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Radicalism Among Students: A Study of Perception of Radicalism of Indonesian and Malaysian Students

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Abstract

This article examines radicalism as a socio-religious phenomenon in constructing ideological and political struggles. This study aims to determine the perceptions of Indonesian-Malaysian students regarding radicalism based on religious understanding obtained at the university. This research uses qualitative methods through online interview data collection, focus group discussions (FGD), and a descriptive-interpretative analysis literature study. This study found several findings, namely: students' perceptions of the level of radicalism were divided into three levels: 1) high (extremism, socio-political movement for political purposes); 2) medium (intolerance); 3) low (exclusive, does not accept differences of opinion). However, it should be noted that the perception of Indonesian students is more diverse regarding the level of radicalism, in contrast to the perception of Malaysian students who view the level of radicalism as narrower. This is due to the political influence of each country. Furthermore, the power of religious understanding at universities regarding the level of radicalism on Indonesian and Malaysian students is different due to the reception of information in class, discussions in communities/organizations, and information from social media. This article contributes to increasing the discussion on youth's response to religious-based radicalism so that various parties, including the government and academics, can carry out a more comprehensive anti-radicalism campaign.

Keywords: Indonesian-Malaysian students; religious moderation; religious radicalism.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji tentang radikalisme sebagai fenomena sosial-keagamaan dalam konstruksi pergulatan ideologi dan politik. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa Indonesia-Malaysia mengenai radikalisme berdasarkan pemahaman keagamaan yang diperoleh di universitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui pengumpulan data wawancara online-offline, focus group discussion (FGD) serta studi pustaka dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif-interpretatif. Penelitian ini menemukan beberapa temuan yaitu: persepsi mahasiswa mengenai tingkat radikalisme dibagi menjadi tiga tingkatan: 1) tinggi (ekstrimisme, gerakan sosial-politik untuk tujuan politik); 2) menengah (intoleransi); 3) rendah (ekslusif, tidak menerima berpedaan pendapat). Namun dengan catatan persepsi mahasiswa Indonesia lebih beragam mengenai tingkat radikalisme, berbeda dengan persepsi mahasiswa Malaysia yang memandang tingkatan radikalisme lebih sempit. Hal ini disebabkan karena pengaruh politik negara masing-masing. Lebih lanjut, pengaruh pemahaman keagamaan di universitas mengenai tingkat radikalisme pada mahasiswa Indonesia dan Malaysia berbeda yang disebabkan oleh penerimaan informasi di kelas, diskusi dalam komunitas/organisasi, serta informasi dari media-media sosial. Artikel ini berkontribusi untuk meningkatkan pembahasan tentang respon pemuda terhadap radikalisme berbasis agama, sehingga berbagai pihak termasuk pemerintah dan akademisi dapat melakukan kampanye anti radikalisme yang lebih komprehensif.

Kata kunci: Fundamentalisme keagamaan; kampanye politik; kelompok radikal; moderasi beragama.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth involvement in radical groups remains a growing concern in Asia, increasing fear of terrorism in some countries. The threat of domestic terrorism and the involvement of youth in violence continues to attract worldwide attention, from the presence of the Taliban (which means 'students') in Afghanistan to *al-Shabab* (which means 'youth') in Somalia, including young jihadists who have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Akhmetova & Jaafar, 2020). Charles Kurzman (2019) notes that: "Terrorists are very successful at attracting public attention. From the thousands of violent incidents that occur around the world every day, the world's media efficiently sifts through clues about terrorist motivations, then delivers these incidents via cable services and satellite networks to news consumers who may not realize how rare terrorism really is."

It is not surprising that in a short time, the discourse on youth radicalization has become a prominent topic of discussion among public policymakers, intelligence agencies, and academia (Aiello, Puigvert, & Schubert, 2018; Costanza, 2015; Pedersen, Vestel, & Bakken, 2018; Mohammad T Rahman & Mufti, 2021). Therefore, it is understandable that the radicalization of young people has been widely discussed. However, the tendency to directly link religious radicalism with violent terrorism is based on the wrong premise, namely that the result of radicalization must be violence.

Radicalism among students in Indonesia has become a prominent issue following research findings that more and more educated young people are embracing radical ideas such as the establishment of a Khilafah state or the application of sharia. Researchers from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) stated that the radical movement impacted campuses, resulting in a recruitment program involving radical discussion groups and student activist networks. LIPI senior researcher Anas Saidi argues that 'Indonesian youth are radicalized and increasingly intolerant, while hardline and radical groups have infiltrated many universities' (Turmudi & Sihbudi, 2005). The results of a 2017 survey by the Alvara Research Center show a tendency for radical and intolerant attitudes among students. The survey found that 29.5% of students did not support the appointment of non-Muslim leaders, 23.4% of students supported Indonesia becoming an Islamic State under the Khilafah, and 23.5% agreed with the existence of ISIS (Rahma, 2019). This survey was conducted at 25 universities throughout Indonesia and involved 1,800 respondents. The most shocking news came when the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) published its research findings in 2018. These findings indicate that radical groups have infiltrated seven leading public universities with many students sympathetic to religious radicalism (Alius, 2019).

In response to this, the government seeks to involve various civil society groups to deal with the threat of radicalism, such as disbanding radical organizations suspected of having infiltrated the education system, both in high schools and universities. In 2017, through implementing a new law, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) dissolved Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). This transnational Islamic organization is keen to promote the Khilafah ideology against Indonesia's basic principles, namely Pancasila (Paelani Setia, 2021). The leaders of educational institutions followed this by introducing policies to deal with the circulation of radical thought on their campuses. However, the effectiveness of procedures is often questioned and often proves to be counterproductive (Anggraeni, Darmawan, & Tanshzil, 2019). For example, the policy on several campuses that prohibits students from wearing the veil triggers adverse reactions and even rejection by students and the community in general, so university leaders are pressured to revoke the policy. It seems that top-down approaches and restrictive regulations are not always based on, or informed by, careful and detailed study and research. This does not mean that the government should do nothing or stand by. Specific policies and regulations, such as the prohibition or

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restriction of HTI on campuses, have effectively prevented the spread of radical views among students. However, it should be noted that the nature of religious radicalism among students often makes the policies implemented only touch the surface of the problem, without touching the core. The assumption that radical youth embrace extreme ideology as a stepping stone to terrorist acts is not confirmed by these studies.

Student involvement in religious militancy is not a new phenomenon in Malaysia. Malaysian students' participation in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) and the Afghan Civil War (1989-2001) are examples of student involvement in militancy outside Malaysia. Malaysian police also detected the movement of some Malaysian students to Pakistan and Afghanistan to join the jihad movement against the Soviet occupation from the 1980s to the 1990s (Talib et al., 2021).

The exact number of Malaysian students who joined the Soviet-Afghan War is unknown. Even the Malaysian Embassy in Pakistan complained about the difficulty in tracking student movements because most of them never reported to the embassy. Some of them returned to their homeland when the war was over and founded militant groups like the Malaysian Mujahidin Group (KMM). Some of the founding members of KMM are former Afghan veterans such as its chairman Zainon Ismail and Nik Adli Nik Aziz. The two fought during the Afghanistan War. Sending students continued even after the First Afghan War (1979-1989). In 1999, for example, Jama'ah Islamiyyah (JI) sent 13 students to Pakistan as part of its regeneration program. These students were members of the al-Ghuraba cell, which consisted of children of JI members who were groomed to become future JI leaders (Freedman, 2009).

The involvement of students, and even lecturers and teachers in Malaysia, has become more evident in recent cases involving Daesh-affiliated groups. Daesh is a radical movement that aims to establish an Islamic state in Malaysia. Since February 2013, more than 340 Malaysians have been arrested by Malaysia's counter-terrorism units on various terrorism-related charges, and at least 40 students from schools, colleges, and universities have been arrested. Since the start of the operation in February 2013. Among the well-known cases are Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, a former lecturer at the University of Malaya (UM), and Aishah Atam, a postgraduate student at UM (El-Muhammady, 2018).

The penetration of the Daesh movement and violent extremism in Malaysia is dangerous (Talib et al., 2021). Perhaps the percentage of involvement is relatively small for some, and such incidents can be considered isolated cases. Thus, it is unnecessary to overstate that this mindset is dangerous to national security. Extremism and terrorism should be taken seriously because they have exponential effects. Practically, it only takes one person to launch an attack on a country. In June 2016, it took only two men to launch an attack on the Movida nightclub in Puchong, which caused panic across the country (Gunaratna, 2016). So, the presence of an extremist on campus is reason enough for the authorities to take precautions. This potential threat can escalate into real danger if not anticipated early on. Indeed, it is a serious mistake to measure the severity of a terrorist threat based on numbers and statistics. Its presence in society provides sufficient reason for the authorities to take precautions before it escalates into a significant threat.

However, not a few scholars and experts who do not believe in the involvement of young people in radicalism movements in Indonesia, for example in the response of campuses when the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) released data on the number of students and university students who had been exposed to radicalism by 36%. The campus party and observers generally still say that acts of radicalism are still happening very few, even considered reasonable as part of the academic freedom discourse. Another observer (Syam, 2009) also noted that good data and methods must support the phenomenon of campus radicalism to avoid misunderstandings. This is certainly ironic because often, cases of radicalism on campus are covered up for the sake of "the good name of the campus".

The involvement of young people, especially educated groups in radical-extremist movements, is not just a figment. The influence of radical extremist movements to Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, is suspected to be why these two countries became destinations. For example, proven through several studies, the ISIS movement has spread to Indonesia (Tobing & Indradjaja, 2019) and Malaysia (Weintraub, 2017).

This article will discuss how Indonesian and Malaysian students understand the phenomenon of radicalism in the two countries. This then has implications for the factors that lead to the formation of student perceptions of radicalism related to the religious understanding obtained at the university. This is important to study because there are similarities regarding the entry of radical ideas into the two countries.

Thus, it is essential to analyze the extent of students' views and opinions on radicalism by photographing several cases in Indonesia and Malaysia. For this reason, this study seeks to describe in detail what and why students in Indonesia and Malaysia perceive the phenomenon of radicalism, including looking at the influence of religious education obtained at universities in countering radicalism efforts. In this discourse, they also discussed their perceptions of one of the solutions proposed by the Indonesian government, namely religious moderation (Mandaville & Nozell, 2017). Especially analyzing how the urgency of religious moderation is to be applied in the life of a religiously multicultural society, both in Indonesia and Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods to explore data and gain a deep understanding of social phenomena (Silverman, 2015). This method emphasizes a deeper, thick description which is one of the elements of phenomenological research that looks at phenomena from the point of view of social actors and understanding social processes rather than aspects of social statistics (Blaikie, 2018). The characteristics and procedures of qualitative research are very relevant to the design of this study, namely mapping the model of the structure of social cohesion in society. To do this requires in-depth data mining and an understanding of the social phenomena (M Taufiq Rahman, 2021). The data collection process is first carried out by document review through survey data which is strengthened by journal articles, reports, and national news (O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014).

This research was conducted on students from two universities in two different countries, Indonesian UIN Sunan Gunung Djati of Bandung and Malaysian Universiti Selangor (University of Selangor) of Kuala Selangor of Malaysia, through interviews, observations, and focus group discussions (FGD). UIN Bandung was chosen as the research locus because it is one of the campuses with a high level of radicalism in Indonesia according to the Setara Institute (Satria, 2019), while UNISEL was chosen because it is a campus that is proactive on religious issues, and is filled with students with various religions and ethnicities. Interviews were conducted with UIN-UNISEL students, lecturers, and mosque administrators. Then, observations were made on the religious activities of UIN-UNISEL students, and finally, FGDs were also conducted with UIN-UNISEL students on two different campuses. After the data is collected, the analysis is carried out, and conclusions are drawn.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Defining Radicalism

Etymologically, the word radical is neutral. Radical, this adjective comes from the Latin, radix or radici. According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary (2004), the term radical means 'root', 'source', or 'origin' (Kennedy & Bourne, 2004). In a broader sense, the term radical refers to basic things, fundamental principles, issues, and essentials for various phenomena, or it can also mean "unusual" (unconventional) (M. Taufiq Rahman & Saebani, 2018). For centuries, the meaning of the term radical has always been closely related to its origin, namely the root. Because it has a broad connotation, the word has gained a lot of technical meaning in various scientific fields such as medicine, agriculture, philosophy, psychology, even philology, mathematics, chemistry, and music.

However, after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, or usually called 9/11, it is easy to understand how the meaning of the term radicalism has changed drastically. "*The Global War on Terrorism"* is a phrase used by the Western media to legitimize the political actions of the United States and its allies in several Islamic countries. Since then, the Islamic world has become the target of the West in the discourse on the theme of "global war against terrorism". From here, the issue of radicalism always sticks out to the public and raises the pros and cons (Mari, 2021).

In the case of Indonesia, the meaning of the term radical is undoubtedly not much different from the definition above. 'Radicalism' has three meanings: radical understanding or sect in politics that want social and political change or reform using violence, and extreme political attitude (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2018). Interestingly, referring to the 1990 KBBI, the term radical is defined as "totally," "all out," and "to go forward in thinking or acting". Here, it is easy to suspect that there has been a process of changing the meaning of this term. A diachronic aspect of working in words shows that history has changed purpose or meaning. If at first, it meant "neutral" or even tended to be "positive," then now the importance of the term radical tends to change to entirely "negative".

In addition to the repertoire of knowledge mentioned above, the term radical's neutral or even positive meaning is also seen in Mitsuo Nakamura's writing. In an article published in Asian Southeast Asian Studies, Nakamura stated that Nahdlatul Ulama is an organization with a "radical traditionalist" character. Nakamura deliberately chose the term radical traditionalism to describe the characteristics of NU as an autonomous and independent organization (Febriansyah, 2021; Nakamura, Siddique, & Bajunid, 2001).

At this point, it is easy to understand that the term radical means neutral. The term 'radical' can have a positive or negative meaning depending on the context of space and time as the background for using the word. From here, it is essential to remember two things. *First,* as long as propaganda by America or the West for nearly two decades—namely post-9/11 in 2001, plus the emergence of ISIS in 2014 until the death of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi not long ago—it is clear that the discourse on the global war against terrorism tends to reduce the term radicalism or radicalism is only aimed at certain religious groups (Lestari, 2021; P. Setia, 2020). *Second,* the Muslim population in Indonesia is the largest in the world, whose mainstream Islamic religious practices in Indonesia tend to be moderate and tolerant (Fealy & Ricci, 2019). Thus, it is essential to understand that the term radical is inappropriate for all Muslims in Indonesia.

So far, although there is still potential for confusion or bias in the political meaning of the term radical, it seems that the Indonesian government's definition of radical is acceptable. The government's objectives regarding the use of the term radical are, *firstly,* aimed at particular groups who incidentally intend to replace Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution with another system, namely the Khilafah System.

Second, this term refers to the political activities of certain extreme groups, which not only do not hesitate to use violent means to impose their will but also often even practice terrorism (Peter, 2020). This meaning later became the mainstream understanding of the society in Indonesia, although that does not mean eliminating the term radical in its neutral nature.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, radical concepts and terms in that country are interpreted as excessive or fanatical religious behavior. The definition of radical in Malaysia is a movement that threatens the country's integrity with violence by justifying any means and generally using religion. This definition even leads to acts of terrorism that create unrest and harm society. A fanatical or excessive nature also causes this definition in religion which causes not to accept fundamental differences in life (Yusoff, 2010).

Experts then agree with a radical definition of an extreme attitude or effort to realize its goals, especially the political goals of certain groups. For example, John L. Esposito explained that radicals are associated with political disillusionment with certain groups or movements that use certain religious symbols (Esposito, 2003). This means that these radicals and radicalism are related to religion because radicalised activities carry religious narratives in their movements. Furthermore, Mark Juergensmeyer said that the debate about the term radical is no longer relevant in the West because radicalism and radicalism are substantially true as global phenomena by justifying violence and ideological doctrines wrapped in religious interests to destroy the existing state order (Juergensmeyer, 2004).

Furthermore, radicals and radicalism can also be categorized into several levels. This is based on the writings of Sidney Jones, a terrorism expert who concluded that radicalism can be divided into three levels, namely 1) high, including violent socio-political movements or terrorist movements (jihadists); 2) medium, which includes an attitude of intolerance or not accepting the differences of other people or other groups who are different (ideological); 3) low, includes the attitude of someone exclusive, does not accept differences of opinion and feels that only his group's opinion is the most correct (Jones, 2014). Several scholars later agreed upon this about the level of radicalism to distinguish between radical levels and how to handle them (Nurrohman Syarif & Fridayanti, 2018; Widyaningsih, Kuntarto, & Chamadi, 2021; Wong, Khiatani, & Chui, 2019).

Thus, it can be concluded that fundamentally radical is a neutral phenomenon, which means rooted. However, due to a radical redefinition, this term is commonly used with a negative connotation, for various movements and fundamental thoughts that want to replace the ideology and system of the state by a particular religion. It was later agreed by the experts mentioned above that this redefinition is essential to give identity to people or groups who think extreme and or use violent means to realize their political ideals.

Perceptions of Indonesian-Malaysian Students on Radicalism

Based on research that has been conducted on Indonesian and Malaysian students, it is found that there are differences in understanding the meaning of radicalism itself. In this study, there are two perspectives on the concept of radicalism offered to students, namely the concept of radicalism according to its nature and the conception of radicalism based on its causes. This is based on the definition of radicalism revealed by Sidney Jones above.

Indonesian students' understanding of radicalism according to its nature is divided into 3 (three) levels: 1) high (extremism, socio-political movement for political purposes); 2) medium (intolerance/ideologically); 3) low (exclusive, does not accept differences of opinion). This understanding is based on the fact that radicalism in Indonesia is interpreted differently and even very complex. At a high

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level (point one), radicalism is addressed as an action collectively carried out to seize or form a particular political order. This movement is interpreted as a political movement they have known so far, such as a transnationalism movement that manifests in religious movements that breathe *da'wah*. Students from Indonesia who were interviewed generally said that the transnational Hizb ut-Tahrir movement was a high category of a radical movement. The HT agenda is very clear about establishing a state above the state, namely, establishing an Islamic state (Khilafah) in Indonesia (FGD with 4 Indonesian students in Bandung, 2019).

Furthermore, the understanding of Indonesian students in the concept of radicalism refers to the nature of intolerance. Intolerance is social action in the form of verbal or non-verbal to eliminate or justify an understanding or character of others because it is considered wrong. This attitude is related to each group's religious ideology, manifesting in intolerance. This intolerance is part of the subject's subjectivity to the interaction object. This attitude has been felt by UIN students where they often receive intolerant treatment when they are considered to have a different understanding of their religion (IH, Indonesian Student, Interview, Bandung 2019). In other forms, this biased attitude targets the phenomenon of *takfiri* or disbelieving in other people. In general understanding, this *takfiri* often occurs in Indonesian public spaces, especially social media. Political influence or the heating up of the situation before and after the 2014 and 2019 Indonesian presidential elections became the point where populist organizations rose to the top, echoing the defense in the name of Islam (Syahputra, 2019). As a result, community polarization still occurs and drags on religious issues, including the issue of *jihad* and *takfiri*. As a result, this understanding is used as the reason why UIN-Bandung students say that intolerance is also part of understanding radicalism (FGD with 4 Indonesian students in Bandung, 2019).

Furthermore, the understanding of UIN-Indonesia students about radicalism is the nature of exclusivism. UIN students believe this trait is part of the low-class radical nature. The implication of exclusivity is not being open-minded or not accepting differences of opinion. The interview results also show that differences of opinion in understanding religious issues for UIN students are commonplace. Muslims can do ijtihad with differences of view, but a decline in thinking happens if a Muslim shuts himself off. This is why UIN students say that radicalism can be interpreted as closing oneself to the latest thoughts in the Islamic world (FGD with 4 Indonesian students in Bandung, 2019).

When the nature of radicalism was also proposed to UNISEL-Malaysia students, they agreed that the three characteristics of radicalism, namely the political movement to establish an Islamic state, intolerance, and exclusivity, were negative attitudes that Muslims should not have. This is because in history, Muslims have never been taught by either the Prophet or the Companions to disrupt a particular country or nation, where that nation has stood steadily. The various conquests carried out by the Apostles and Companions were a form of self-defense from harm directed at Muslims (FGD with 3 Malaysian students in Shah Alam, 2019).

On the other hand, Malaysian students' understanding of radicalism is singular. This does not generalize the knowledge of all students in Malaysia, but only representatives of students on the UNISEL campus. They view radicalism as a movement that struggles to achieve its goals using violence (extremism). In a sense, the radicalism movement that is understood always has the connotation of acts of terrorism. It is evident from several answers from interviews that stated that radicalism is a heinous act that can kill someone with a bomb attack or armed attack. The discussions also understood the radical movements they know, such as the Malaysian Mujahiddin Group (KMM) and Daesh (Talib et al., 2021). These two movements for UNISEL-Malaysia students are a form of resistance to undermine unity in the Malay country (FGD with 4 Malaysian students in Shah Alam, 2019). Thus, Malaysian students'

perceptions of radicalism are narrower. This is also caused by the political dynamics in Malaysia itself where extreme political movements are always labeled as revolutionary movements by the Kingdom of Malaysia (Chan, 2018; Saidin, 2019).

In this case, the meaning of radicalism in UNISEL students' perceptions is related to the premise of radicalism related to terrorism (Scott & Thomas, 2017). Even in the West, the conception of radicalism often leads to extremist actions. This then returns to the question of the definition of radicalism itself. However, as described in the theoretical framework, the term and meaning of radicalism at least fulfill two main concepts: political movements that want to change the state system and groups that use extreme or violent means to propagate a particular understanding.

The Effect of Religious Understanding at Universities

Furthermore, religious understanding at universities regarding the level of radicalism in Indonesian and Malaysian students is different due to receiving information in class, the effect of friends, discussions in communities/organizations, and news from social media.

Different university statuses cause the effect of differences in understanding of radicalism. This then affects the courses and or the information they receive in class. In the context of this research, the two universities that focus on research have significant differences, like their higher education institutions. UIN Bandung in Indonesia is a tertiary institution with an Islamic tertiary base, while Universiti Selangor in Malaysia is a public university. As a result, the curriculum of the two universities is different, where at UIN Islamic-based courses are very strong, while at UNISEL Islamic lectures are very rare.

However, some UNISEL students who became informants of this study were classified as having religious characteristics. This is evidenced by their participation in an Islamic *da'wah*-based student organization on their campus, namely the UNISEL Islamic Study Student Club (Kelab Mahasiswa Pengajian Islam --KMPI). Similar to the Student Activity Unit at UIN Bandung, KMPI UNISEL actively conducts Islamic studies, especially material harmony and peaceful Islam. KMPI's influence on students is even more significant when the student organization offers in-depth discussion studies about Islam. Muhammad Hafiy—the chairman of KMPI said that KMPI often discusses the history of Malay-Nusantara Islam in certain situations. Therefore, the relationship between Indonesian and Malaysian Islam has become common knowledge (MH, Malaysian Student, Interview, 2020).

In addition, understanding radicalism is also influenced by information received on social media. The development of data and the digitization of knowledge impact all people worldwide, including Indonesian and Malaysian students. These two groups of students were enlightened about the dangers of radical movements entering the university through social media. At UIN itself, students feel radicalism is a real threat that can change their mindset. This context is even more worrying when the Setara Institute release states that UIN Bandung is one of the campuses with the highest level of intolerance in Indonesia.

As a result, a cautious attitude responds to every campus organizational movement, especially external movements (FGD with 2 Indonesian students in Bandung, 2020). Therefore, social media is an effective weapon to see the extent of the dynamics of the campus and student organization movements at UIN itself.

UNISEL students feel the same way; they are always active in using social media, especially accessing the campus website, so they do not miss any information. The dynamic campus website at UNISEL also always presents various actual news content about the campus, including information related to student religious activities. Therefore, the campus website for UNISEL students is beneficial. In addition

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to the campus website, the exciting thing for UNISEL students is that they often access information in Indonesia. They even know about the multi-volume movement for the blasphemy case by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok. Through this information, UNISEL students also learned about the fanaticism of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) (FGD with 3 Malaysian students in Shah Alam, 2019).

Moderate Islam: A Joint Solution to Counter Radicalism in Indonesia-Malaysia

The most crucial thing agreed upon by the two groups of students—Indonesia and Malaysia—is the idea of the concept of moderate Islam or *wasatiyyah*. In Indonesia, this concept became known in 2019, especially the one introduced by the Minister of Religion Lukman Hakim Saifuddin (in other terms, it is known as religious moderation). The concept of moderate Islam itself in Indonesia was later revealed in four official indicators, namely: 1) national commitment; 2) tolerance; 3) non-violence; and 4) accommodating to local culture (Kementrian Agama, 2019). *First*, national commitment is significant in seeing the extent to which a person's religious attitudes, views, and practices and their implications for loyalty to the national basis, especially devotion to Pancasila and the state ideology. *Second,* tolerance is an attitude of giving space and not disturbing or eliminating the rights of others in expressing their beliefs or opinions in a public audience. Tolerance refers to an open, generous, and gentle attitude in accepting differences. *Third,* anti-violence is the antithesis of radical groups' violence often perpetrated. *Fourth,* accommodation to local culture is an attitude of getting the nation's local culture and traditions in religious life, such as accepting *amaliah* (practices) of cultural accommodation with religious life on condition that it does not conflict with certain religious teachings (Junaedi, 2019; P. Setia, Rosyad, Dilawati, Resita, & Imron, 2021).

Meanwhile, in Malaysia itself, the concept of Moderate Islam was first introduced by their former prime minister, Moh Najib Tun Abdul Razak, who was oriented towards the government's desire to create a more harmonious unity among multiracial, multireligious, and multicultural societies. The concept of Moderate Islam in Malaysia became known in the state vision of 1Malaysia on racial unification (Z. S. A. Rahman, 2021). It contains three main characteristics, namely: the principle of acceptance (tolerance), statehood (unity), and social justice (justice) (Mujani, Rozali, & Zakaria, 2015). Tolerance is interpreted as an effort to respect differences; there is mutual respect and acceptance even though there are differences in religion and way of life. The principle of freedom to practice this belief is the essence of religious moderation. Although it is entrenched in the Federal Constitution that Islam is the official state religion, adherents of other faiths are not prohibited from practicing their respective religions in peace and harmony.

Furthermore, the principle of statehood or unity and difference is maintained by following the moderate Islamic concept that reflects balance, neither excessive nor diminishing. Extremism will cause destruction; therefore, the principle of national unity must be implemented. The principle of social justice, which Islam interprets as social rights and the public interest, is much more guarded than individual rights. Justice is an important aspect to give birth to goodness or *wasatiyyah* in society. The principle of moderation aims to foster unity among people of different ethnicities. The principle of social justice can be seen in two main aspects: *first, wasatiyyah* in the distribution of political power, and *second,* in the distribution of wealth (Husain, Ramlee, Syed, Zain, & Jan, 2021).

Overall, the two concepts of moderate Islam from these two countries have the same goal: to counteract radical efforts that will undermine the country's integrity. Interestingly, moderate Islam in the two countries has the same principles or indicators: tolerance. This proves that the two nations' leaders share the same thoughts regarding issues also being faced together, namely radicalism and extremism.

Indeed, history has proven that these two countries are old brothers who have similarities in culture, religion, and living habits. Therefore, this similarity makes it an opportunity to create cooperation in anticipating and solving radicalism problems (Akhmetova & Jaafar, 2020).

The responses of the two groups of students were also very positive in responding to the concept of religious moderation in their respective countries. For Indonesian students, the idea of moderate Islam is proof that the Indonesian people from the start have been moderate, do not like conflict, and do not like violence. Indonesian students also believe that the idea of moderate Islam itself is a reinforcement that entering Islam into Indonesia is also carried out peacefully (FGD with 3 Indonesian students in Bandung, 2019). Meanwhile, for Malaysian students, the idea of *wasatiyyah* (moderate Islam) is a breakthrough by the government advancing in fighting the rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in their country. After all, the ISIS movement is a dangerous thorn that must be fought with an understanding that connotes Bumi Putera Malaysia. In addition, Malaysian students also believe that the issue of radicalism is a global problem that will not only affect their country, but also other countries, especially neighboring countries with a majority of Islam such as Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, therefore for Malaysian students there is cooperation to fight extremist ideas. should be able to do the three countries (FGD with 3 Malaysian students in Shah Alam, 2019).

As such, youth involvement in radical groups will remain a growing concern in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Malaysia (Akhmetova & Jaafar, 2020); many parties must increase security and raise awareness of the dangers of religiously based violent extremism.

CONCLUSION

The assumption that radicalism will not attack educated people like students is not valid. Various studies have shown that the radicalism movement has penetrated the campus world, especially students. This radicalism has become a global phenomenon because it is found in multiple parts of the world, including Indonesia and Malaysia. Therefore, this study succeeded in revealing the perceptions of Indonesian-Malaysian students about radicalism. Although these two countries are in the same family, the characteristics of education and students are different. In responding to radicalism, Indonesian students have a deeper perspective on radicalism. They say that radicalism comes from the perpetrators' doctrine in their daily activities. As a result, radicalism has high, medium, and low levels for Indonesian students. The high level is interpreted as a political movement to replace the government system of a sovereign state; for example, a movement for the purification of Islam through the establishment of the *Khilafah*.

Meanwhile, the middle and low levels lead to an attitude of intolerance and do not accept the opinions of others (closed-minded). The different contexts are understood by Malaysian students who view that the meaning of radicalism is singular, namely an act that leads to violence and extremes to realize the group's wishes. For Malaysian students, radicalism is synonymous with terrorist activities. These two views are based on different religious knowledge at the university level. The curriculum accepted in religious courses is very different from those offered on Indonesian and Malaysian campuses. In addition, another influential factor is the knowledge gained in organizational activities and social media. As provided in Indonesia and Malaysia, moderate Islam has the same connotation of creating a peaceful and serene life. Therefore, the two students from two different countries believe that moderate Islam is the complete solution to overcome the radicalism movement in Indonesia and Malaysia if appropriately implemented. Going forward, researches are needed that is less subjective, while still engaging in a complex examination of the relationship between identity, ideas, and violence.

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