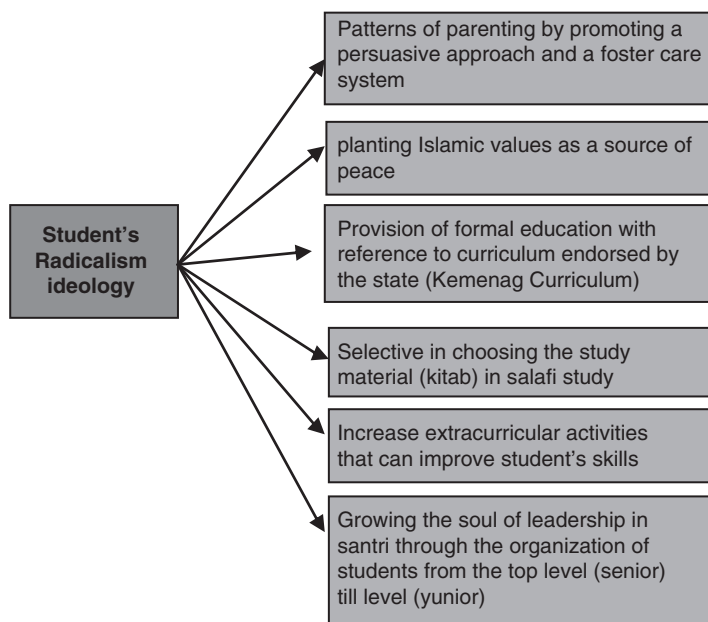
“as I know there is no Islamic studies teaches us to stop us from violence. Even if there is our *santri* who understand that way I see it is influenced by other things outside the system of Dayah. Probably because of TV, friendships, whispers of outsiders we do not know.”

The cultivation of radical ideologies through religious education in the Isamic boarding school as observed by this research is difficult. The life control system of students is well managed for 24 hours, which does not allow outsiders to provide any kind of understanding and flow. The fostering system implemented at the Isamic boarding school uses foster care, where each dormitory is guided by a foster parent who is a senior teacher (generally a foster parent is in-charge of 50 *santri*) and who is fully responsible for his students' issues such as health, education, or personal issues which is considered to potentially disrupt the activities of these students.

The cultivation of Islamic values as a compassionate religion and as a source of peace needs to be done from an early age and done on an ongoing basis. A formal education institution in this case has a very important role, especially in a boarding school where Islam is taught by propositions more than formal institutions. Concerns about the emergence of radical society from educational institutions are important to examine, seeing that violence in the name of religion comes from those who have a good education, even if not violent actions are pioneered by a well-educated society that is able to procreate the impressionable masses.

Radical prevention efforts undertaken by the *Dayah* can be simplified in the form of charts as illustrated in Figure 1.

The efforts that done by the Islamic boarding school *Jabal Nur* in anticipation of the spread of radical understanding among students are 1) through formal school education based on the curriculum of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2) through salafi education (*kitabul ashfar*) at night, 3) extracurricular activities, and 4) through organizing activities. Implicitly, the four programs do not touch directly on preventing radical understanding. Even his own educators did not plan to instill a radical idea. It's just based on the analysis of the researchers seeing that the system implemented by the *Dayah* leads to a form of



**Figure 1.**  
Simple Chart of  
Radicalism

understanding of the importance to live with peace, put forward morality, increase the creativity of the *santri* to be positive and productive and instill the values of responsibility in each student.

The last thing is reflected from the daily activities of the students where each student was given the mandate to lead himself independently and its members. Provision of this mandate is certainly divided into two forms, namely macro and micro. Generally, the *santri* who are still in the lower class (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah* and some *Madrasah Aliyah*) have been given the responsibility. An example of deradicalisation done at boarding school JabalNur is to provide a mandate to senior students to teach and help them dealing with problems. Among the activities that lead to the planting of deradicalization values are the activities of *santri* organizations and language teaching in the morning after the dawn prayers.

#### 4. Implications

On a macro-scale, when students who are in the fifth grade and some from the fourth grade enter the even semester they are involved in the formation of the *santri* organization called *munaddhamah*. This organization is fully responsible for student activities for 24 hours. They plan the programs that they want to do with their members, carry out planned programs and evaluate them regularly on every Friday night under the direct guidance of Dayah parenting. The organization will form the personality of the *santri* responsible for the duties that he holds. Prevention is also done with a foster care system (pedagogy) is the effort of persuasive approach of students problem. Violation of discipline by *santri* will be addressed by persuasion efforts not with punishment in any form, so do not familiarize student with violence things. and establish a system of protection for student from outside influences. Students are not given free space to interact with outsiders, and the outsiders who do not have interests with students are also not allowed to interact with the students. This is done so that students are protected from negative things that may arise without predicted before

#### 5. Conclusion

The potential for radical understanding among *santri* in Nort Aceh and the Islamic Boarding School of Jabal Nur is too thin, considering that the space for the inclusion of such understanding of the region is very small. If the spread of radical understanding is through the Dayah education curriculum, then the college management already has a standard curriculum that has been applied for a long time and declined, and the curriculum is very far from anything that is radical Islam (fundamental). However, radical understanding can easily enter if a person's psychiatric condition is affected due to the condition being experienced. Therefore, the Dayah management is implementing the system of care so that the smallest *santri* problems can be heard and look for a comprehensive solution.

Prevention of radical understanding among the youth (*santri*) can be done in various ways:

- (1) With an exclusive lodging system that can limit the interaction space of students with the community,
- (2) With a care system (Jabal Nur in this case uses the foster care system) that puts forward the approach of persuasion rather than physical punishment in order to avoid trauma to students and excessive fear,
- (3) With the implementation of an educational curriculum that does not accept the emergence of radical understanding among *santri*.

Planting of *santri* morality values puts forward the principle of togetherness, i.e., the student must have a sense that the other person (them) is himself and himself is them.

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