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COUNTERING RELIGIOUS RADICALISM: STRATEGIC STEPS OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT IAIN PONTIANAK

MENANGKAL RADIKALISME AGAMA: LANGKAH STRATEGIS PRODI PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM DI IAIN PONTIANAK

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ABSTRACT:

This article examines the strategic steps taken by the Islamic Education Department (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak to counter religious radicalization among students. The primary focus of this study is the department's efforts to educate students through a religious moderation-based curriculum, aimed at preventing narrow and exclusive interpretations of religion. A qualitative-descriptive approach is used in this research, combining field research methods with a systematic literature review. The study finds that the PAI department is dedicated to developing a curriculum that incorporates the values of Islamic moderation while also leveraging technology to expand students' perspectives on pluralism and multiculturalism. Education programs rooted in moderate values, such as Religious Moderation Education, play a key role in fostering tolerance and harmony among religious communities. However, the main challenge faced is the limited resources of faculty and facilities needed to support

the effective implementation of this curriculum. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to discussions on Islamic education, especially in strengthening religious moderation within Islamic higher education. This article also offers a new perspective on the critical role of curriculum, faculty, and technology in addressing the challenges of radicalization, making it highly relevant for Islamic education that emphasizes inclusive values and multiculturalism.

KEYWORD:

Religious Radicalism, Religious Moderation, Islamic Education, Strategic Steps, Islamic Education Department (PAI)

ABSTRAK:

Artikel ini mengkaji langkah-langkah strategis yang dilakukan oleh Prodi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di IAIN Pontianak dalam menangkal radikalisasi agama di kalangan mahasiswa. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah upaya Prodi dalam mendidik mahasiswa melalui kurikulum berbasis moderasi beragama yang bertujuan mencegah munculnya penafsiran agama yang sempit dan eksklusif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif dengan memadukan metode penelitian lapangan dan telaah pustaka secara sistematis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Prodi PAI berkomitmen mengembangkan kurikulum yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai moderasi Islam sekaligus memanfaatkan teknologi untuk memperluas wawasan mahasiswa mengenai pluralisme dan multikulturalisme. Program pendidikan yang berakar pada nilai-nilai moderat, seperti Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama, berperan penting dalam menumbuhkan sikap toleransi dan harmoni antarumat beragama. Namun, tantangan utama yang dihadapi adalah keterbatasan sumber daya dosen serta sarana dan prasarana yang diperlukan untuk mendukung implementasi kurikulum secara efektif. Signifikansi penelitian ini terletak pada kontribusinya terhadap diskursus pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam memperkuat moderasi beragama di perguruan tinggi Islam. Artikel ini juga menawarkan perspektif baru mengenai peran penting kurikulum, dosen,

dan teknologi dalam menghadapi tantangan radikalisme, sehingga relevan bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam yang menekankan nilai inklusif dan multikulturalisme.

KATA KUNCI:

Radikalisme Agama, Moderasi Beragama, Pendidikan Islam, Langkah Strategis, Prodi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)

INTRODUCTION

Religious radicalism in higher education must be confronted with a deeper awareness of the importance of religious moderation. According to Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, religious moderation is a perspective and attitude in practicing religion moderately, which means avoiding extremism in understanding and practicing religion. Religious moderation does not imply changing the religion but rather how to understand and practice religious teachings without excess or crossing boundaries (Saifuddin, 2023).

As times evolve, higher education institutions should educate students academically and shape them into individuals capable of critical thinking, appreciating diversity, and accepting differences in religion. In this context, religious education at universities must make students aware of the importance of a moderate attitude that can manage differences well without violence and intolerance. Higher education should be able to instill values of justice, tolerance, balance, and equality as part of character building (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

However, the reality in most higher education institutions, particularly in Indonesia, shows the opposite. Religious radicalism is thriving among students, especially in environments that should be a platform for developing more open and moderate thinking. According to research conducted by several institutions, radicalization is increasingly spreading among students, both in schools and universities (Abdallah & Fadlan, 2021). This indicates that the religious education students receive does not provide a strong enough foundation to maintain moderate and inclusive religious attitudes. Instead, they are more inclined toward exclusive and harsh interpretations of religion, even using religion to justify radical actions (Wildan, 2019).

Given this phenomenon, exploring religious radicalism in higher education is important, particularly within the Islamic Education program. Radicalization on campuses often goes unnoticed or is even trivialized by concerned parties. However, universities should be at the forefront of efforts to instill a moderate attitude that not only manages differences but also opposes all forms of violence that use religion as a justification. Moderate religious education must be a long-term solution to reduce the potential for radicalization among students, so they do not fall into narrow and exclusive religious understandings.

Indeed, a deeper exploration of religious radicalism requires a more critical approach, as this issue is related to individuals and the educational structure, campus culture, and the values that develop within it. This study is expected to offer new insights into how religious education in higher education, particularly in the Islamic Education program at IAIN Pontianak, can strengthen moderate religious awareness and combat radicalization. This is significant, given that IAIN Pontianak is the oldest program with the largest student body on campus, which naturally has a substantial influence in instilling values of religion that align with moderate and tolerant Islamic teachings.

Amid these realities, a deeper investigation into religious radicalism in higher education is expected to provide a larger contribution to preventing the spread of radical religious ideologies. With its large student population, the Islamic Education program at IAIN Pontianak bears a great responsibility in nurturing moderate religious understanding. In this regard, religious education oriented toward values of pluralism and multiculturalism should be a top priority, considering Indonesia's characteristic diversity. If students are taught to respect diversity, they can become agents of change in addressing radicalization in the future.

The phenomenon of religious radicalization on campuses has attracted the attention of scholars trying to understand its complexity and impact. This literature review synthesizes findings from various studies, focusing on the causes, manifestations, and prevention strategies related to religious radicalization in academic settings.

One key factor contributing to religious radicalization among students is the quality of social relationships formed during their educational journey. Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger et al. emphasize that socio-demographic backgrounds, especially immigration status, influence students' tendencies to support extremist religious ideologies, suggesting that isolation and disrupted healthy relationships can trigger radicalization (Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger et al., 2022). This finding aligns with Bhui et al.'s research, which states that transitional periods, such as migration and changes in the educational environment, can weaken bonds with positive influences, thereby facilitating radicalization (Bhui et al., 2012). Additionally, radicalization is often exacerbated by students' affiliations with external organizations, as found by Basri and Dwiningrum, who state that student affiliation with off-campus organizations contributes to the emergence of radical tendencies in educational institutions (Basri & Dwiningrum, 2019). This complex social dynamic requires preventive measures focused on building healthy interactions and community engagement to reduce the risk of radicalization.

Various educational strategies have been proposed to address these challenges. Yani et al. emphasize the importance of efforts from academic institutions, involving direct communication and joint initiatives in combating terrorism to limit the influence of radical ideologies (Yani, 2022). Furthermore, the implementation of moderate Islamic education has shown promising results in combating radicalization. Kader et al. propose that promoting moderate values can foster social responsibility and positive community

engagement (Kader et al., 2024). These educational programs equip students with a balanced perspective on their religion and teach the critical thinking skills necessary to distinguish radical ideologies (Faizah et al., 2021). Thus, educational institutions are expected to actively create environments that promote moderation and mutual respect among diverse religious beliefs.

Furthermore, the role of faculty members in combating radicalization on campuses cannot be overlooked. Rousseau et al. discuss the significant influence of educators in shaping students' perceptions of radical movements. They note that faculty members who engage in open dialogue about radical ideologies can help students navigate complex discussions on religion and extremism (Rousseau et al., 2020). This is also supported by experiences shared by participants in various studies, including those involving religious educators who apply pedagogical creativity to combat radical tendencies (Remiswal et al., 2023), as well as mentors who provide psychological support for vulnerable students. Additionally, integrating interfaith literacy programs has proven effective in reducing radical views, as highlighted in a narrative study by Tahir and Wijaya related to higher education efforts (Tahir & Wijaya, 2024).

Finally, a systemic approach outside the campus is also crucial to address the broader social issues related to religious radicalization. Desmarais et al. propose a dual strategy that examines vulnerability to radicalization individually and through contextual factors leading to terrorist actions (Desmarais et al., 2017). As identified in various studies, the intersection of external influences such as the socio-political context and community affiliations plays a significant role in shaping students' radical attitudes, requiring collaboration between educational institutions and government entities to formulate comprehensive community policies and programs (Götzsche-Astrup et al., 2020; Idami et al., 2023).

Overall, the existing literature reveals that addressing religious radicalization in higher education requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving social relationships, implementing effective educational strategies, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders. By prioritizing these areas, academic institutions can significantly reduce the prevalence of radical ideologies among students.

This article contributes a new perspective by thoroughly examining the strategic steps taken by the Islamic Education Program (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak to curb religious radicalization among students. The primary focus of this research is the implementation of religious moderation education tailored to the local and social context of West Kalimantan, which is rich in cultural and religious diversity. Additionally, this study offers a fresh perspective on the vital roles of the curriculum, faculty, and technological involvement in addressing the challenges of radicalization, making it relevant to the discourse on Islamic education oriented toward inclusive and multicultural values.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach, combining field research methods (Creswell, 2012, 2014) with a systematic and directed literature review (Zed, 2014). The selection of this method is intended to trace policy tracks and reinforce these findings through a literature review, thereby building a deep and reflective understanding of the strategic steps taken by the Islamic Education Program (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak to counter religious radicalization.

All data gathered through the literature review are analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative approach, following the three main stages outlined by Miles and Huberman: data condensation, data display, and reflective conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Data condensation is carried out by filtering and clarifying relevant information that aligns with the main research question, namely the strategic steps taken by the PAI program at IAIN Pontianak to address religious radicalization. Data presentation is organized thematically so emerging narratives can be grouped within interrelated conceptual dimensions. Conclusions are drawn inductively, not by generalizing data uniformly, but by interpreting the relationships between the findings.

Furthermore, the literature review is consistently aligned with field data obtained through in-depth interviews with policy makers in the Program and several faculty members. This approach is chosen to capture the authentic voices of policymakers and those directly impacted by the policies, namely, the students. Their perspectives are essential not merely as supplementary data but as a bridge that connects the ideality of the policies with their real-world implementation in the classroom.

Thus, this study aims not only to produce a systematic scientific report but also to offer a reflective reading of how the strategic steps taken by the Islamic Education Program at IAIN Pontianak work to mitigate religious radicalization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Radicalism and Its Underlying Causes

Religious radicalism often drives some Muslims to take shortcuts by hijacking religious understanding to justify their aggressive actions and behaviors. According to Haedar Nashir, the understanding built upon radicalism is a latent threat to the sustainability of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This is because fundamentalist and radical Muslim groups often intersect with Islamic movements advocating for the formalization of Sharia law in the national governance system. Nashir cites how such movements frequently bring up the Jakarta Charter during amendments to the 1945 Constitution, demand the implementation of Sharia-based regional regulations, and insist on enforcing an Islamic Caliphate (Nashir, 2013).

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Dictionary), radicalism is a political ideology seeking drastic social and political change, even through violence or extreme actions. Based on this definition, religious radicalism can be understood as an

ideology that demands drastic social changes, justifying extreme attitudes and violence under religious arguments (Tim Penyusun Kamus Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1996).

In several cases, religious radicalism is not merely an ideology but manifests in various religious movements that accompany violent actions, and in some instances, even terrorism. As Ahmad Asrori argues, religious radicalism is an attitude and behavior filled with violence, directed towards achieving certain goals—goals that, although framed in religious claims, often contradict broader humanistic values (Asrori, 2015).

According to Abd A'la, addressing religious radicalism must be done thoroughly and systematically. An initial step to minimize radicalization is to correct the misinterpretations of religion that have often been misunderstood. Radicalism is an ideology that has the potential to divide religious communities and disrupt various aspects of life. This ideology is termed as such because it leads to the belief that truth resides solely with them, monopolizing interpretation, and viewing violence as a legitimate means to defend their beliefs (A'la, 2014).

Luthfi Assyaukanie identifies religious radicalism through several indicators. First, iconoclasm, which is the textualist view that sees modernization as a product of Western culture, is viewed as a new idol that must be opposed and destroyed. Second, demonization, which involves labeling others as satanic, heretical, infidels, or applying other negative stigmas. In this view, only they are considered pure and right. Third, fatwas of violence, emerging from radical ideologies that approach differences harshly, considering any divergence as heretical. Fourth, conservatism, which rejects viewing Islam through historical and anthropocentric lenses. Fifth, instant culture, where radical religious understanding often arises from an instant model of religious education, presenting religion as unquestionable doctrines and dogmas. Sixth, puritanism, which advocates for an original interpretation of Islam that only refers to the Quran and Sunnah while disregarding the thoughts and *ijtihad* of past scholars. Consequently, they tend to view the Quran and Sunnah texts literally and textually (Assyaukanie, 2007).

The ideological politicization of Islam is often intertwined with political Islamic movements. Political Islam arises with the assumption that Islam needs to be defended—its existence, cultural heritage, and its nations. The desire to defend Islam is fueled mainly by nostalgia glory of the Muslim community (conservatism) and the belief that the modern world contradicts the spirit of Islam. Thus, ideological Islam is difficult to separate from political Islam, which generally emerges from fundamentalist tendencies in thinking.

Fundamentalism, while distinct from radicalism, is closely related to it. Fundamentalism is a religious ideology that seeks a return to the basic foundations believed to be the religion's core teachings, often demanding that followers adhere strictly to religious texts. This ideology usually serves as an entry point into radicalism, which

requires drastic change and uses violence as a tool to achieve its goals. In short, Islamic radicalism can be seen as an extreme form of Islamic fundamentalism.

Moreover, ideological Islam, often appearing as a revivalist Islamic movement, reflects the image of Islamic fundamentalism. This movement is characterized by several beliefs: first, the revival of Islam requires a paradigm reform and revolution, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad; second, religion is inseparable from the state and society; third, deviation from Islamic norms leads to the decline and loss of the Muslim community's dignity; fourth, un-Islamic behavior can only be corrected through the implementation of Islamic law; fifth, the syncretism of Islam with local culture will only lead to the decline of the Muslim community; and sixth, jihad and armed struggle are considered necessary to reassert Islam's rightful position in society (Nashir, 2013).

Islamic radicalism emerges as a negative response to rapid modernization and socio-cultural changes. The global political, economic, and socio-cultural situations that increasingly marginalize religious communities are often met with a fundamentalist interpretation of religion. According to Charles Kimball, this negative response to modernization traps religious communities in religious radicalism, creating a "sick" model of religiosity. This sick religiosity is marked by: first, claims of absolute truth among their ranks; second, blind obedience (fanaticism) to religious institutions with limited use of reason and intellect; third, an obsession with an idealized past, believing that the current era has deviated from the noble spirit of religion; and fourth, the justification of principles and goals that underpin the methods they use (Kimball, 2003).

Thus, in Kimball's terms, religious radicalism appears as a form of "sick" religiosity arising as a negative response from some religious communities to modernization and its various aspects. Religious radicalism often also emerges as a reaction to dissatisfaction with mainstream religiosity, which is seen as insufficiently responsive to global issues that marginalize religious groups. In this context, radicalism is born as a theological and ideological response from religious communities feeling alienated by modernization and globalization. According to Abd A'la, addressing the issue of religious radicalism must be done thoroughly and systematically. Such efforts include eliminating radical ideas and thinking within religious communities (A'la, 2014).

Historically, the emergence of radical groups among Muslims in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon. The Islamic radical movement in Indonesia differs from that in the Middle East, which places greater emphasis on political agendas. In Indonesia, the radical Islamic movement has been more focused on fulfilling Islamic aspirations, such as the implementation of Islamic law and a return to the Jakarta Charter version of Pancasila.

Radicalism in Indonesia continued to develop post-independence and into the reform era. History records how Kartosuwiryo led operations in the 1950s under the Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII) banner, a political movement that used religion to justify its objectives. However, over time, this movement was eventually thwarted.

The growth of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia is a result of political issues in the country. In the political constellation of Indonesia, the issue of Islamic radicalism has become increasingly significant, not because its supporters are few, but rather because they are numerous. However, research conducted by Ahmad Asrori suggests that these movements have slowly diverged and lack uniform patterns. Some focus solely on the struggle to implement Sharia law without the necessity of establishing an Islamic state, while others seek the creation of an Islamic state of Indonesia, and some even aim to establish an Islamic caliphate. The organizational patterns of these movements are diverse and often contradictory. Examples include the differences between Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, as well as between Laskar Jihad and the Islamic Defenders Front (Turmudi, 2005).

Radicalism is an ideology formed by a group of people seeking drastic social and political change through violence. However, from a religious perspective, radicalism can be understood as a religious ideology that adheres to the most fundamental foundations of religion. This means fanaticism toward a particular religious teaching, where followers feel they are on the right side and insist, even forcefully, on imposing their beliefs with violence on individuals or groups who differ (Asrori, 2015).

The emergence of radical Islamic movements in Indonesia is caused by at least two factors: first, internal factors within the Muslim community, including deviations from religious norms; and second, external factors from outside the Muslim community, whether from the policies of authorities or Western hegemony. Jihad then becomes a symbol of resistance that, in reality, is exploited to stoke ongoing hostility between Islam and the West. This phenomenon is visible in Indonesia, where Muslims have reacted to the United States' attack on Afghanistan, Israeli aggression against Palestine, and so on. During this period, Islam finds a moment to voice their aspirations (Islamic solidarity). Some radical Islamic groups have moved to oppose the US and Israel's attacks (Zada, 2002).

Opportunities for Radicalism to Target Higher Education Institutions

It is undeniable that Indonesia is a country of extraordinary diversity, including in terms of religious beliefs. This heterogeneity should be a defining characteristic of the nation, understood wisely by its citizens, so the diversity present does not become counterproductive. Unfortunately, this is precisely what has happened. Awareness of the importance of respecting diversity, especially in the context of religion, is still very minimal among a significant portion of Indonesia's religious communities. Their belief is sometimes understood as an absolute truth that others should accept, leaving no room for differences.

This situation is further exacerbated by the rampant claims of religious truth used by radical groups as tools to judge and even condemn, not only interfaith, but also within the same religious group. Spiritual teachings, which should serve as guidelines for

peaceful living, are instead practiced in distorted ways, leading to what we now recognize as radicalization. This is the emerging trend in the religious life of Indonesians. M. Ajib Hermawan, for example, sharply points out, “Recently, radical Islamic understanding has gained strength, as seen in the increasing number of intolerance cases, both in society and within educational institutions, ranging from schools to universities” (Hermawan, 2020).

Research conducted by PPIM in 2017 and 2018, as well as by the Wahid Institute in 2019, confirms a profound weakness in openness and respect for diversity, including towards minority and marginalized groups, among educators in Indonesia. This aligns with the growing trend of religious radicalization. A 2019 study by the Setara Institute, for example, revealed the increasingly alarming spread of extremism among university students. A year earlier, in 2018, Cisform had already highlighted how religious activities on campuses were fostering exclusive religious views.

In the same year, INFID released its findings showing that radicalism and extremism had spread within campus mosques. BNPT also reported that approximately 39% of students from the seven public universities they surveyed were exposed to radicalization. Furthermore, a recent study by PPIM in 2021 at three Islamic Higher Education Institutions—UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Sunan Gunung Jati Bandung, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta—showed how empathy, both internally and externally, among students, faculty, and education staff remained highly unstable (Abdallah & Fadlan, 2021).

These research findings provide a clear signal that radicalism has become a serious issue for Indonesia, especially in the context of religious life. The root of the problem is partly within educational institutions, notably higher education. If students are exposed to radicalism, the hypothesis we propose is that this may be triggered by the role of lecturers or a campus culture that conditions or even neglects such situations.

Rahimi Sabirin identifies several indicators of radicalization. First, intolerance, characterized by the unwillingness to respect the opinions of others. Second is fanaticism, the belief that one’s views are always correct, while others are wrong. Third, exclusivism, reflected in the separation from standard Islamic practices, claims their way of practicing Islam is the only true, complete one, while others are deemed wrong, infidel, or heretical. Fourth, revolutionary attitudes, which tend to prioritize violence to achieve their goals (Sabirin, 2004). These indicators can, in turn, be linked to the emergence of radical characteristics among students in the religious context.

Various factors can cause the rise of radical Islam among university students. First, radicalism in Islam is often a consequence of the approach chosen to interpret religious sources. It is important to remember that the interpretation of the Quran should not solely rely on the text, but must also take into account the socio-cultural context around it. Without a comprehensive understanding of this, there is a potential for misinterpretation of the Quran (Hasyim, 2012). Therefore, there should be an agreement that the Quran did not come into the world in a vacuum, detached from its historical context. The Quran was

revealed to address various issues faced by the Arab society at that time, to create a social order that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a blessing for all worlds). However, because Islam came in a historical context, initially understood with one interpretation, this has opened the door for multiple interpretations (Nashir, 2013). As the source of Islamic teachings, the Quran is universally accepted as a revelation from God. However, this text can be understood or misinterpreted in its application in social life. The tendencies toward fundamentalism and radicalism in Islam often arise from how groups or individuals interpret religious teachings, including among students. Narrow doctrinal understanding usually becomes the root of radical movements, where the belief that Islam is the only solution, along with an integralist view referring to the teachings of the *salaf as-salih*, forms a fundamentalist ideology (Akyol, 2014).

Second, the recurring historical waves that have placed Muslims in marginalized positions in civilization contribute to radicalization. Many Muslim students see the divided and manipulated Arab world, along with the poor economic conditions, as factors worsening the situation. The position of Muslims, their inability to reinterpret the Quran in contemporary contexts, and pressure from the Western world strengthen radicalism (Hassan, 2006).

Third, religious radicalism among students often reacts to modernization and globalization. For those exposed to radical ideologies, modernization and globalization are viewed as threats that deviate from Islamic teachings. The rise of radical Islamic movements is fueled by the absence of mainstream Islamic groups in addressing the challenges of modernization and Westernization, and their inability to assert their identity amidst the influence of liberalism and secularism. Fourth, structural injustices in the state also contribute to the cause. For example, social, economic, and political injustices in Indonesia often exacerbate tensions and create space for radicalization to develop (Nashir, 2013).

In the realm of higher education, particularly at general universities (PTU), there are many radical-minded student groups. There are three patterns of religious practice among Muslim students at PTUs: first, students who follow the mainstream religious practices of the Muslim community. This group constitutes the majority on campus and generally practices their religion as they received it from their parents and social-religious environment. Some of them may not be overly concerned or engaged with religion. This group can be referred to as 'common Muslims,' those who practice religion without deep enthusiasm. Second, a group of students seek personal development, both in religious terms to deepen their understanding of Islam, and academically to enhance their organizational skills and scientific attitudes. These students often join organizations such as the Indonesian Muslim Student Association (HMI), the Indonesian Muslim Students Movement (PMII), and the Muhammadiyah Student Association. The urge to join these organizations becomes stronger once they realize that many active members and leaders in these organizations are prominent, both on campus and as alumni. Third, there is a

group of Muslim students with a deeper orientation towards Islam, often referred to as the 'green group' during the reform era. The emergence of this group began with the establishment of small Islamic study groups in the mid-1980s, popularly known as *usrah*. According to William R. Liddle, this group represents the fundamentalist Muslims among students, and some of them exhibit radical characteristics (Liddle, 1997).

The Muslim student movements in Indonesia have also been greatly influenced by their interactions with intellectuals and religious scholars from the Middle East, including Indonesian scholars who graduated from schools in the region. The arrival of ideological movements from the Middle East, as well as the spread of books and writings from the area, has acted as an effective catalyst for the rise of the Islamic movement. Religious radicalism often emerges as a phenomenon of identity crisis. This crisis is generally rooted in political, economic, social, and cultural issues. For some Muslim groups, this crisis is felt as an identity crisis, making them feel threatened (Monroe & Kreidie, 1997).

Religious radicalism also arises as a consequence of identity politics. This identity politics becomes the source of totalization that ultimately leads to radicalism. Various forms of radical actions under the guise of religion in the homeland are direct consequences of identity politics driven by religious fundamentalist groups. Thus, identity politics in this context can be said to have negative consequences for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism or Islamic radicalism.

As representatives of youth, students often experience an identity crisis at this age. According to Calvin S. Hall and G. Lindsey, this identity crisis arises from radical changes in their perspectives (Hall, 1993). In an attempt to overcome their identity crisis, young people, including students, tend to become more interested in participating in movements aimed at changing or renewing the established social structures. These movements serve as a means for them to assert their identity.

It is interesting to observe how the rise of Islamic radicalism has gained widespread support among students. Empirical evidence from various studies shows how the dakwah activist movements have attracted many followers from this group. Additionally, several observers have noted that socio-economic backgrounds heavily influence the orientation of students involved in these groups. Various conditions, such as feelings of alienation, unsettled social status, and an uncertain future, have driven students to join these groups, hoping to find a sense of security and protection.

In the context of globalization, Islamic radicalism should be understood as a reaction against global tendencies toward homogenization. In this case, radicalism should be seen as a movement to return to one's own cultural and religious identity as a form of rejection of global homogenization. Therefore, identity politics is generally used to refer to political activities built upon the experiences of injustice experienced by members of certain social groups. In this context, identity politics is not always related to ideology or political affiliation. Instead, identity politics is also connected to liberation movements carried out by marginalized groups in a broader society (Syafiq, 2010).

Members of these marginalized groups strive to assert or reaffirm new ways of understanding their distinctiveness to challenge the characterization imposed by the dominant society, often considered oppressive, to gain greater self-determination. They aim to form a new understanding of themselves and their communities, often through consciousness-raising efforts. This process forms collective awareness, which ultimately drives them to build resistance movements to change their lives or end the oppression they experience (Syafiq, 2010). Identity politics within the Islamic revival movement is based on the memory of life experiences that awaken awareness and objectification: ‘How should one be a Muslim in today’s society?’ This issue leads to various identity options available in their society. The question then becomes, what causes this objectification or awakening of awareness to emerge, and why do they choose religious-based communities?

The different offer from the campus dakwah communities seems to attract the attention of some new students. These dakwah communities appear to provide a sense of security in their social interactions, both on and off campus. These dakwah communities offer emotional support and a strong sense of fellowship. The social values developed within the dakwah community are based on religious solidarity, unlike the social recognition often based on materialistic factors in the broader society. However, the appeal of joining these communities is essentially the gateway to the process of indoctrination. In this process, there is intensive interaction between senior and junior members in a mentoring context, aimed at shaping their character under the values upheld by the organization—the campus dakwah community (Syafiq, 2010).

The Commitment of the Islamic Education Study Program (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak in Countering Religious Radicalism

The Islamic Education Study Program (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that not only masters religious knowledge but also can manage diversity and counter religious radicalization. In line with its vision, which focuses on excellence in Islamic education, academic research, and community service, the PAI program is committed to instilling the values of religious moderation in its students. This is particularly important considering the increasingly complex challenges of the modern era, which demand the ability to manage differences and live harmoniously amidst religious and cultural diversity.

The vision and mission articulated by the PAI program reflect a high standard of education in the realm of Islamic studies and are responsive to the needs of the times. One of the primary challenges faced is ensuring that religious education does not solely focus on the otherworldly (akhirah) aspects but remains relevant to worldly needs, including within multiculturalism and the digital era. The PAI program’s vision, which emphasizes forming an excellent generation based on values of justice, equality, and democracy, is a

highly relevant foundation for developing a moderate, tolerant generation with a broad understanding of global challenges.

In addressing the phenomenon of religious radicalization, the PAI program at IAIN Pontianak emphasizes the importance of balanced religious teaching, which not only highlights the spiritual dimension but also considers the need for social integration. Through an educational approach grounded in Islamic moderation or *washatiyah*, this study program strives to educate students to avoid falling into narrow and exclusive interpretations of religion. While differences in society often lead to friction, a moderate attitude enables these differences to be managed as a valuable asset that enriches social and cultural life. Therefore, this teaching, rooted in inclusive Islamic values, aims to create a just and harmonious society. According to Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, religious moderation is the perspective and attitude of individuals in practicing religion moderately, avoiding extremism in the understanding and practicing religion. Religious moderation does not mean altering the essence of religion itself, but instead focusing on a balanced way of learning and practicing religious teachings, ensuring that one does not exceed or fall short of the boundaries (Saifuddin, 2023).

One of the strategies employed by the PAI program to counter religious radicalism is the mainstreaming of multiculturalism within the curriculum and learning activities. By integrating the values of tolerance, justice, and balance into course materials, the PAI program seeks to produce graduates who not only understand Islamic teachings. Still, it can also adapt to the diversity found in society. The rich cultural and religious diversity of West Kalimantan, home to a pluralistic population, serves as a vital teaching tool to equip students with the skills necessary to live peacefully alongside other social and religious groups.

This program also has a significant opportunity to leverage technology and digitalization to expand students' knowledge of pluralism and multiculturalism. With the development of technology, students are expected to use digital platforms to access a broader range of information and educate the public on the importance of moderate religious attitudes. In addition, ICT-based education in the PAI program provides opportunities to develop more flexible learning models, which can reach a broader range of students in various regions, including areas with limited educational facilities.

However, the challenges faced by the PAI program are not limited to the development of curricula and ICT-based learning; they also involve faculty resources. Despite having a strong vision and mission to build moderate religious education, a key challenge lies in the imbalance between the number of students and the available faculty. The lack of qualified lecturers who can support the development of multicultural-based education remains a significant obstacle. Therefore, the PAI program needs to maximize the potential of exceptional lecturers to fill this gap while seeking long-term solutions regarding funding and structuring faculty positions.

Another significant challenge is the diverse socio-economic background of the students. Most students at IAIN Pontianak come from lower-middle-class families, making them vulnerable to the influence of radical ideologies as a solution to life's uncertainties. Therefore, the PAI program needs to develop a learning system that prioritizes religious knowledge and provides students with relevant life skills, enabling them to adopt more rational ways of thinking in facing life's challenges. Education emphasizing the importance of building inclusive social networks and developing the ability to address differences is key in preventing religious radicalization among students.

On the other hand, the PAI program has great potential in building collaborations with various domestic and international stakeholders to strengthen the development of moderate and multicultural-based religious education. Cooperation with educational institutions within Indonesia and abroad can open opportunities for the PAI program to enrich its curriculum with more progressive approaches relevant to today's world's challenges. Thus, the commitment of the PAI program at IAIN Pontianak in combating religious radicalism is not only limited to curriculum and learning development but also involves synergy with various parties to create inclusive, just, and socially relevant education that meets the evolving needs of society.

One of the highly relevant courses in efforts to combat religious radicalization in the Islamic Education Study Program (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak is *Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama* (Religious Moderation Education), which is taught in the fourth semester. This course plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of the importance of a moderate attitude in religion. The materials taught include several key concepts that form the foundation of tolerance, such as *Tawasut* (moderation), *Tasammuh* (tolerance), *Tawazun* (balance), and *I'tidal* (equilibrium in religion). The course also teaches the meaning of patriotism and commitment to the nation, which are essential values in maintaining the unity and solidarity of Indonesia's multicultural society.

Furthermore, this course delves into various cultures, potential divisions that may arise due to differences, and strategies for effectively managing them. One of this course's main objectives is to cultivate tolerance attitudes, both between religious communities and within the same religion. Topics such as understanding radicalism in the name of religion and analyzing social and religious conflict structures are also taught to help students explore and understand the phenomenon of radicalization and its impact on social harmony. Moreover, the emphasis on religious moderation as a spiritual foundation that accommodates local cultures and preserves interfaith harmony makes this course highly relevant for producing a generation committed to moderation, justice, and equality in religious practice.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the Islamic Education Study Program (PAI) at IAIN Pontianak plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that not only deeply understands

religion but also can manage diversity and counter religious radicalization. The program demonstrates its commitment by developing a curriculum that integrates religious moderation, as well as the use of technology and education based on multiculturalism to address the increasingly complex challenges of today's world. By emphasizing values such as tolerance, justice, and balance, the PAI program strives to produce graduates who are knowledgeable in religious studies and capable of adapting to diversity and maintaining social harmony within society.

Furthermore, the PAI program at IAIN Pontianak also leverages courses such as *Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama* (Religious Moderation Education) to equip students with in-depth insights on moderation in religion. This course not only teaches fundamental concepts such as *tawasut* (moderation), *tasammuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (equilibrium in religion), but also prepares students to manage potential societal divisions in a multicultural environment. Additionally, the PAI program includes discussions on religious radicalism and analyzes the structures of social and religious conflicts, which are increasingly relevant to the current social context in Indonesia.

However, the most significant challenge faced by the PAI program is the imbalance between the growing number of students and the limited number of faculty, along with insufficient facilities. This presents an obstacle in optimally implementing a curriculum based on multiculturalism and religious moderation principles. Therefore, the PAI program needs to innovate by improving the quality of faculty and educational facilities and strengthening collaborations with other academic institutions to enrich the curriculum and broaden students' perspectives on the importance of religious moderation in the context of diversity.

The argument presented in this study emphasizes that, despite the significant challenges in developing religious moderation education—particularly related to the shortage of human resources and facilities—the PAI program at IAIN Pontianak has made considerable efforts to respond to religious radicalization. Through a relevant curriculum, well-structured courses, and an educational approach based on multiculturalism, the PAI program plays a vital role in shaping a generation of young people who are moderate, tolerant, and prepared to face the increasingly complex global challenges.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the discourse on Islamic education, particularly in the context of strengthening religious moderation in Islamic higher education. This research demonstrates that religious education based on moderate values can prevent religious radicalization and build a more just, inclusive, and harmonious society. Thus, the PAI program at IAIN Pontianak stands as a relevant model in Islamic higher education, supporting interfaith harmony and fostering a generation that is knowledgeable in religious matters and sensitive to the social dynamics and diversity around them.

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