

ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN KALIMANTAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR DERADICALIZATION

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Abstract: *Radicalization in Indonesian higher education has raised significant concerns, with studies highlighting the potential vulnerability of students, particularly in science disciplines. This research examines the factors influencing radicalization among science students in Kalimantan, focusing on their understanding and practice of Islam. Data were collected through surveys and interviews at five universities in Kalimantan, including both public and Islamic institutions, with participants actively engaged in Islamic activities. The study finds that while science students exhibit curiosity about Islam, their limited access to reliable religious literature often leads them to seek information from digital content, requiring strong content-filtering skills. The research also reveals that students are interested in Islamic teachings that promote good character and enhance worship. Their views on religious diversity and tolerance have become more inclusive, though some students still hold rigid interpretations of Islam. The findings suggest that effective Islamic Education courses should align with students' interests and contemporary issues while fostering a moderate understanding of Islam. The implications for deradicalization include designing curricula that promote critical thinking, tolerance, and national values, alongside mentorship from moderate academics to counteract extremist ideologies. This approach contributes to creating a balanced, inclusive educational environment that resists radicalization.*

Keywords: *Deradicalization; Radicalization; Science Students; Religious Practices*

Introduction

The issue of radicalization in higher education in Indonesia has become a serious concern in recent years. Based on findings from the Setara Institute between February and April 2019, ten universities in

Indonesia were found to be exposed to radical ideologies.¹ This research revealed that there were exclusive religious movements developing within campus environments, which have the potential to disrupt social harmony and influence political dynamics. A similar finding was made by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) in 2018, which released a list of prominent universities in Indonesia suspected of being exposed to radicalism (Setara Institute 2019; BNPT 2018).² These findings strengthen the suspicion that universities could serve as breeding grounds for the spread of radical ideologies, even becoming centers for their dissemination.³

Previous studies on radicalization in higher education have largely focused on factors that contribute to students being exposed to radical ideologies.⁴ The Data and Analysis Center of TEMPO has mentioned that campuses are currently facing a radicalization emergency.⁵ Hidayat, for example, argues that science students, with their logical and pragmatic thinking, tend to be more vulnerable to radicalization due to their tendency to view the world in a black-and-white perspective.⁶ Moreover, their limited knowledge of Islam often becomes an entry point for radical ideologies that offer a more textual understanding of religion.⁷ However, this view is often considered too simplistic. For instance,

¹Pebriansyah Ariefana and Ummi Hadiyah Saleh, "Menristek Sebut Sudah Lama 10 Perguruan Tinggi Terpapar Radikalisme", 3 June 2019, <https://www.suara.com/news/2019/06/03/135655/menristek-sebut-sudah-lama-10-perguruan-tinggi-terpapar-radikalisme?page=all>.

² Awal Muqsih, "Wacana Radikalisme di Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar; Kontestasi dan Pertarungan Gagasan di Ruang Publik Kampus", *Fikrah* 10, no. 1 (2022): 101–20, doi:10.21043/fikrah.v10i1.10639.

³Mohammad Zaki Arrobi, *Islamisme Ala Kaum Muda Kampus: Dinamika Aktivisme Mahasiswa Islam di Universitas Gadjah Mada dan Universitas Indonesia di Era Pasca Soeharto* (UGM PRESS, 2020), 88.

⁴ Arrobi, *Islamisme Ala Kaum Muda Kampus*, 101.

⁵Pusat Data dan Analisa TEMPO, 'Gerakan Radikalisme Di Indonesia', *Tempo Publishing*, 2019, 82.

⁶Elise Dwi Ratnasari, "Mahasiswa Jurusan Eksakta dan Ancaman Label "Radikal"", accessed 25 December 2024, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/edukasi/20180606140515-561-303979/mahasiswa-jurusan-eksakta-dan-ancaman-label-radikal>.

⁷Lilis Marliani, 'Mengapa Mahasiswa Sains/Teknik Rentan Radikalisme', *KOMPASIANA*, 24 March 2017, <https://www.kompasiana.com/lilismarliani/58d41260519773c51bb5c359/mengapa-mahasiswa-sains-teknik-rentan-radikalisme>.

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Hasanah and Huriyah argue that an understanding of science or the natural sciences is not the sole factor that leads someone to be exposed to radicalization. Other factors, such as personal conditions and social environments, must also be taken into account when understanding this tendency.⁸

Moreover, in a study conducted by Qadir, it was found that radicalization in higher education is often influenced by external factors, such as interactions with groups that promote radical ideologies.⁹ Their research shows that a campus environment that lacks support for tolerance and empathy can exacerbate vulnerability to radicalization. On the other hand, a study by Peels and de Ruyter indicate that the values of tolerance applied in academic environments can actually reduce the potential for radicalization by encouraging students to be more open to differing religious and political views.¹⁰

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between science education and radicalization, there remains a gap in the literature that more deeply examines the dynamics of radicalization in higher education within the Indonesian context, particularly outside major universities and beyond the science disciplines. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the issue of radicalization in higher education from a broader perspective, not only limited to social and political studies but also taking into account the cultural and local factors that influence religious practices on campus.¹¹

This study also distinguishes itself from previous studies by highlighting the influence of piety practices and public religiosity in universities in preventing radicalization. Several earlier studies, such as those by Sugiharti, et.al., show that the da'wah movements developing on campuses often spread radical ideologies under the guise of promoting the purity of Islamic teachings, even though their primary goal is to

⁸ Noor Hasanah and Huriyah, *Religius Radikal? Kesadaran Beragama dan Aktualisasi Kesalehan Gen-Z* (Yogyakarta: Zahir Publishing, 2021), 88.

⁹ Zuly Qodir, "Gerakan Salafi Radikal dalam Konteks Islam Indonesia: Tinjauan Sejarah", *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 3, no. 1 (3 September 2008): 5, doi:10.15642/islamica.2008.3.1.1-15.

¹⁰ Trees Pels and Doret J. de Ruyter, "The Influence of Education and Socialization on Radicalization: An Exploration of Theoretical Presumptions and Empirical Research," *Child Youth Care Forum* 41, (2012): 318, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-011-9155-5>.

¹¹ Hasanah and Huriyah, *Religius Radikal?*, 115.

mobilize mass support for political purposes.¹² However, these findings do not apply universally. For instance, although some universities, such as Universitas Gadjah Mada¹³ and UIN Alauddin Makassar,¹⁴ have been identified as being exposed to radicalization, there are also campuses with a more moderate Islamic culture, which not only resist radicalization but also foster inclusive values in religious education.¹⁵

This study focuses on providing a deeper understanding of the issue of radicalization in higher education in Kalimantan by linking religious understanding and practices on campus and their influence on students' mindsets. This more contextual approach distinguishes the research from previous studies, which tend to focus narrowly on ideological or sociological analyses. Therefore, this study aims to present a new perspective on how both Islamic-based and general universities can play a role in shaping moderate religious understanding and preventing the spread of radicalization among students.

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The research is designed to examine the understanding and practice of Islam among science students in Kalimantan, focusing particularly on those who are actively involved in Islamic activities on campus. A case study design is adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject matter, with both surveys and structured interviews as the primary data collection tools. This approach allows for triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

¹² Rahma Sugihartati, Bagong Suyanto, and Medhy Hidayat, "Channelization Strategies of Radicalism among Muslim University Students in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no.2 (2020): 318, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.2.309-334>.

¹³ Zuly Qodir. "Gerakan Salafi Radikal dalam Konteks Islam Indonesia: Tinjauan Sejarah." *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 3, no.1 (3 September 2008): 1–15, doi:10.15642/islamica.2008.3.1.1-15.

¹⁴ Muqsih, 'Wacana Radikalisme di Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar; Kontestasi dan Pertarungan Gagasan di Ruang Publik Kampus'.

¹⁵ Saiful Mujani, William Liddle, and Deni Irvani. "Islamism and Muslim Support for Islamist Movement Organizations: Evidence from Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 30, no.1 (2023): 55, doi. 10.36712/sdi.v30i1.33369.

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The subjects of this study are science students from public universities and Islamic religious universities in Kalimantan. Specifically, the study focuses on students from Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM) and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Antasari Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan, Universitas Palangka Raya (UPR) and Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Palangka Raya in Central Kalimantan, and Universitas Mulawarman (UNMUL) in East Kalimantan. These universities were selected for their representation of both public higher education institutions (PTU) and Islamic religious institutions (PTKIN), which provide a diverse context for studying student perspectives on Islam. The universities are located in provinces with a significant Muslim population, providing a relevant setting for exploring the interaction between Islamic identity and higher education.

The study specifically targets science students, particularly those who are actively engaged in Islamic extracurricular activities on campus. These students were chosen because they represent a group that may have strong religious convictions and are more likely to exhibit a deep engagement with Islamic ideologies, which may influence their views on radicalism, extremism, and the broader role of Islam in society.

Data collection is conducted using a case study approach through surveys and interviews. The surveys consist of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, which are intended to provide comprehensive and varied responses. Open-ended questions allow informants to freely express their answers, while closed-ended questions facilitate easier data collection and categorization.¹⁶

The surveys are directly administered to the science students, meaning that the students themselves will answer the questions and respond to statements posed in the survey.¹⁷ This ensures that the data collected are directly from the respondents, rather than from intermediaries. Interviews are conducted using a set of structured questions, serving as a guide for gathering data related to the factors influencing the understanding and practice of Islam by science students in Kalimantan. These questions explore topics such as participation in Islamic study sessions on campus, the activities of these study sessions,

¹⁶ Susilo Rahardjo and Gudnanti, *Pemahaman Individu Teknik Nontes* (Kencana, n.d.), 96–98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

views on hijrah (migration for religious purposes), opinions on fanaticism, and perspectives on radicalism. The interviews are conducted primarily to verify the data gathered from the surveys. This approach ensures the accuracy and clarity of the collected data.

The first stage involves editing the collected data, reviewing each entry for completeness, readability, clarity of meaning, relevance, and consistency of responses. Next, the answers are classified and coded according to specific categories. After that, the data is tabulated and analyzed descriptively, allowing for a thorough presentation of the findings.

Ethical principles are strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring they understand the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to confidentiality. Personal identifiers are omitted to protect the privacy of respondents, and all data is stored securely to maintain anonymity. Furthermore, ethical guidelines regarding the handling of sensitive topics such as religious beliefs and radicalism are followed to ensure that participants' perspectives are treated with respect and integrity.

Results and Discussion

Religious Radicalism

Religious radicalism refers to individuals who rigidly adhere to the beliefs and ideologies they hold, with the consequence that anything differing from their views is considered wrong. Not only do they perceive the difference as a mistake, but they believe it is their duty to correct it. However, due to their rigidity and textualist approach in interpreting religious texts, the means they employ to rectify what they perceive as errors is often through violence, even when peaceful alternatives might exist. In the context of this article, the religion in question is Islam. Thus, the religious radicalism referred to here is the radicalism in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings.

At this level, radicalism can be referred to as extremism or *tatarrufiyyah* (تطرفية). Beyond this, the desire to "correct" perceived errors leads to actions that generate antipathy, fear (terror), intimidation, panic, and social destruction. Therefore, radicalism at this stage is termed

terrorism or *irhābiyyah* (إرهابية).¹⁸ Both forms of radicalism pose significant threats to a nation: one endangers unity and cohesion, while the other threatens national defense and security. These actions clearly contradict the spirit of Islam, as discussed earlier.

Citing what Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono has stated, "radical" is essentially a stance. He equates it with discipline and diligence in learning. Radicalism, as described by him, is a positive feeling (affection) towards everything that is extreme, even down to its roots.¹⁹ Such a strong stance can be referred to as fanaticism. This attitude drives motivation and behavior to fiercely defend what one believes to be the most fundamental values of a belief, ideology, religion, or anything else. For example, a fanatic who collects antiques will focus all his attention on caring for and expanding his collection, even selling his possessions to buy new items, regardless of the cost. The same applies to religion. A strong (fanatical) attitude toward religion will cause the person to devote themselves as fully as possible to it.

Such an attitude can turn negative when a person is accompanied by negative emotions when encountering certain objects of their stance. The expressions that arise from this can include avoidance, rejection, or even more extreme actions such as destruction or killing. Therefore, in the context of religious radicalism, individuals may engage in aggressive behaviors that ultimately harm both themselves and others. This is the danger of having such a strong or radical attitude in religion.

It must be understood that, in reality, no stance is innate or inborn. In other words, no one is born diligent in learning, disciplined, or radical. All of these attitudes are learned and shaped, whether by experience, education, upbringing, or even through intentional training designed to alter one's attitudes. Therefore, thoughts and attitudes can be changed, minimized, or even eradicated through the same process of learning and shaping. This can be achieved through education, upbringing, experience, and training aimed at changing these attitudes.²⁰ Hence, radicalism can be transformed into deradicalization. Once again, because thoughts and attitudes can be shaped and changed.

¹⁸ Syahrin Harahap, *Upaya Kolektif Mencegah Radikalisme & Terorisme* (Depok: Prenada Media, 2017), 3–5.

¹⁹ Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono, *Terorisme di Indonesia: Dalam Tinjauan Psikologi* (Tangerang: Pustaka Alvabet, 2012), 130–31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

Radicalism is not necessarily the result of mental disturbances, contrary to earlier views that categorized radical individuals as those suffering from psychological disorders.²¹ These individuals lead ordinary lives, much like others in society. What sets them apart is their religious stance. For them, Islam must serve as the primary framework for personal life, social interactions, and governance. They believe that only in an Islamic state can they practice their faith in peace. As a result, they often vocally advocate for the establishment of an Islamic state, the implementation of Sharia law, the mandatory wearing of hijab for Muslim women, intolerance toward non-Muslims, and the condemnation of different sects. It is this strong commitment to their beliefs, ideologies, and religious teachings that defines them as radicals.²²

Radical movements are often viewed by the West as terrorist groups that are hostile toward Western values.²³ However, this definition needs to be expanded to ensure that deradicalization efforts are not solely focused on combating terrorism. Being radical does not necessarily equate to being a terrorist. There is a certain discomfort in facing diverse realities and an inability to adapt to them, which leads to the rejection or condemnation of those realities.

Radical attitudes seem to form due to differences in perception, understanding, and viewpoints towards Islamic teachings. Proponents of radicalism often believe that such attitudes represent decisiveness in practicing Islam. In their view, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught firmness in adhering to Islam, and therefore, for radical individuals, their stance is seen as a manifestation of their commitment to Islam.²⁴ To them, this is a noble cause—fighting for the religion of God with all their resources.

As Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono has noted, radicalism is not an inherent trait but a product of external influences. Human beings are shaped by their experiences and the education they undergo. It is important to recognize that education here refers not only to formal academic education but also to non-formal and informal education.

²¹ Jamhari, *Gerakan Salafî Radikal di Indonesia* (RajaGrafindo Persada, 2004), 35; Bahtiar Effendy, *Agama dan Radikalisme di Indonesia* (Nuqtah, 2007), 23.

²² Sarwono, *Terorisme di Indonesia*, 132.

²³ Effendy, *Agama dan Radikalisme di Indonesia*, 23.

²⁴ Tim Cahaya Nabawiy, 'Cahaya Nabawiy - Radikalisme Kelompok Liberal: Membumikan Shalawat dan Cinta Rasul', *Yayasan Sunniah Salafiyah*, 2017, 14–26.

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Therefore, the writers agree with the notion that combating radicalism and promoting deradicalization would be most effective through educational channels.²⁵

Abdullah Saeed identifies several factors that contribute to radicalism: 1) a response to Western colonialism in Muslim-majority regions; 2) a desire to resist Western hegemony over economic resources, the subjugation of Muslim-majority countries, and the suppression of Muslim power to rise up and challenge the status quo; 3) the double standards applied by the West and the restriction of Islamic missionary activities (dawah); and 4) a sense of powerlessness in the face of the West, which is perceived as overwhelmingly strong, leading to feelings of frustration, despair, and lack of self-confidence in competing with the West.²⁶ The writers understands this as stemming from a sense of inferiority felt by some Muslims, who, due to their historical oppression and experiences of injustice, develop feelings of resentment without the means to engage in meaningful competition.

Another perspective clearly states that radicalism is caused by two (2) factors: internal and external. The internal factor relates to an individual's personal condition, which may have a destructive tendency. This involves an individual's psychological makeup, past experiences, and personal predispositions that can make them more susceptible to radical ideologies. Meanwhile, the external factor pertains to the complexities of life experienced by an individual, often influenced by societal, political, and economic circumstances.²⁷

The first external factor involves the economic, social, and political pressures, along with a sense of injustice and wealth disparity, which often lead to suffering and emotional turmoil. These pressures can create a fertile ground for radical ideologies to take root, as individuals experiencing these hardships may be more inclined to search for solutions that promise a sense of empowerment and retribution.

The second external factor concerns religious solidarity understood rigidly. In situations where conflict arises in a Muslim-

²⁵ Ilham Safutra, 'Saran Fahri Hamzah Soal Pemberantasan Radikalisme', *JawaPos.com*, 21 May 2018, <https://www.jawapos.com/nasional/21/05/2018/saran-fahri-hamzah-soal-pemberantasan-radikalisme/>.

²⁶ Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 149.

²⁷ Harahap, *Upaya Kolektif Mencegah Radikalisme & Terorisme*, 12–18.

majority area, there is often a desire for retribution or retaliation in one's own region. For example, when one religious group faces difficulties in constructing places of worship, there may be a desire to prevent other faith communities from building their own. Similarly, incidents such as Islamophobia in the United States can lead radical individuals in other countries, such as Indonesia, to harbor strong animosity toward the West. Some may even engage in violent actions, such as protests or suicide bombings targeting locations where Americans are present.

Another external factor is the rejection of secularism. Radical individuals often view secularism with suspicion, fearing that it will undermine or destroy Islam. This perception fuels resistance to secular governance systems, believing them to be antithetical to Islamic values and potentially harmful to the Muslim community.

Radicalism resulting from a rigid, literal, and textual reading of religious texts is another contributing factor. These individuals often interpret religious scriptures without considering the broader context, resulting in an oversimplified and extreme understanding of Islam. The texts, however, contain universal humanitarian messages that, when studied comprehensively, reveal the peaceful and inclusive nature of Islam. Unfortunately, these messages are often overlooked by radicalized individuals who focus only on rigid interpretations.

Moreover, government policies perceived as unjust can exacerbate feelings of frustration and alienation, contributing to social inequality and envy. When policies are seen as disproportionately favoring the elite, while neglecting the needs of the disadvantaged, it fosters a sense of injustice. For example, the lenient sentencing of corrupt officials compared to the harsh punishment of petty criminals who steal out of necessity can intensify these sentiments.

The spread of anti-Western and anti-liberal ideologies also plays a significant role in the emergence of radicalism. As Western influence and liberal thought continue to expand, radical individuals may react by seeking to protect what they perceive as traditional or Islamic values. This ideological opposition often leads to calls for the rejection of Western-style democracy, capitalism, and liberalism.

A closed and exclusive mindset in understanding and practicing Islam is yet another external factor. Radical individuals often prefer isolated religious study groups (*halaqah*) led by senior members of their community, where the teachings are unverified, and the sources of

knowledge are often unclear. These groups tend to reject open, inclusive, and diverse Islamic studies, which can lead to a distorted view of Islam and further entrench radical beliefs.

Additionally, aligning ideas with terms closely related to Islam plays a significant role in radicalization. Terms like *jihad*, *hijrah*, and *upholding the word of Allah* are often used to attract others to their cause, promoting the idea that they are fighting for a noble religious goal. This rhetoric can effectively manipulate individuals into joining radical movements, often for purposes beyond religious devotion, such as gaining popularity or pursuing political agendas.

Recruitment through digital media, including the internet and social media, is another significant factor. This is particularly dangerous for the millennial generation, who are very familiar with the digital world. They are more likely to search for information on the internet and, unfortunately, without the necessary critical thinking skills, they may accept and believe whatever they find online. This unfiltered access to information is a powerful tool for radicalization.

Finally, the blind admiration for the historical success of the Islamic political unity during the caliphate system contributes to radicalism. Many radical individuals long for a return to the caliphate, seeing it as a symbol of Islamic unity and political strength. This longing, often fueled by a lack of historical understanding, can lead to misguided attempts to re-establish such a system in contemporary times. These individuals, influenced by ongoing conflicts in various countries, may dream of creating an idealized Islamic state, despite the challenges and complexities of the modern world.

In conclusion, these internal and external factors form a complex web that drives radicalism. Addressing these factors comprehensively is essential for effectively countering radical ideologies and promoting a more inclusive and peaceful understanding of Islam.

Dissatisfaction with government performance, combined with nostalgia for the glory of the Islamic ummah during the caliphate, often occurs among individuals who seek to replace the national philosophy and establish an Islamic state. In essence, radicalism is an ideology that seeks drastic, fundamental change, aiming to overhaul the existing system at its very roots.²⁸ In relation to religion and state, radical groups argue

²⁸ Suhardi Alius, *Memimpin dengan Hati*, 79.

that Indonesia deviates from an Islamic system because it is not based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) despite Indonesia being the largest Muslim-majority country in the world.

Among the various pathways of Islamization in Indonesia, business relationships can be considered a significant factor.²⁹ Through trade, Indonesia has been connected to international networks, establishing relationships with other nations, including those with Muslim-majority populations. Historically, Indonesia, known as the Nusantara, had many coastal areas that served as hubs for international trade. At that time, maritime transport dominated, facilitating the exchange of goods, cultures, and ideas across the region and beyond.

An equally important element in the historical development of Islam in Indonesia is **Sufism** (mysticism).³⁰ During the Nusantara kingdom era, the noble classes had close relationships with individuals believed to possess spiritual powers.³¹ Figures such as **habibs**, **sheikhs**, and others were familiar to the Nusantara community. They taught ways to purify oneself on a spiritual level, allowing inner peace and tranquility to be achieved.

Therefore, the roots of Islam in Indonesia were not driven by power struggles, radicalism, or colonialism. This historical foundation should be remembered by the Indonesian people. Doctrines that lead to violence or radicalism should be avoided, as they not only deviate from Indonesia's historical roots but also contradict the core principles of Islamic da'wah (preaching), which emphasize character, exemplary behavior, and justice.³² In other words, diversity and pluralism should be more widely accepted. This is particularly true for Kalimantan, where, historically, there has never been religious tension or conflict. This awareness seems to be well understood by the subjects of this study, as demonstrated by the following survey results.

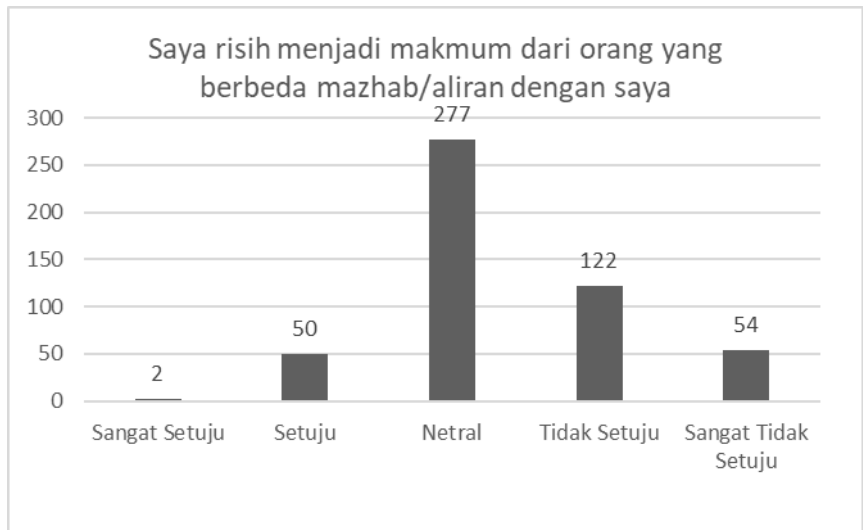
²⁹ Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern, 1200-2004* (Penerbit Serambi, 2005), 46–47.

³⁰ Uka Tjandrasmita, *Arkeologi Islam Nusantara* (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009), 33; Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern, 1200-2004*, 47.

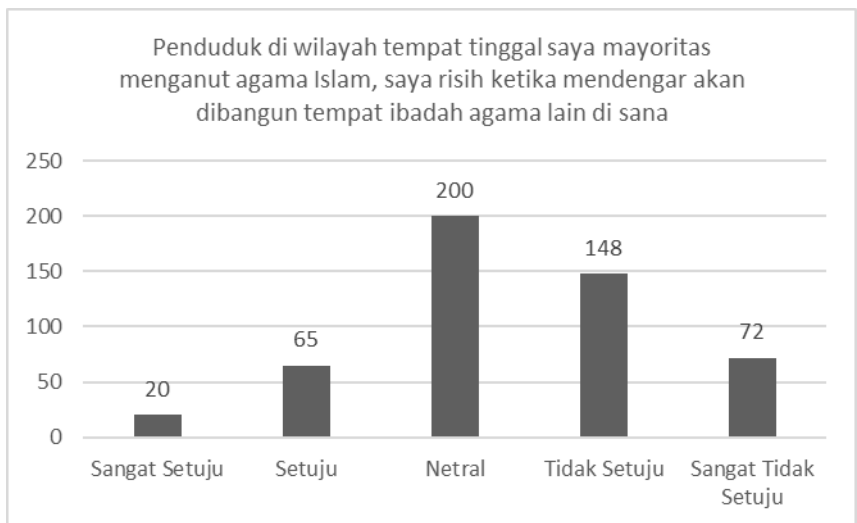
³¹ Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern, 1200-2004*, 47.

³² Hamka, *Prinsip dan Kebijakan Dakwah Islam* (Gema Insani, 2020).

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The respondents indicated that differences in religious sects (mazhab) are not an issue for them. They have already understood the importance of tolerance when it comes to sectarian differences.



Interfaith tolerance awareness is shown to be very high in this diagram. It can be seen that only 20 respondents strongly agreed and expressed discomfort when a place of worship for another religion was to

be built in their area, while 65 respondents agreed. In other words, only 17% of respondents felt uncomfortable with the presence of a place of worship for another religion in their vicinity.

Islamic Understanding and Practices

An understanding of religious texts has become a contributing factor to radicalism among students. Therefore, some universities have reformulated their curricula and teaching methods to align with local wisdom and religious moderation. For example, universities in Lampung Province have implemented such reforms.³³ Additionally, some institutions have taken steps to prevent radicalism by offering courses on moderation and hosting monthly seminars focused on religious moderation, as seen at UIN Surakarta.³⁴

It is well known among Muslims that the sources of Islamic teachings are the Quran and Hadith. If the Quran is considered a guide for life, it implies that the messages it conveys must remain relevant across different places and times.³⁵ This means that the Quran cannot be interpreted and understood rigidly or literally. Therefore, if interpreting and understanding the messages of the Quran in a rigid and literal manner is incorrect, acting upon the basis of such a rigid interpretation is also flawed.

As the primary source, the Quran actually contains universal ideas. These values (in the author's view) are often sidelined in the process of preaching Islam, leading to a narrow understanding of the religion. Indeed, the Quran was revealed in the Arabian Peninsula, in Arabic, and to a Prophet who was an Arab. However, this does not imply that every Muslim living outside of the Arab world must follow exactly what was practiced in Arabia. The relevance of Islamic teachings remains flexible and adaptable to the circumstances of its followers, wherever they may be.

In his work *Islam dan Modernitas*, Syahrin Harahap distills the earlier-discussed universal concepts into eight key principles. These

³³ Elfa Murdiana, Titut Sudiono, and Toto Andri P, 'Deradikalisasi Pemahaman Agama Aktivistis Dakwah Kampus Di Perguruan Tinggi Provinsi Lampung', *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 1, no. 1 (2 July 2021): 101–20, doi:10.32332/moderatio.v1i1.3485.

³⁴ Moh Ashif Fuadi et al., 'Strengthening Religious Moderation to Counter Radicalism at IAIN Surakarta', *Al-Tabir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 21, no. 2 (2 November 2021): 261–84, doi:10.21154/altahrir.v21i2.3102.

³⁵ Syahrin Harahap, *Islam & Modernitas* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2017), 14.

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principles include, first, submission to God, reflected in faith and piety (iman and taqwa). Secondly, a sense of equality, honor, and brotherhood among all humanity, emphasizing the idea of human equality that transcends race, social status, ethnicity, religious sects, and skin color. Other essential concepts are tolerance, the liberation of women and their spiritual equality with men, and freedom from all forms of oppression, slavery, exploitation, and poverty. Harahap also highlights the obligation to uphold justice, the destruction of arrogance, pride, and haughtiness based on racial, economic, or political superiority, and, lastly, universal values of education, which emphasize acquiring knowledge and submission to Allah SWT. These principles underscore the broader, more inclusive messages of Islam that Harahap argues are often overlooked when the religion is propagated in a narrow or rigid manner.³⁶

The formulation above seems to be inspired by what Khurshid Ahmad outlines in his book *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*. He identifies nine key points that reflect the universal ideas found in the Qur'an. These include: first, equality, honor, and brotherhood among all of humanity; second, universal values of education, grounded in the spirit of free inquiry and the urgency of scientific knowledge; third, religious tolerance; fourth, the liberation of women and their spiritual equality with men; fifth, freedom from all forms of slavery and exploitation; sixth, the dignity of manual labor; seventh, the unity of mankind based on a shared sense of belonging, regardless of differences, especially skin color; eighth, the destruction of arrogance and pride founded on racial, ethnic, or economic superiority, and the creation of a society based on justice; and ninth, the rejection of the philosophy of asceticism (or monasticism).³⁷

Syahrin Harahap further argues that these eight universal values can be realized if Muslims fulfill three essential conditions. First, the mastery of knowledge to its fullest extent by utilizing reason. Additionally, he emphasizes the necessity of modernizing and rationalizing religious teachings to ensure their relevance. Second, the establishment of justice in order to achieve human equality. Third, submission and devotion to God to uphold moral integrity and piety, both on an individual and societal level.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., 15.

³⁷ Khurshid Ahmad, *Islam: It's Meaning and Message* (London: The Islamic Foundation, 1988), 81.

³⁸ Harahap, *Islam & Modernitas*, 15.

It is crucial to understand here that reason (*akal*) is not merely the brain, but the intellectual capacity and understanding that resides within the human soul. A person who uses their intellect is someone capable of restraining their desires, preventing them from dominating their behavior.³⁹ Such individuals can control themselves and comprehend the truth. On the other hand, those who are governed by their desires are hindered from understanding the truth, which makes practicing religion in the correct manner difficult or even impossible.⁴⁰

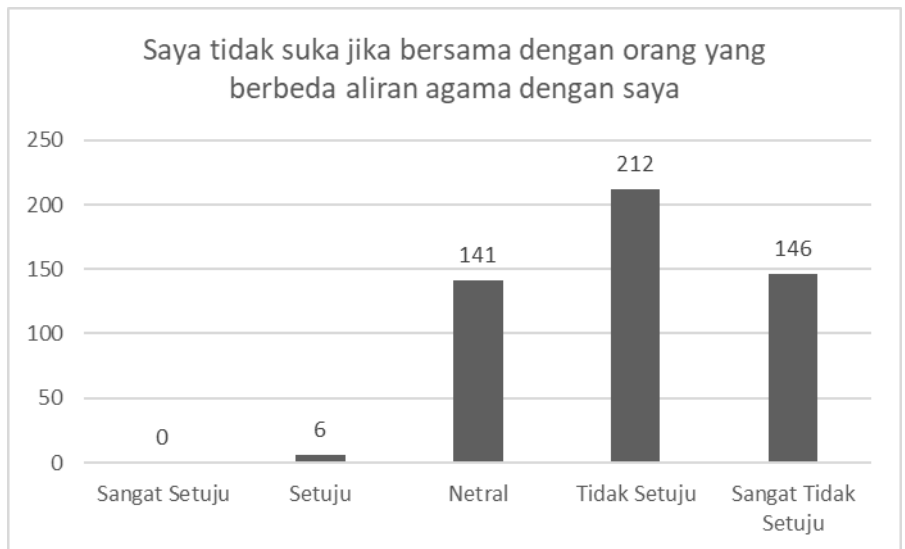
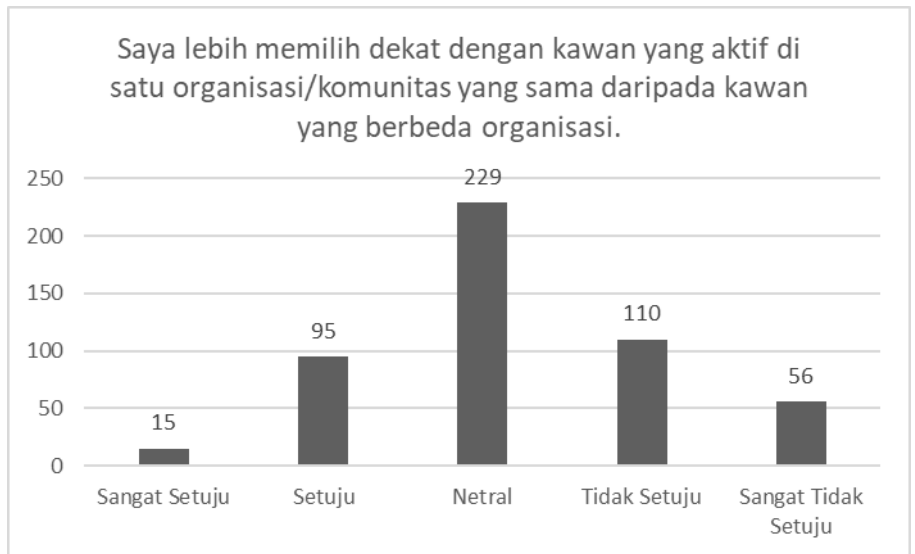
It is clear here that using reason in religion is crucial. Religion does not prioritize desires or passions (*hawa nafsu*). If religion advocates for peace in diversity and difference, then those who practice it should reflect this in their social lives. It is not easy to blame others and be able to place oneself in the shoes of those who are different. To blame others who are different, feel that one is always right, and fail to tolerate diversity is an example of practicing religion by prioritizing desires or passions. This clearly goes against Islam's mission as a mercy to the world (*rahmatan lil-'alamin*).

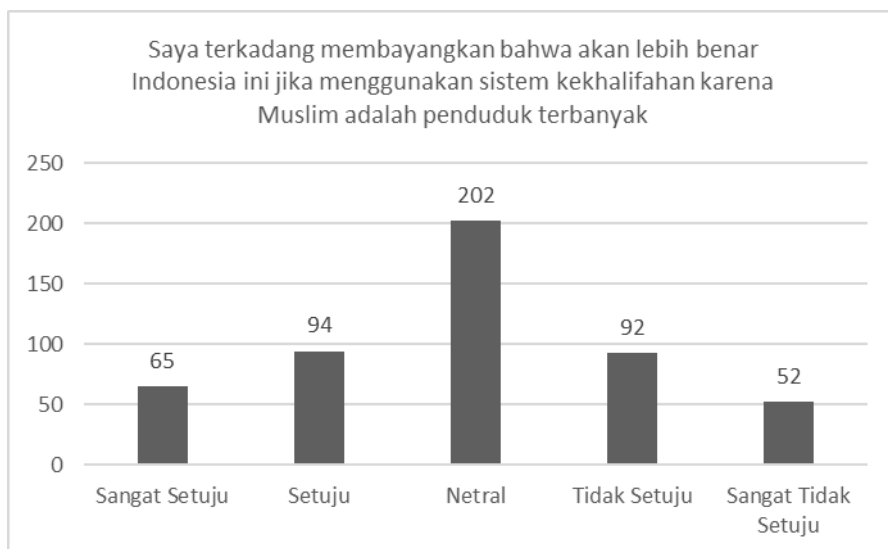
When we closely examine the universal values of the Qur'an, as presented by Khurshid Ahmad and Syahrin Harahap, we can truly understand how noble and modern the teachings of Islam are. Islam genuinely desires the establishment of peace among humanity, between different religious communities. It is clear that Islam aims for human beings to achieve dignity, benefit, and meaning in their lives. This illustrates the relevance of Islamic teachings in every place, at all times, and for everyone. Muslims should not only focus on issues of faith (*akidah*) and law (*shari'ah*). While faith and law are important, the universal values are even greater. Their correlation lies not only in achieving personal righteousness but also in guiding towards social righteousness. Just as Islam means *salam* (peace), a religion that brings safety and security, Muslims should embody the peaceful face of Islam—one that is not harsh and self-absorbed in private worship, oblivious to the social conditions faced by the community, and unaware of the realities in society. These points are demonstrated in the survey results that follow

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Harun Nasution, *Akal dan Wahyu Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1982), 13.

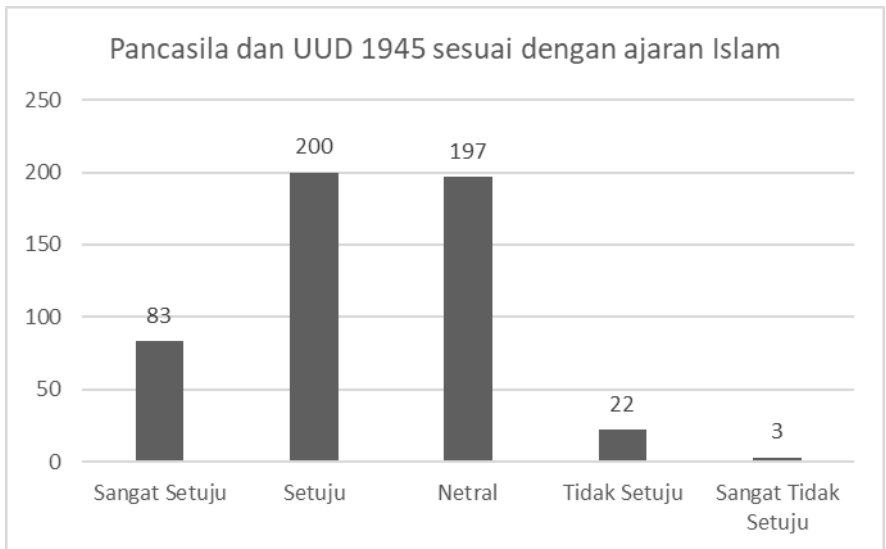
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The findings in these categories are quite surprising. It appears that the idea of the caliphate still persists in the minds of some students. This suggests that there is a need for higher education institutions to strengthen and clarify students' understanding of the country's foundational philosophy and its historical context. By doing so, students can better grasp the core values and principles that underpin the nation, preventing any misinterpretation or misguided beliefs. The statistics presented make it clear that this issue is not something that can be easily ignored. The persistence of such ideas indicates a potential gap in education that requires attention to ensure students have a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of their national identity and the principles of governance.

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In contrast to the two survey items mentioned earlier, the survey data shows that the respondents seem to be quite aware of the relevance of Indonesia's national ideology, Pancasila, to Islam. This suggests that their misunderstanding lies more in their grasp of history, particularly with regard to the concept of the caliphate. However, they appear to understand the values embedded in Pancasila well, and recognize that there is no fundamental contradiction between Islamic principles and the Pancasila values.

Azyumardi Azra emphasizes in the introduction to *Relevansi Islam Wasathiyah: Dari Melindungi Kampus Hingga Mengaktualisasikan Kesalehan* that *Islam Wasathiyah* (Islamic Moderation) is the future of Islam. In this framework, the concept of *rahmatan li al-'alamîn* (mercy to the worlds) can truly be realized. As a religion of peace, Islam is not only a blessing for Muslims, but also for people of other faiths. This, in essence, embodies the meaning of mercy for all of creation. Azra argues that Islam, when presented in a harsh, rigid, and unfriendly manner, will fail to guide the Muslim community toward a productive civilization that contributes to the welfare of all humanity and the world.⁴¹ The writer fully agrees with this perspective. How can Muslims contribute to the advancement of

⁴¹Azyumardi Azra, *Relevansi Islam Wasathiyah: Dari Melindungi Kampus Hingga Mengaktualisasikan Kesalehan* (Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2020).

global civilization if the wider society holds an antagonistic view of them?

True piety in Islam should manifest through actions that have a tangible, positive impact on the world. This means that religious practices should not only benefit the individual, but also extend their goodness to those around them, and even to all other creatures. This aligns with the concept of *kes halehan* (righteousness), which, in reality, is not just built vertically (with God—*habl min Allah*) but also horizontally (with others—*habl min an-nâs* and *habl min al-‘âlam*). As human beings, we are connected to God (Allah SWT) and to all creatures in the universe. Thus, Islam encourages a balance in interactions—not only between the Creator and the created but also among the creatures themselves.

To be a true Muslim means to fully surrender oneself to Allah, to submit to His will by following His commandments and avoiding His prohibitions.⁴² The essence and ultimate goal of Islam are singular: total submission to Allah.⁴³ In this sense, the writer understands that this total surrender means placing complete trust in Allah, who is the Supreme Planner, the All-Knowing, and the All-True. As His servants, we are to abide by His decrees. When Allah wills that Islam be a mercy, this means He does not desire division or harsh behavior. Similarly, when it comes to justice, it must be upheld impartially, without distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims.⁴⁴ There should be no consideration of ethnicity, group, or sect when establishing justice, because these terms represent the fundamental human rights of all creatures.

Implications for Deradicalization

The findings of this study suggest that the assumption that science students are inherently more susceptible to radicalization cannot be generalized. A holistic approach that takes into account personal, social, and environmental factors is crucial for understanding radicalization in university settings. Research by Sahri emphasizes the importance of considering multiple dimensions of students' backgrounds,

⁴² Nur Ali el-Darbi, 'معنى الإسلام', H/2021 M 1442, <https://binbaz.org.sa/fatwas/14565/>.

⁴³ Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern* (Republika Penerbit, 2014), 106.

⁴⁴ Mahmoud Ali, *الأخلاق في الإسلام: من أحاديث الرسول، و من فتاوى ابن تيمية*, (Dar el-Mashr Li Thaba'ah, 1964), 35.

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such as family, social networks, and community influences, when analyzing their susceptibility to radical ideologies.⁴⁵ In line with this, Fawaid argues that radicalization is not solely a product of academic disciplines but is shaped by a combination of socio-cultural and personal experiences. Therefore, deradicalization strategies should not be based on academic discipline alone, but also on a comprehensive understanding of the individual student's circumstances.⁴⁶ A nuanced approach, as highlighted by Sahri, is critical in creating effective deradicalization strategies that address underlying personal and contextual factors.⁴⁷

One of the significant findings in this research is that students display a strong curiosity to explore Islam, but face limitations in accessing credible, diverse Islamic resources. This underscores the need for higher education institutions to provide balanced and reliable resources for students. Previous studies have pointed out that the lack of access to diverse, credible sources of religious knowledge can push students toward more extreme interpretations of Islam.⁴⁸ According to Fanindy and Mupida, the digital age has made it easier for radical content to spread, as students may turn to online platforms for religious education.⁴⁹ Therefore, universities must take a proactive role in offering religious education programs that emphasize critical thinking and provide diverse perspectives on Islamic teachings. Universities could also collaborate with established Islamic scholars to create educational content that counters extremist narratives. As Ummah discusses, the development of a robust Islamic educational framework within

⁴⁵ Sahri Sahri, "Radikalisme Islam di Perguruan Tinggi Perspektif Politik Islam," *Al-Daulah: Jurnal Hukum dan Perundangan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2016): 240, <https://jurnalsh.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/aldaulah/article/view/113>

⁴⁶ Muhammad Rizkon Fawa'id, "Masyarakat Madani dan Tantangan Radikalisme," *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 1, no.2 (2019): 128, <https://journal2.unusa.ac.id/index.php/JIC/article/view/1312>.

⁴⁷ Sahri, "Radikalisme Islam," 242.

⁴⁸ Masnun Tahir, "Wacana Fikih Kebangsaan dalam Penanggulangan dan Pencegahan Radikalisme di Lingkungan Kampus di NTB," *Asy-Syir'ab: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ab dan Hukum* 49, no. 2 (2015): 308, <http://asy-syirah.uin-suka.com/index.php/AS/article/view/143>.

⁴⁹ M. Nanda Fanindy and Siti Mupida. "Pergeseran Literasi pada Generasi Milenial Akibat Penyebaran Radikalisme di Media Sosial," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 20, no. 2 (2021): 200, <https://journal.uui.ac.id/Millah/article/view/16856>.

universities can effectively combat the allure of radical ideologies by offering students balanced religious perspectives.⁵⁰

The study also reveals that students already possess a foundational understanding of tolerance and diversity, making them less susceptible to radical views. This provides an important opportunity to build upon these values to strengthen their resistance to radical ideologies. This aligns with previous research by Suryani (2018), who emphasizes that the cultivation of tolerance in educational institutions is essential for preventing radicalization. When students are exposed to diverse religious and ideological viewpoints in a safe and supportive environment, they are less likely to embrace extremist ideologies.⁵¹ As such, universities should focus on designing curricula and programs that reinforce interfaith and intergroup tolerance, as well as critical thinking skills. These programs, as indicated by Saleh and Arbain, could be integrated into both formal academic courses and extracurricular activities, creating an environment where students learn to appreciate religious and cultural diversity and engage in dialogue across ideological divides.⁵²

Furthermore, the study indicates that students acknowledge the compatibility between Indonesia's national ideology (*Pancasila*) and Islamic values, but their understanding of the political history and concepts such as the caliphate is often superficial. This gap in understanding suggests that deradicalization efforts should focus not only on Islamic teachings but also on fostering a deeper understanding of Indonesian history, democracy, and civic values. This aligns with the work of Masnun, who argues that integrating civic education into the religious curriculum is crucial to creating a more balanced perspective on the relationship between religion and the state.⁵³ Teaching about

⁵⁰ Athik Hidayatul Ummah, "Dakwah Digital dan Generasi Milenial (Menelisis Strategi Dakwah Komunitas Arus Informasi Santri Nusantara)," *Tasamuh* 18, no. 1 (2020): 68, <https://journal.uinmataram.ac.id/index.php/tasamuh/article/view/2151>

⁵¹ Syaugi Syaugi, Badrian Badrian, and Faisal Mubarak. "Peran Kearifan Lokal dalam Upaya Deradikalisasi Faham Radikal di Kalimantan Selatan." *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora* 18, no. 2 (2020): 168, <https://jurnal.uin-antasari.ac.id/index.php/khazanah/article/view/4155>.

⁵² Khairul Saleh and Muhammad Arbain, *Deradikalisme di Perguruan Tinggi: Strategi Menangkal Radikalisme melalui Pendidikan Islam*, (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2019), <http://repository.iain-samarinda.ac.id/handle/123456789/727>.

⁵³ Masnun Tahir, "Wacana Fikih," 310.

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Indonesia's national ideology alongside Islamic values can help students appreciate the diversity within the country and reject ideologies that seek to undermine national unity. According to Fitriani, university instructors, particularly those with a moderate and inclusive perspective, are pivotal in guiding students to understand the importance of a balanced relationship between religion and politics in Indonesia.⁵⁴

Finally, the study underscores the importance of creating an environment in which students can engage with Islamic studies without it conflicting with their academic commitments. Many students expressed a strong interest in Islamic studies but noted that the demands of their coursework often left little room for such activities. As argued by Muslimin and Uus, integrating religious education into the broader curriculum can provide students with more opportunities to explore Islamic teachings while ensuring that their academic obligations are met.⁵⁵ Additionally, universities should offer flexible learning formats, such as online courses or evening classes, to accommodate students' schedules. Tedy, et.al., emphasize that the delivery of Islamic educational content should be adaptive to contemporary student needs, especially given the increasing availability of digital content that can sometimes present extreme interpretations of Islam.⁵⁶ Therefore, deradicalization strategies must account for the realities of students' time constraints and provide easily accessible, moderate religious content that aligns with the values of tolerance and peace.

In conclusion, deradicalization in Indonesian higher education, particularly in science disciplines, requires a comprehensive approach that accounts for academic, personal, and societal factors. By offering balanced religious education, promoting tolerance, and fostering dialogue, universities can play a critical role in preventing radicalization.

⁵⁴ Laily Fitriani, "Pendidikan *Peace Building* di Pesantren: Sebuah Upaya Mencegah Radikalisasi," *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* 16 no.1 (2015): 127, <https://ejournal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/ululalbab/article/view/3011>

⁵⁵ Erwin Muslimin and Ruswandi Uus, "Tantangan, Problematika dan Peluang Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Perguruan Tinggi," *Tarbiatuna: Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 66, <https://journal.laaroiba.com/index.php/tarbiatuna/article/view/652>

⁵⁶ Armin Tedy, M. Zikri, and Ihsan Rahmat. "Revitalizing Pure Islamic Study Program: Harmonizing Classical Paradigms with Market Demands in the Era of Disruption," *Didaktika Religia* 12, no. 2 (2024): 462, <https://jurnalpascasarjana.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/didaktika/article/view/3474>.

Previous studies have shown the importance of creating a balanced, open environment for students to engage with diverse perspectives. In addition, integrating Islamic education with civic education can help foster a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between religion, society, and the state. Through these efforts, universities can contribute significantly to deradicalization and the creation of a more inclusive, peaceful society.

Conclusion

The assumption that science students are inherently vulnerable to radicalization cannot be generalized. Family, friends, educational environment, society, and personal factors should be explored further. The rich locality of Kalimantan, personal conditions, and the surrounding environment are factors that require further investigation, as simply studying science or exact sciences is not sufficient to make someone radical in their thinking and ideology.

This research presents several findings: First, students have a curiosity to study Islam, but due to limited literature, their search for Islamic information often shifts to digital content. The ability to filter such content is crucial. Second, students are highly interested in Islamic materials that guide them to improve their character and enhance the quality of worship. Thus, Islamic Education courses should be designed to address these interests effectively. Third, students already understand diversity and the importance of tolerance, and issues related to religious, sectarian, and doctrinal differences are no longer significant concerns for them. Fourth, students recognize that Indonesia's national ideology aligns with Islamic values, although their understanding of history and the caliphate needs further improvement. This can be achieved through guidance from lecturers with moderate and inclusive views. Fifth, some students still hold rigid views regarding Islam and its practice, as shown in their perspectives on music, veiling, female leadership, and Muslim solidarity in other countries. Sixth, students have a strong interest in Islamic studies on campus and view them positively; however, the demands of coursework often conflict with their ability to participate fully.

The findings highlight the need for universities to play a more active role in deradicalization by offering structured, balanced, and accessible religious education programs. Addressing the gap in Islamic

resources and promoting critical thinking can help students navigate the vast amounts of digital content, reducing their exposure to extremist ideologies. Additionally, integrating lessons on tolerance, national identity, and democratic values into the curriculum, along with providing mentorship from moderate faculty, can reinforce students' resistance to radical ideas. This approach supports the creation of a more inclusive and peaceful campus environment, where students can engage with religious teachings that foster harmony rather than division.

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