Preventing Religious Radicalism in Indonesian Society (Case of Gunungpati Subdistrict, Semarang City)

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Abstract

Acts of terror invariably commence with the cultivation of radicalism, making it imperative to implement preventive measures to curtail the proliferation of these extremist ideologies. Particularly noteworthy is the rise of social radicalism, which requires vigilant attention. The recent uptick in religious radicalism further underscores the urgency of fostering a preventive mindset. The objective of this initiative is to instill a preventive attitude among the residents of Gunungpati District in Semarang City, countering the influences of both terrorism and radicalism. Simultaneously, it seeks to offer valuable insights to the government, outlining necessary actions to provide legal protection for the people of Gunungpati District against religious sects associated with terrorism and radicalism. In collaboration with the Ats-Tsaqofah Semarang Foundation, an institution

dedicated to community empowerment, particularly in the realm of religious morality development, this activity employs a combination of lecture, dialogue, and focused discussion methods. The utilization of the brainstorming method from the audience further enhances the initiative, extracting their initial knowledge about terrorism and radicalism. The anticipated outcome of this collaborative effort is the cultivation of preventive attitudes within society, acting as a counterforce against the infiltration of radical ideologies. By leveraging educational and community-based strategies, the initiative aims to equip individuals with the awareness and resilience needed to resist the allure of radicalism, thereby contributing to the overall security and well-being of the Gunungpati community.

Keywords

Religious Radicalism, Fortifying Radicalism, Indonesian Society

I. Introduction

The presence of law in society serves a crucial role as a regulator, contributing to the maintenance of social stability. Within this framework, the notion that law functions both as a tool for social control and as an instrument for social engineering holds true. While individuals naturally aspire to lead comfortable and peaceful lives, achieving a state of constant safety, peace, order, and prosperity remains elusive. Persistent deviations from the ideal social order and expectations by members of society prompt the

classification of such actions or behaviors as crimes or criminal acts by the legal system.[1]

In contemporary society, one of the pressing issues demanding serious attention is the emergence of extremism and radicalism, often culminating in acts of terrorism. This deviant behavior poses a substantial threat to the aspirations of societies seeking peace and tranquility. The intricate interplay between radical ideologies and the perpetration of acts of terror has heightened concerns globally, necessitating a comprehensive approach to address the root causes and manifestations of these threats. As societies strive for peaceful coexistence, understanding and effectively combating extremism become imperative to safeguard the values of peace and harmony.[2]

The multifaceted nature of radicalism and its evolution into violent acts underscores the urgency for proactive measures and nuanced strategies. The impact of these deviant behaviors extends beyond immediate security concerns, permeating the

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[1] Rahardjo, Satjipto. *Hukum dalam Jagat Ketertiban.* (Jakarta: UKI Press, 2006). *See also* Soekanto, Soerjono. "Kesadaran hukum dan kepatuhan hukum." *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 7.6 (1977): 462-471; Rahardjo, Satjipto. "Between two worlds: Modern state and traditional society in Indonesia." *Law and Society Review* (1994): 493-502.

[2] Stephens, William, Stijn Sieckelinck, and Hans Boutellier. "Preventing violent extremism: A review of the literature." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 44.4 (2021): 346-361; Cassam, Quassim. *Extremism: A philosophical analysis.* (London: Routledge, 2021); Wibisono, Susilo, Winnifred R. Louis, and Jolanda Jetten. "A multidimensional analysis of religious extremism." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 2560; Asrori, Saifudin. "Mengikuti Panggilan Jihad; Argumentasi Radikalisme Dan Ekstremisme di Indonesia." *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality* 4.1 (2019); Nurish, Amanah. "Dari fanatisme ke ekstremisme: Ilusi, kecemasan, dan tindakan kekerasan." *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya* (2019): 31-40.

fabric of social cohesion and stability.[3] In order to counteract this menace, it is crucial to not only focus on reactive security measures but also to delve into preventive strategies that address the underlying factors contributing to the radicalization of individuals.[4] By acknowledging the severity of the issue and adopting a holistic approach, societies can fortify themselves against the threats posed by extremism and terrorism, working towards a more secure and harmonious future.

Extremism and radicalism often stem from an individual's inability to embrace differences, seeking to assert dominance and viewing oneself as the ultimate authority.[5] However, it is crucial to recognize that diversity is not only a natural aspect of human existence but also a source of enrichment that bolsters unity. Societal advancement is closely tied to a culture of mutual respect, especially within the context of pluralism. Hence, any refusal to accept diversity, disrespect for others' rights, or attempts to impose one's will reflect a lack of civilization and warrant condemnation for disrupting the established harmony.[6]

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[3] Davies, Lynn. "Security, extremism and education: Safeguarding or surveillance?." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 64.1 (2016): 1-19.

[4] Pisoiu, Daniela, et al. "Factors of individual radicalization into extremism, violence and terror–the German contribution in a context." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)* 14 (2020): 1-13; Yusoufzai, Khouwaga, and Franziska Emmerling. "Explaining violent radicalization in Western Muslims: A four factor model." *Journal of Terrorism Research* 8.1 (2017): 68-80; Leistedt, Samuel J. "On the radicalization process." *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 61.6 (2016): 1588-1591.

[5] Carpenter, J. Scott, Matthew Levitt, and Michael Jacobson. "Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism." *Journal of National Security Law & Policy* 3 (2009): 301-327; Wintrobe, Ronald. "Extremism, suicide terror, and authoritarianism." *Public Choice* 128 (2006): 169-195.

[6] Laba, Ebenhaezer Beri, and Yakobus Adi Saingo. "Menganyam Tali Persaudaraan dengan Nilai Pancasila Sebagai Upaya Menangkal

The disruption of the harmonious order of human life is categorized as a criminal act, defined by the state as deviant behavior that merits legal consequences. In response, societal norms play a pivotal role in guiding individuals on what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable. The establishment of norms serves as a compass, delineating the boundaries of acceptable behavior and reinforcing the collective commitment to maintaining harmony and unity. Consequently, fostering a culture that values diversity and upholds shared norms becomes instrumental in preventing the spread of extremism and radicalism, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and inclusive society.

In this context, religious radicalism has emerged as a pressing concern in many societies, including Indonesia, where diverse religious and cultural landscapes coexist. This paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of preventing religious radicalism in Indonesian society. As a nation with a predominantly Muslim population, Indonesia has witnessed the coexistence of various Islamic ideologies, and the challenge lies in fostering tolerance, understanding, and unity while mitigating the risks associated with radicalization.[7]

Ekstrimisme Agama di Indonesia." *Jurnal Adijaya Multidisplin* 1.6 (2024): 1164-1177; Syifa, M. Mucharom. "Formulasi Konsep Moderasi Islam Berbasis Keindonesiaan dalam Mereduksi Radikalisme Agama di Indonesia (Kajian Epistemologis-Historis)." *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Raushan Fikr* 8.1 (2019): 31-41.

[7]   Mahfud, Choirul, et al. "Religious Radicalism, Global Terrorism and Islamic Challenges in Contemporary Indonesia." *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora (JSH)* 11.1 (2018): 8-18; Ahmad, Maghfur, et al. "The Sufi order against religious radicalism in Indonesia." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77.4 (2021); Fealy, Greg. "Islamic radicalism in Indonesia: The faltering revival?." *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2004.1 (2004): 104-121.

The grim manifestations of violence, such as killings, arrests, and bombings, often find their roots in the infiltration of radicalism within society. Radicals are individuals or groups who advocate for drastic social and political change, resorting to violent means to achieve their objectives. Particularly perilous is the religious dimension of radicalism, where adherents staunchly believe in the superiority of their own beliefs, dismissing others as unequivocally wrong. In a religious context, radicalism is characterized by an uncompromising adherence to a fundamental religious foundation coupled with intense fanaticism.[8] Consequently, followers of such ideologies may resort to violence against those holding different beliefs, compelled by the conviction that their religious understanding must be forcibly imposed and accepted.

Indonesia has tragically witnessed a series of targeted terrorist attacks, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's history. Among these, the Bali I Bombing stands out as a shocking and unforgettable act of terror that claimed the lives of 202 people, leaving numerous others seriously injured. The wounds inflicted by the Bali Bombing I are still fresh, and the haunting specter of terrorism persisted with the alarming occurrence of Bali Bombing

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[8] Hanafi, Imam. "Agama dalam Bayang-Bayang Fanatisme; Sebuah Upaya Mengelola Konflik Agama." *Toleransi: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 10.1 (2018): 48-67; A'yuna, Qurrata, and Said Nurdin. "Fanatisme dalam Tinjauan Psikologi Agama." *Jurnal Suloh* 1.1 (2016): 75-82; Sumbulah, Umi. "Pluralisme dan kerukunan umat beragama perspektif elite agama di Kota Malang." *Analisa Journal of Social Science and Religion* 22.1 (2015): 1-13.

II. These events have reverberated beyond Bali, casting a shadow over various cities and regions across Indonesia.[9]

Cities such as Semarang, Solo, Medan, Jakarta, Surabaya, and several other regions have not been spared from serving as the *locus delicti* for these heinous acts of terror. Incidents recorded in the Central Java region include bomb attacks targeting Police Security Posts in various cities, indicating the widespread and pervasive nature of the terrorist threat. Notably, Solo, situated in Central Java, has been labeled as an enclave of terrorism in Indonesia, underscoring the gravity of the security challenges faced by the nation. These incidents highlight the urgent need for comprehensive and vigilant measures to address and mitigate the persistent threat of terrorism throughout the archipelago.[10]

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[9]   Wibisono, Ali Abdullah. "Kebijakan Respons Indonesia terhadap Problematika Teroris-Kombatan Transnasional Pasca Bom Bali 2002 [Indonesia's Policy Response to Foreign Terrorist Fighter Problem In Post-2002 Bali Bombings]." *Jurnal Politica Dinamika Masalah Politik Dalam Negeri dan Hubungan Internasional* 11.1 (2020): 19-42; Ulandari, Ari, Yoedhi Swastanto, and Effendi Sihole. "Implementasi Kerjasama Kontra-Terorisme Indonesia-Australia (Studi Kasus: Bom Bali I Tahun 2002)." *Jurnal Diplomasi Pertahanan* 6.1 (2020); Syamsudin, Muhammad Hasan. "Titik "Temu Fundamentalisme, Radikalisme, dan Terorisme Gerakan Jamaah Islamiyah (JI)(Studi Kasus Bom Bali I)." *Jurnal Pemikiran Politik Islam* 4.2 (2021): 174-189.

[10]   Purwawidada, Fajar. "Jaringan Teroris Solo Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Keamanan Wilayah Serta Strategi Penanggulangannya (Studi Di Wilayah Solo, Jawa Tengah)." *Jurnal Ketahanan Nasional* 20.1 (2014): 1-22; Windiani, Reni, and Mohammad Rosyidin. "Peran Polisi Daerah Jawa Tengah Dalam Menanggulangi Terorisme di Jawa Tengah Pada Periode 2009-2014." *Journal of International Relations* 2.3 (2016): 1-10; Masyhar, Ali, and Ridwan Arifin. "Urgensi Pembentengan Masyarakat dari Radikalisme dan Terorisme (Upaya Terhadap Jamiyyah Nahdlatul Ulama Kecamatan Bonang Kabupaten Demak)." *Jurnal Pengabdian Hukum Indonesia (Indonesian Journal of Legal Community Engagement) JPHI* 1.1 (2018): 1-12.

The genesis of all these actions invariably traces back to the implantation of radical ideology into the mindset of the perpetrator. Once this radical ideology takes root within the very essence of the individuals involved, the perpetrators need only await opportune moments to enact terrorist acts, often without explicit directives or commands.[11] The successful internalization of radical beliefs becomes the catalyst, propelling individuals towards the execution of extremist activities, creating an unsettling scenario where acts of terrorism can unfold independently, detached from explicit orders.[12]

Terrorism transcends the realm of ordinary criminal acts, distinct from conventional offenses such as theft, fraud, or robbery. While acts of terrorism often involve violence and may lead to loss of life, they fundamentally differ from conventional crimes like murder. The key divergence lies in the motive. For terrorists, the act of murder is not an end in itself but a means to a concealed objective—the alteration of societal order and the acquisition of political influence.[13]

Given the unique characteristics of terrorism, countermeasures must be tailored to address these distinctions

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[11] Chertoff, Michael. "The Ideology of Terrorism: Radicalism Revisited." *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 15.1 (2008): 11-20; Doosje, Bertjan, et al. "Terrorism, radicalization and de-radicalization." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 11 (2016): 79-84.

[12] Hilmy, Masdar. "Radikalisme agama dan politik demokrasi di Indonesia pasca-orde baru." *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 39.2 (2015): 407-425; Mubarak, M. Zaki. "Dari NII ke ISIS: Transformasi ideologi dan gerakan dalam Islam radikal di Indonesia kontemporer." *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 10.1 (2015): 77-98.

[13] Rahmat, Maulana. "Politik Hukum Terhadap Tindak Pidana Terorisme Dalam Pembaharuan Hukum Pidana Indonesia." *Jurnal Wawasan Yuridika* 1.2 (2017): 155-173.

from ordinary criminal acts. Counterterrorism strategies have traditionally leaned heavily on penal efforts, characterized by repressive measures enacted post-terrorist incidents. However, recognizing the multifaceted nature of terrorism, it is imperative to supplement punitive approaches with non-penal countermeasures, particularly emphasizing prevention. Effective counterterrorism efforts should encompass a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond reactive responses, integrating proactive measures aimed at thwarting the genesis and spread of terrorist ideologies.

Therefore, effective prevention efforts are essential to curb the spread of radical ideology within society. One approach to achieve this is to fortify and strengthen the teachings of a religion that promotes tolerance, embraces differences, and embodies the concept of rohmatal lil alamin. This endeavor yields tangible outcomes, including the cultivation of preventive attitudes among the residents of Gunungpati District in Semarang City to counteract the influences of terrorism and radicalism.[14] Additionally, it contributes to scholarly endeavors by generating articles published in nationally accredited scientific journals, subsequently evolving into books or textbooks as an academic responsibility stemming from research work. Furthermore, the initiative generates proposals and recommendations directed to the Regional Government of Demak Regency, advocating for legal

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[14] Arifinsyah, Arifinsyah, Safria Andy, and Agusman Damanik. "The urgency of religious moderation in preventing radicalism in Indonesia." *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21.1 (2020): 91-108; Sumbulah, Umi. "Preventing radicalism by family and civil society organizations in Indonesia." *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities* 27.1 (2019): 391-403.

protection for the residents of Gunungpati District in Semarang City against the encroachment of terrorism and radicalism.

Against this background, this paper explores the strategies, initiatives, and collaborative efforts undertaken to prevent the proliferation of religious radicalism in Indonesian communities. By examining the methods employed, societal responses, and government policies, we aim to shed light on the complexities of this issue and offer insights into effective preventive measures.

Through a comprehensive analysis, this paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on countering religious radicalism in Indonesia, offering recommendations for fostering a society that embraces diversity, upholds tolerance, and safeguards against the influences of radical ideologies.

II. Method

This initiative is structured around the delivery of lectures and dialogues. The mentoring program is conducted in collaboration with the Ats-Tsaqofah Semarang Foundation, a religious social institution dedicated to community empowerment in the social, humanitarian, and religious domains. The foundation is committed to promoting a tolerant approach and upholding Islamic principles in accordance with the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah.

The approach employed in fortifying religious moderation against radicalism in the Gunungpati Community of Semarang City involves a combination of lectures, dialogues, and focused discussions. Dialogues serve as a pivotal method for participants to pose questions, share opinions, and even challenge thoughts

that may have caused turbulence within the group. These discussions provide a platform for participants to openly express their field experiences. The dialogue participants represent various key groups, including the management of Nahdlatul Ulama in Gunungpati district, the NU Community of Kalisegoro Village, IPNU/IPPNU UNNES, and PMII UNNES.

III. Results and Discussion

The residents of Gunungpati Subdistrict, forming a predominantly homogenous rural community, have recently experienced a noticeable increase in heterogeneity. Situated in an expansive area of 58.72 km² with hilly terrain and mountains, Gunungpati continues to support a rural lifestyle. The total population of 98,023 people, yielding a density of 1,682 people per km² (BPS, 2021a), reflects the evolving demographics of the region. Notably, the overwhelming majority of Gunungpati's population, numbering 92,947 individuals (95%), follows the Islamic faith (BPS, 2021b). This religious homogeneity sets the stage for exploring the dynamics of religious radicalism prevention in the context of Gunungpati, Semarang, Indonesia.

Nevertheless, despite the religious homogeneity within the community (all being Muslims), this unity manifests itself in three

distinct categories: (1) Formalist Islam[15], (2) Wasathiyah Islam[16], and (3) Abangan Islam[17]. The adherents of Formalist Islam are

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[15] Formalist Islam refers to a category of Islamic practice characterized by a formalistic and rigid interpretation of the religion. Adherents of Formalist Islam tend to adopt a strict, literal approach to religious teachings, often emphasizing a narrow and dogmatic interpretation of Islamic principles. This category may include individuals who exhibit a heightened sense of religious fervor and dedication but, unfortunately, this dedication can manifest in extreme and violent behavior. Formalist Islam is associated with a more conservative and traditionalist understanding of the faith, and followers may view their interpretation as the only correct and authentic version of Islam. This rigidity can lead to an exclusionary mindset, where adherents may perceive others with different beliefs or practices, even within the Muslim community, as deviating from the "true" path. The term "formalist" in this context suggests a strict adherence to established forms and practices, often at the expense of flexibility or openness to diverse interpretations within the Islamic tradition. It is important to note that the term "Formalist Islam" is not universally recognized and may be used in various contexts to describe specific interpretations or practices within the broader spectrum of Islamic belief. *See* Ibrahim, Ahmed Fekry. "The Sunni Legal Tradition: An Overview of Pluralism, Formalism, and Reform." *A Cosmopolitan Jurisprudence: Essays in Memory of H. Patrick Glenn* (2022); Nuruzzaman, Mohammed. "Conflicts in Sunni political Islam and their implications." *Strategic Analysis* 41.3 (2017): 285-296.

[16] Wasathiyah Islam, also known as moderate Islam, represents an approach to the practice of the Islamic faith that emphasizes moderation and balance. The term "Wasathiyah" is derived from the Arabic word "wasat," which means middle or moderate. Adherents of Wasathiyah Islam strive to maintain a balanced and centrist perspective in interpreting and practicing Islamic teachings. This form of Islam, often associated with the concept of Islam Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah (the followers of the Prophet's traditions and the community), rejects extremism and advocates for a middle path that avoids both excessive rigidity and undue laxity. Wasathiyah Islam encourages Muslims to adhere to the core principles of Islam while fostering an inclusive and tolerant attitude toward diverse interpretations within the Islamic tradition. Followers of Wasathiyah Islam typically reject radical ideologies and extremist practices, seeking to promote harmony, understanding, and peaceful coexistence. They emphasize the importance of engaging with contemporary issues while staying true to the

fundamental tenets of Islam. Wasathiyah Islam is seen as a counterbalance to more extreme interpretations within the Muslim community, contributing to the overall diversity of beliefs and practices within the Islamic faith. *See* Arif, Khairan M. "Moderasi Islam (Wasathiyah Islam) Perspektif Al-Qur'an, As-Sunnah Serta Pandangan Para Ulama dan Fuqaha." *Al-Risalah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 11.1 (2020): 22-43; Najib, Muhammad Ainun, and Ahmad Khoirul Fata. "Islam Wasatiyah dan Kontestasi Wacana Moderatisme Islam di Indonesia." *Jurnal Theologia* 31.1 (2020): 115-138; Niam, Zainun Wafiqatun. "Konsep Islam Wasathiyah Sebagai Wujud Islam Rahmatan lil 'alamin: Peran Nu dan Muhammadiyah dalam Mewujudkan Islam Damai di Indonesia." *Palita: Journal of Social Religion Research* 4.2 (2019): 91-106; Syam, M. Basir. "Islam Wasathiyah Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi." *Aqidah-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah* 4.2 (2018): 197-213.

[17] Abangan Islam refers to a category of Islamic practice that is characterized by a more syncretic and flexible approach to religious beliefs and rituals. The term "Abangan" itself is derived from Javanese, and it broadly denotes those who identify as Muslim but may not strictly adhere to orthodox Islamic practices. This category often represents a form of Islam that is integrated with elements of local culture, traditions, and even pre-Islamic beliefs. Adherents of Abangan Islam may incorporate local customs, rituals, and folk traditions into their religious practices, creating a blend of Islamic and indigenous cultural elements. This syncretic approach may be seen as a way to adapt Islam to local contexts, allowing for a more harmonious coexistence with pre-existing cultural practices. Abangan Islam is sometimes contrasted with "Santri" Islam, which is associated with a more orthodox and formalistic interpretation of the faith. While the distinction between Abangan and Santri Islam is not universally accepted and may vary across different regions, it highlights the diversity within the Muslim community in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia. It's important to note that the term "Abangan" has historical and cultural connotations specific to Indonesia, particularly Java, and may not be applicable or recognized in the same way in other Islamic contexts. *See* Aizid, Rizem. *Islam Abangan & Kehidupannya*. (Jakarta: Dipta, 2015); Hefner, Robert W. "Where have all the abangan gone?: Religionization and the decline of non-standard Islam in contemporary Indonesia." In *The politics of religion in Indonesia*. (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 71-91; Mughits, Abdul. "Berakhirnya Mitos Dikotomi Santri-Abangan." *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama* (2004): 276-288; Mamahit, Ferry Y. "Abangan Muslims, Javanese Worldview, and Muslim–Christian Relations in Indonesia." *Transformation* 38.1 (2021): 31-45; Van Bruinessen, Martin. "Global and local in Indonesian Islam." *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37.2 (1999): 158-175.

characterized by a tendency towards violence, extremism, and secrecy. On the other hand, Abangan Islam designates those who identify as Islamic but do not integrate the faith significantly into their daily lives. Meanwhile, Wasathiyah Islam represents a moderate approach, steering clear of extremism and adhering to the teachings of Islam on a non-extreme path, aligning with the principles of Islam Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah[18]. This nuanced

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[18] Islam Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah, commonly known as Sunni Islam, embodies the largest and most widely followed branch within the Islamic tradition. Rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, the Quran, and the consensus of the early Muslim community, this branch of Islam is characterized by several fundamental principles. At the core of Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah's beliefs is a steadfast commitment to the Quran and the Sunnah, the practices and sayings of Prophet Muhammad recorded in hadiths. Adherents emphasize a strict adherence to these primary sources of Islamic guidance, considering them essential for understanding and practicing the faith. The principle of Tawhid, affirming the oneness of Allah (God), is a foundational tenet shared by all Muslims, including those within Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah. This belief underscores the absolute uniqueness, sovereignty, and indivisibility of God in Islamic theology. Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah holds great respect for the companions (Sahabah) of Prophet Muhammad, viewing them as exemplars whose contributions were pivotal in the early development and dissemination of Islam. Additionally, Sunni Muslims accept the leadership of the first four caliphs—Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali—as the rightful successors to Prophet Muhammad. The consensus (Ijma) of Islamic scholars is considered a significant source of guidance in matters not explicitly addressed in the Quran or Sunnah. Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah places value on the collective agreement of scholars, acknowledging their role in interpreting and applying Islamic principles. Emphasizing personal piety and morality, Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah encourages individuals to cultivate virtuous lives aligned with Islamic teachings. This commitment to righteous conduct reflects a broader emphasis on the moral and ethical dimensions of Islam. Sunni Islam, including Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah, is often associated with a moderate approach to religious practices, discouraging extremism and radical interpretations. This emphasis on moderation underscores a commitment to fostering a balanced and tolerant

religious landscape forms a backdrop for understanding the intricacies of preventing religious radicalism in Gunungpati, Semarang, Indonesia.

The effort to fortify the Gunungpati community against the influence of religious radicalism involves cultivating a nuanced understanding of authentic Islamic teachings. This initiative aims to instill a mature comprehension of Islam capable of guarding against both extremes—the hardline interpretation on the right and the syncretic interpretation on the left, represented by Islam Abangan. The approach endorsed for this fortification is based on the principles of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah.

The initiative to fortify the Gunungpati community against the infiltration of religious radicalism involves a multifaceted approach aimed at cultivating a nuanced understanding of authentic Islamic teachings. Recognizing the potential dangers posed by both hardline interpretations on the right and syncretic interpretations on the left, represented by Islam Abangan, the community seeks to instill a mature comprehension of Islam that acts as a protective barrier against such extremes.

At the core of this fortification effort lies the commitment to promote a balanced perspective rooted in the principles of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah. This moderate and inclusive stance within Islam emphasizes unity, tolerance, and a middle path, discouraging extremist ideologies and fostering a sense of

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expression of the Islamic faith. While Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah represents a majority within Islam, it's important to recognize the diversity of thought within Sunni Islam itself, with various schools of thought coexisting while sharing foundational principles. *See* Yasid, Abu. *Prinsip Moderat Paham Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (ASWAJA).* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2022); Al-Atsari, AA Hamid. *Intisari Aqidah Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah.* (Jakarta: Niaga Swadaya, 2006); Mujahid, Nendi Sahrul. "Prinsip-Prinsip Nahdlatul Ulama dan Urgensinya dalam Tantangan Internasional." *AL-FIQH: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1.1 (2023): 20-27.

community cohesion. By endorsing the principles of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, the community endeavors to build resilience against radical influences and promote an environment that values diversity within the Islamic faith.

A pivotal aspect of this fortification initiative took the form of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), where religious figures and activists from the Gunungpati community engaged in an open dialogue. The inclusion of Mr. Tsabit Abi Fadhil, a figure with a background in Wahabi ideology and activism, contributed diverse perspectives to the conversation. This forum, held at the Ta'lim Assembly and Dzikir Ats Tsaqofah Semarang with 100 participants, facilitated an exchange of ideas and insights, empowering community members with a deeper understanding of different religious perspectives.

Furthremore, the fortification against religious radicalism in Gunungpati is not only about countering extremist views but also about promoting an environment that appreciates the moderate and inclusive principles of Islam. By embracing a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings rooted in Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, the community aspires to build resilience, unity, and a shared commitment to a more harmonious coexistence amidst the diverse religious landscape of Gunungpati.

To implement this strategy, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was orchestrated, convening religious leaders and activists from the Gunungpati community. The session featured Mr. Tsabit Abi Fadhil, a prominent individual with a background in Wahabi ideology and activism, contributing diverse perspectives to the dialogue. The FGD transpired on July 18, 2022, at 8:00 PM local time, hosted at the Ta'lim Assembly and Dzikir Ats Tsaqofah Semarang, drawing an attendance of 100 participants.

This platform provided a conducive environment for an open discourse, enabling community members to interact with various religious viewpoints and cultivating a more enlightened and resilient community in the face of the menace of religious radicalism.

Preventing radicalism through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) is a proactive and participatory approach that actively engages individuals from diverse backgrounds. These discussions serve as a crucial platform for community members, including religious figures, activists, and residents, to come together and openly address the complex issues surrounding radicalization. The inclusive nature of FGDs ensures that a wide range of perspectives and experiences are considered, fostering a sense of shared responsibility within the community to prevent the spread of radical ideologies.

FGDs play a pivotal role in promoting dialogue and understanding among participants. By creating an environment that encourages open communication, individuals can freely express their views, concerns, and personal experiences related to radicalism. This, in turn, helps break down stereotypes and misconceptions that may contribute to the development of radical ideologies, fostering a climate of empathy and mutual understanding.

Moreover, the discussions within FGDs often delve into the root causes of radicalization. By examining socio-economic factors, political grievances, and issues related to identity, participants can collectively identify and address these underlying factors. This holistic approach aims to develop strategies that

prevent radicalization at its source, focusing on the broader context in which extremist ideologies may take root.[19]

A key aspect of preventing radicalism through FGDs involves counteracting extremist ideologies. Religious leaders, scholars, and community influencers can utilize these discussions to present alternative narratives and perspectives that emphasize tolerance, inclusivity, and non-violence. This proactive approach seeks to challenge and undermine the appeal of radical ideologies by providing constructive and alternative viewpoints.

Furthermore, FGDs contribute to building community resilience by equipping participants with the knowledge and awareness needed to recognize and resist radical influences. Empowering individuals to critically assess information and ideologies fosters a resilient community capable of withstanding the allure of radicalization. Through these discussions, community members collectively brainstorm and formulate solutions that are tailored to their specific context, ensuring that the strategies devised are rooted in local nuances and actively involve those most affected. In essence, preventing radicalism through FGDs is a dynamic and collaborative process that engages communities in constructive dialogue, addresses root causes, and builds resilience against the influence of extremist ideologies. This FGD is considered very effective because it takes place in a fluid, informal and not rigid manner, especially since the resource persons/triggers

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[19] *See also* Wahab, Laode Abdul, and Nur Alim. "Deradikalisasi Dakwah: Optimalisasi Peran Da'i salam Membangun Karakter Multikultur Melalui Penguatan Kapasitas Kelembagaan." *Zawiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 6.2 (2020): 354-378; Nugrahajati, Susilastuti Dwi, and Basuki Agus Suparno. "Program Deradikalisasi Dalam Perspektif Komunikasi Politik." *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 21.3 (2024): 417-430.

for the discussion are selected by people who do have direct experience in hardline Islamic involvement.

Indonesian society, inherently peace-loving, embraces a culture of high tolerance and inclusivity, characterized by an openness to diverse perspectives. This societal fabric is well-suited to comprehend the principles of Islam Alussunnah Wal Jamaah. To fortify itself against the encroachment and allure of hardline Islamist groups, both from the extreme right and left, it is imperative for the government to establish a comprehensive map identifying which Islamic sects or groups fall under the category of hardline. Such proactive mapping not only provides clarity to the public but also equips relevant authorities, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Gunungpati District, with a strategic overview.

This mapping initiative serves as a proactive measure, enabling the public to navigate the diverse landscape of Islamic sects and groups, discerning their alignment with or deviation from mainstream, moderate interpretations of Islam. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly the KUA in Gunungpati District, assumes a pivotal role in cultivating awareness and understanding through this mapping process. By categorizing and delineating hardline groups, the government contributes to the dissemination of accurate information, empowering individuals to make informed choices regarding their religious affiliations.

In the further context, having a comprehensive map of Islamic sects and groups categorized as hardline is an essential tool in fortifying Indonesian society against the influence of extremist ideologies. It not only aligns with the inherently tolerant and inclusive nature of Indonesian society but also provides a proactive

strategy for safeguarding against the potential risks posed by hardline Islamist groups.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the description and outcomes of the activities, it can be concluded that the Focus Group Discussion, featuring individuals with experience in dealing with the hardline Islamic world, proves highly effective. This is particularly evident when presented in a simple lesehan format, minimizing barriers and rigid structures to foster an open exchange of opinions. Additionally, the government, specifically the KUA (Religious Affairs Office), should adopt a policy to map streams falling under the hardline category. This proactive measure is crucial for fortifying and protecting the community against potential infiltration of hardline Islamic ideologies.

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