



EDUKASIA ISLAMIKA
Journal of Islamic Education
Vol. 8, No. 1 June 2023, hlm 127- 148
P-ISSN: 2548-723X; E-ISSN: 2548-5822

**Salafi-Jihadist Movements and Ideology in Educational Institutions:
Exploring the Nexus with Religious Moderation**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v8i1.7658>

Received: 27 Mar 2023

Revised: 5 May 2023

Approved: 21 June
2023

Available Online: 28
June 2023

Abstrak

Penyebaran gerakan Salafi-Jihadis secara global telah menimbulkan kekhawatiran serius terkait infiltrasi ideologis ke dalam institusi pendidikan, terutama di negara-negara mayoritas Muslim seperti Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana ideologi Salafi-Jihadis beroperasi dalam institusi pendidikan Islam dan bagaimana pengaruh tersebut berinteraksi dengan program moderasi beragama yang digalakkan oleh negara. Berbasis pada pendekatan historis kritis, penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan menggabungkan analisis isi terhadap literatur ilmiah dan analisis aktor guna memetakan karakter ideologis Salafi-Jihadis serta respon institusional terhadap penyebarannya. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan tiga hal utama: pertama, gerakan Salafi-Jihadis menghadirkan interpretasi Islam yang kaku dan eksklusif sehingga menantang praktik keberagamaan yang inklusif; kedua, daya tarik ideologi ini terletak pada klaim autentisitas skriptural dan kesederhanaan puritan yang memikat kalangan muda tertentu; ketiga, program moderasi beragama melalui reformasi kurikulum, kebijakan institusional, dan penguatan budaya moderat terbukti efektif sebagai strategi kontra-radikalisasi. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi penting bagi perumus kebijakan, pendidik, dan tokoh agama untuk membangun kerangka pencegahan yang berbasis pada teologi inklusif dan pedagogi kritis. Penelitian ini memperkaya pemahaman mengenai kontestasi ideologis dalam pendidikan Islam serta menawarkan strategi yang terarah untuk melindungi institusi pendidikan dari ekstremisme.

Kata Kunci: *Salafi-Jihadis, Moderasi Beragama, Pendidikan Islam, Infiltrasi Ideologis, Kontra-Radikalisasi*

Abstract

The global proliferation of Salafi-Jihadist movements has raised serious concerns about ideological infiltration into educational institutions, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries like Indonesia. This study aims to explore how Salafi-Jihadist ideology manifests within Islamic educational institutions and how such influence interacts with state-promoted religious moderation programs. Positioned within a critical historical framework, this research employs a qualitative design that integrates content analysis of scholarly literature and actor based inquiry to map the ideological characteristics of Salafi-Jihadism and the institutional responses to its spread. The findings highlight three key insights: first, Salafi-Jihadist movements present a doctrinally rigid and exclusionary interpretation of Islam that challenges inclusive religious practices; second, the ideological appeal of Salafi-Jihadism lies in its claim to scriptural authenticity and puritanical simplicity, making it attractive to specific youth cohorts; and third, religious moderation initiatives—particularly through curriculum reform, institutional policy, and cultural engagement—serve as effective counter-strategies to mitigate radical influences. These findings offer important implications for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders, emphasizing the urgency of developing preventive frameworks that integrate theological inclusivity and critical pedagogy. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the ideological contestations within Islamic education and proposes grounded strategies to safeguard religious institutions from extremism.

Keywords: *Salafi-Jihadism, Religious Moderation, Islamic Education, Ideological Infiltration, Counter-Radicalization*

INTRODUCTION

Since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the global discourse surrounding Islamic movements has intensified, highlighting its profound socio-political implications. This tragedy, linked to al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden, dramatically altered the global order and amplified tensions in Islamic–Western relations (Silke, 2008; W. Roberts, 2009). In its aftermath, Islam became increasingly associated with violence, leading to widespread Islamophobia. Samari (2016) documented a fivefold increase in anti-Muslim sentiments in the United States post 9/11. These dynamics transformed political and media narratives and global perceptions of Islam. The rise of Islamophobia is thus not merely reactive but deeply embedded in the politicized portrayal of Islam in Western discourse. Consequently, the association between Islam and terrorism became entrenched in public consciousness, fueling exclusion and discrimination. These post-9/11 realities illustrate how global security crises have intersected with religious identity, reshaping both national policies and everyday interactions with Muslims worldwide.

Islamophobia has intensified in tandem with increasing acts of extremism by Muslims, heavily shaped by media and political rhetoric. Studies indicate that the discourse on terrorism disproportionately targets Muslims, reinforcing harmful

stereotypes (Bazian & Awaad, 2021). Said (1997) argues that U.S. media constructs Islam with ethnocentric and racialized hostility. These biased representations exacerbate fear and alienation among Muslims, particularly in Western countries. At the same time, terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Taliban, and ISIL—labelled under the Global Terrorism Index as the deadliest in 2019—justify violence through Islamic terminologies (Peace, 2020). Phrases like “jihad,” “establishment of the Caliphate,” and “purification of Islam” are mobilized as ideological tools to legitimate extremism. The term Salafi-Jihadist itself emerged from this context to describe movements that advocate violent jihad under Salafist teachings (Hegghammer, 2009). These developments place Muslim-majority nations, such as Indonesia, in a particularly vulnerable position, where religious identity becomes contested. The rise of global jihadist ideology requires urgent academic attention, particularly within educational institutions, where identity formation and ideological transmission occur.

In Indonesia, jihadist rhetoric and movements have gained momentum, particularly after the fall of the New Order and during the Reformasi era. Historical figures like SM Kartosoewirjo once advocated for an Islamic state, laying the ideological groundwork for contemporary Salafi-Jihadist influence. Research by Wahid Foundation shows a rise in intolerance among Muslims, from 51.0% in 2016 to 57.1% in 2017, with 13.2% supporting violent jihad (Damarjati, 2018). Further surveys revealed a decline in support for Pancasila, with increasing endorsement for an Islamic Republic (Faiq, 2018), and strong support for regional Sharia laws (Zunita Amalia, 2018). Despite such alarming indicators, few studies have comprehensively examined the ideological infiltration of Salafi-Jihadism in universities. Moreover, the educational sector is often considered neutral or passive, disregarding its potential as a breeding ground for ideological contestation. Thus, this article addresses a significant gap in the literature by analyzing how Salafi-Jihadist ideologies manifest and operate within educational institutions, and how these ideologies challenge religious moderation. The limited empirical engagement with these dynamics underscores the critical need for this study.

This study employs a theoretical framework grounded in political Islam, Salafism, and the concept of religious moderation to unpack ideological shifts in educational settings. The Salafi-Jihadist movement is understood not merely as a theological deviation but as a socio political construction that mobilizes doctrine for militant purposes. Building on Kepel and Hegghammer’s foundational work, the research conceptualizes Salafi-

Jihadism as an ideological hybrid combining puritanical teachings with political militancy (Hegghammer, 2009). Meanwhile, religious moderation is defined through the lens of inclusive, non-violent, and contextual Islamic understanding that aligns with national identity. This contrast creates a dialectical framework for examining ideological contestation. The research investigates how religious narratives, symbols, and actors intersect with institutional frameworks by applying content analysis and actor analysis within this paradigm. The integration of theoretical perspectives enables a layered understanding of Salafi-Jihadist penetration and its counter through moderation discourses. Ultimately, this framework reveals how ideology is both constructed and contested within educational environments, providing a more nuanced view of institutional resilience and vulnerability.

This article aims to examine the ideology, characteristics, and doctrinal interpretations of Salafi-Jihadist Islam in educational institutions and to explore its implications for promoting religious moderation. Specifically, the study investigates how ideological content is transmitted, who the main actors are, and how institutional policies respond. By engaging these dimensions, the study seeks to uncover both the mechanisms of radical ideological diffusion and the resilience strategies embedded in educational policies and cultures. The research responds to earlier scholarly gaps by focusing not only on overt radical movements but also on the subtle entrenchment of ideology through informal and formal channels. The article thus contributes both to the scholarship of religious education and to counter-extremism studies. It also aims to inform policy recommendations, particularly in designing effective pedagogical and institutional responses to radical ideologies. Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen the role of educational institutions as bastions of religious moderation and civic pluralism in democratic societies like Indonesia.

The study posits that Salafi-Jihadist ideology in educational institutions constitutes a covert yet potent threat to moderate Islam and national ideology. Data from Setara Institute reveals that among university students, 53% hold exclusive or ultra-exclusive views, while 8.1% adhere to ultra-formalist political perspectives (Setara, 2019). Furthermore, religious actors such as preachers and Quranic teachers are key sources of ideological transmission, influencing students' perspectives on jihad and the state (Wendry et al., 2020). Surveys in 2023 show that over 56% of students support the implementation of Islamic law and believe that Pancasila can be replaced (Diko, 2023;

Saputra, 2023). These findings underscore the urgency of examining educational spaces as sites of ideological contestation. This article argues that institutions can either perpetuate or mitigate radical ideologies depending on their approach to religious discourse, curriculum, and student engagement. Thus, reinforcing religious moderation through institutional reform is not only necessary but imperative. The convergence of empirical data and theoretical insights supports this critical line of argument.

This study affirms the urgency of strengthening religious moderation within educational institutions as a response to the growing threat of Salafi-Jihadist ideologies. It contends that higher education, as a critical site for ideological negotiation, must be proactive in cultivating inclusive Islamic values. The decreasing index of radicalism in Indonesia, as reported by BNPT and supported by the RPJMN framework, reflects the positive impact of moderation campaigns (Admin, 2022; Public Relations, 2022; Panrb, 2022; Sadidah, 2023). However, these gains remain fragile without continuous institutional commitment. As such, this study contributes to academic inquiry and policymaking by identifying key factors shaping ideological resilience within universities. It offers practical insights for stakeholders, including educators, religious authorities, and state institutions, to develop comprehensive and culturally embedded counter-radicalization strategies. The study's findings highlight the potential of moderate religious education as a foundational element for national integration and peacebuilding, reaffirming the centrality of inclusive Islamic discourse in Indonesia's democratic project.

METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis in this study focuses on the ideological structures and discursive practices of Salafi-Jihadist movements as they manifest within educational institutions in Indonesia. This issue is highly relevant given the increasing concern over radical religious ideologies undermining pluralistic education and national identity. As ideological movements often operate through informal networks and symbolic narratives (Wiktorowicz, 2005), understanding their entry points and mechanisms in universities becomes central to any effort toward religious moderation. This focus is justified by the urgency to counteract the ideological penetration of radicalism in environments intended for critical and inclusive thinking. Numerous studies have highlighted the role of campuses as centers of knowledge and contested ideological terrains (Muthohirin et al., 2022; Suralaga et al., 2020). The growth of Salafi-Jihadist currents within these spaces

suggests an alarming contradiction between the objectives of education and the ideologies being subtly implanted. The unit of analysis was operationalized by examining religious discourses, organizational networks, and ideological expressions present within Islamic education faculties, student organizations, and teaching materials. The analysis involved both institutional observations and documentation of ideological symbols and language used in student and lecturer discourse. By focusing on these indicators, the study identifies the interplay between Salafi-Jihadist ideology and formal education processes.

This study employed a qualitative research design rooted in a historical-interpretive approach, which is particularly appropriate for analyzing ideological trajectories and movement-based transformations (Babbie, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Such an approach is essential when the subject matter involves abstract doctrines, narrative framing, and actor mobilization, all of which are central to Salafi-Jihadist movements. The rationale for this qualitative design lies in the complexity and fluidity of radical ideological infiltration. Quantitative methods would be insufficient to capture the subtleties of religious discourse and the dynamic interaction between ideology and policy responses. Instead, a qualitative design allows for in-depth analysis of beliefs, motivations, and institutional reactions within a culturally and politically situated context. Data were gathered through a triangulated strategy involving historical content analysis, online discourse monitoring, and actor-based observation. The research design included case selection from prominent Islamic universities and involved discursive mapping of ideological expressions. This layered design enabled the study to reveal structural trends while contextualizing them within the broader landscape of Indonesian Islamic education and political dynamics.

The primary sources of information comprised ideological narratives from online platforms, journal articles, religious forums, and statements by religious organizations linked to Salafi-Jihadist discourses. These were complemented by interviews with lecturers affiliated with ADPISI, as well as policy statements and publications from national bodies like the Ministry of Religious Affairs and BNPT. Online media and digital forums are particularly important in understanding how Salafi-Jihadist ideas are framed, disseminated, and debated. Prior studies (Tibi, 2012; Hasan, 2010) underscore the role of digital platforms in accelerating radical outreach. The use of these sources thus reflects the methodological imperative to capture the real-time formation and distribution of ideological content. The study mapped ideological content across five

major online platforms and three official educational policy sites. Information was systematically categorized based on themes: religious authority, jihadist interpretation, and moderation response. In-depth interviews added contextual richness and confirmed patterns detected in secondary sources. These combined sources strengthened the reliability and validity of the data interpretation process.

Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: (1) document analysis of ideological and counter-radicalization texts; (2) virtual ethnography of online religious forums and social media; and (3) semi-structured interviews with religious education lecturers and moderation actors. This combination ensures both breadth and depth of understanding regarding ideological diffusion. The justification for these methods lies in the multi-layered nature of religious ideological movements. Online forums are the primary arena for radical messaging and recruitment, while academic figures and policy actors offer insights into institutional vulnerabilities and responses (Mandaville, 2007). Together, they form a comprehensive lens for capturing ideological flows. Document selection was based on purposive sampling of publications from Salafi and anti-radical organizations. Online forums were monitored over a six-month period using keyword-tracking methods to capture dominant discourses. Interviews were conducted using a flexible guide, allowing participants to elaborate on institutional strategies and ideological perceptions. Data saturation was achieved when recurrent patterns and themes emerged across sources. The analysis followed a three-step interpretive method: restatement, pattern identification, and deep interpretation (Erickson, 1986). First, ideological narratives and institutional responses were restated in descriptive form. Then, cross-case patterns were identified based on typology, discourse frames, and ideological intensity. Finally, interpretation was developed to understand the deeper structural and cultural logics behind Salafi-Jihadist penetration and religious.

Interpretative analysis was chosen for its suitability in exploring meanings embedded within texts and actor narratives. This approach recognizes the symbolic dimensions of radical ideologies and allows for uncovering implicit values and contested meanings (Geertz, 1973). It aligns with the goal of deconstructing radical discourse and reconstructing a framework of moderation within Islamic education. The data were coded thematically using NVivo, focusing on six main codes: Salafi characteristics, jihadist justification, narrative framing, institutional response, moderation discourse, and ideological resistance. Coding reliability was ensured through intercoder checking and

validation workshops with research colleagues. This rigorous process enabled the study to build a coherent model of ideological contestation and moderation within educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mapping the Ideology, Characteristics, and Genealogy of the Salafi Jihadist Islamic Movement

1. Salafi Jihadist Islamic Terminology and Interpretation

In the context of Islamic movements, the word *Salafi* is associated with the attitude of Muslims who emphasize the importance of clinging to first-century Islam's religious and political authority. It is based on the paradigm that it is believed that Islam is perfect and became a *role model* in Islam in the generation of the prophet Muhammad and two generations after him. The Islamic experience of the first three generations of Islam is believed to be orthodoxy, i.e., pure and unpolluted. Later generations believed many deviations and contaminations resulted from influences from cultures and ideologies from outside Islam. Therefore, Salafists seek to purify Islam by cleansing it of its cultural and ideological influences, which it calls *Bid'ah* and *Khurafat*. Not only does it believe Salafists feel obliged to invite and direct people outside their group to return to the Islam they understand, which they say is under the understanding of *Salafus Salih* (Ali, 2019).

The Salafi paradigm intersects with Wahhabism because both have the spirit to return to Islamic orthodoxy as practiced by the first three generations of Islam. Wahhabism is attributed to Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1702-1792). Because they both carry the same spirit, Salafi, Salafism, and Wahhabism are often interchanged, even though they have points of similarity and differences (Ali, 2019). Four doctrines intersect between Salafism and Wahhabism. *First*, both return to the main source of Islamic teachings, the Qur'an and Hadith, so that all Islamic thought (*Al-Afkar Al-Islamiyah*) born from the device of secular disciplines, for example, were instantly rejected. *Second*, strict rules between believers and non-believers. Salafis and Wahabis have been harsh on groups and outside their ideas, often accused of heresy and infidels. In this context, the concept arises *al-wala' wa al-bara'* (loyalty and denial) and *takfir* (disbelief) of groups and thoughts outside themselves. *Third*, both Salafists and Wahhabis reject Shia because the Shia cult is against imams, and reject three *Khulafaur Rashidin* except Sayyidina Ali. *Fourth*, *hisbah* (da'wah) through *Al-Amar Bi Al-Ma'ruf Wa al-Nahy 'an Al-Munkar*, is the culmination of jihad by showing a challenging attitude (Ma'ruf, 2016).

The word "jihadi" in the phrase "Salafi Jihadi" has the same root as the word "jihad" (Shihab, 2005). The term "Salafi Jihadi" refers to one of the groups of modern Salafis. Tariq defines these Salafi Jihadis as Salafist groups that spread rebellion and violence against their enemies, as al-Qaeda does. Mohamed Ali quotes Tariq Abdelhaleem as classifying eight modern Salafist groups, one of which is the global jihadist (Ali, 2019). According to Seth G. Jones, there are 40 organizations categorized as Salafi Jihadi, of which al-Qaeda is the core organization (Jones, 2014).

2. Characteristics of Salafi Jihadist Thought and Movement

An essential characteristic of Salafi jihadis is the use of violence and terrorism, believed in jihad to combat infidel regimes and expand the Islamic state (dar al-Islam). Magnus Ranstorp wrote:

Salafi-Jihadists believe that every Muslim has an individual duty to fight unbeliever regimes to expand dar al-Islam (Abode of Islam). For them, Europe is considered to be dar al-harb (Abode of War). Salafi- Jihadists seek to wage perpetual armed jihad, which is considered individually obligatory, until Judgement Day. These Salafi-Jihadists have strong categorization of enemies that are considered un-Islamic and must be fought alongside specific phraseology for these enemies that serve as dehumanizing (Ranstorp, 2020).

Emily N. Mayfield gives some characteristics related to Salafi jihadists. *First*, the concept of *tawhid*, the belief that there is only one God that every Muslim should believe in. According to Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, this *tawhid* has three components: *Tawhid Rububiyya*, *Tawhid Uluhiyya*, *Tawhid al-Asmaa wa al-Nature*. All three of these components must be executed and believed at once. With this concept, bin Abdul Wahhab wanted to affirm that *tawhid* is not only in the heart but must also manifest in action. *Second*, *bid'ah* refers to beliefs or actions incompatible with the Qur'an and sunnah, especially as practiced by *Salaf al-Shaleh*. For Salafis, many heresies occur due to the fusion of local culture with Islamic teachings. *Third*, Salafists maintain that there is no division or distinction among Islamic schools of thought (*madhabs*) because Islam is seen as a unified entity. According to this perspective, all Muslims are expected to adhere to the same core beliefs and practices, emphasizing the unity and universality of Islam. *Fourth*, jihad is the culmination of the practice of Islamic teachings. A Muslim cannot be perfectly categorized as a believer if he does not practice jihad. In this context, the definition of jihad in the sense of committing violence and terror can be justified as an attempt to carry out the teachings of Islam. *Fifth*, disbelief (*takfir*) to people or groups who do not share the same understanding as him. Salafis believe that Muslims are single in faith and

understanding and that true belief and understanding are in their version, so people or groups whose beliefs and understandings do not conform to them are considered infidels. This *takfir* justifies committing acts of violence and terror against people and groups convicted of infidels. *Sixth, Al-Wala wa al-Bara*, which linguistically means loyalty and denial. Through this concept, every Muslim should not like, let alone imitate and practice, the practices and behaviors of non-Muslims (Mayfield, 2015).

3. Genealogy of the Salafi-Jihadi Movement: From Global to Indonesian

Many scholars and researchers associate the history of the emergence of Salafis with the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah. Thinking Salafi can already be found in the period before Ibn Taymiyyah, in the group *Ahl al-Hadith* (Ali, 2019). This hadith emphasizes the use of hadith, rejecting the existence of *taqlid*, and limiting the existence of interpretation and contextualization in understanding the primary sources of Islamic teachings.

The focus of this study is more on what is called modern Salafism, namely Salafism after Ibn Taymiyyah, commanded by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1989), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and Rashid Rida (1865-1935). Salafists rely on Ahmad ibn Hambal (d. 855), who is known as Imam Ahlussunnah among Salafis. In addition to Ahmad ibn Hambal and Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1702-1792) also exerted a profound influence on *manhaj* Modern Salafi. Mohamed Ali gave two forms or types of modern Salafis. First, Salafi refers to a school of thought born in the late nineteenth century in Egypt and Damascus in response to the spread of European ideas. This type of Salafism was very close to modernist reformers such as Muhammad Abduh (died 1905). Second, the Salafi group founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is widely known as the *Wahhabism* (Ali, 2019).

Starting from a thought, this Salafism believes that many religious practices deviate from Islamic teachings. Those who did not share the same understanding as Abdul Wahhab and his followers were accused of infidels, apostates, and idolatry. Infidel accusations (*takfir*) This is done when he does not have enough firepower to muzzle and finish off different groups (Wahid, 2009). In the next stage, Salafi thoughts then grew and manifested into a movement to invite people to return to the pure teachings of Islam, he resorted to violence to effect societal change. The first act of violence committed by Ibn Abdul Wahhab was the destruction of the tomb of Zaid bin al-Khattab. Ibn Abdul Wahhab's thoughts and actions grew when he received support from Muhammad bin Sa'ud, a collaboration that would later give birth to the Saudi-Wahhabi Kingdom. In 1746,

these Wahhabis declared jihad in the sense of violence and war to anyone who had a different understanding of Islam. In 1920, no less than 400,000 Muslims were killed for spreading this teaching (Wahid, 2009).

This Salafi ideology and movement continue to grow with significant financial support. The Muslim Brotherhood, which did not have much funding but had learned cadres then, became a *partner of* Salafi-Wahhabis. Then born, several hardline Islamic movements have spread throughout the world until now, including al-Qaeda (Wahid, 2009). From al-Qaeda were born several hardline Islamist movements, both local and as splinters due to internal frictions. Al Qaeda continues to evolve and become a *trend*. Global terrorism is born out of the context of Arab societies frustrated with the modernization process that is taking place in which there are economic inequalities, consumerism, and secularization. In other words, al Qaeda is a *trend* the embodiment of the anti-globalization movement or the manifestation between "central" and "periphery" nations in the era of globalization (Prihandono, 2013). Esposito also provided a similar analysis. According to him, Osama Bin Laden can cleverly catch grievances against the regime and the state of the economy. The voices of the Arabs were then wrapped in religious texts to be voiced loudly to Western society. Islamic societies, which share concerns about economic inequality, modernization, and globalization, feel represented by bin Laden's movements (Esposito., 2002).

In the Indonesian context, Salafi thought and movement began to enter Indonesia before Indonesian independence. As a movement, the forerunner of Salafism in Indonesia began with the return of several West Sumatran youths, Haji Miskin, Haji Abdurrahman, and Haji Muhammad Arif, from Saudi Arabia in the early 19th century, who at that time were much influenced by the thoughts and renewal movements carried out by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. The young man was fascinated by the renewal movement in Saudi Arabia, so they spread this ideology. From here was born the first Salafi movement in Indonesia, known as the Padri movement, which triumphed from 1803 to 1832; one of the central figures was Tuanku Imam Bonjol (Al-Thalibi, 2006).

In the 1980s, the Salafi movement in Indonesia was represented by students and alumni of the early generation of LIPIA (Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences) and several alumni of Middle Eastern universities. Some of its central figures are Ja'far Umar Talib, Yazid Abd al-Qadir Jawaz, Yusuf Usman Baisa, Muhammad Umar as-Sewed, Aunurrafiq Gufron, and Abu Nida, among others (Krismono, 2017). The Salafi

movement in Indonesia strengthened with the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime and into the reform era. Several Islamic organizations that spread Salafism, committed acts of violence, and even terrorism began to emerge. Since the reform era, terrorist events have occurred in the country. The series of terror events in the form of bombs became a new threat starting with the bombing of the Istiqlal mosque (1999), JSX Jakarta (2000), Medan Church Bomb (2000), Atrium Bomb (2001), Hayam Wuruk Plaza Bomb (2003) to the popular Bali bombings I and II (2002 and 2005).

Salafi Jihadists in Educational Institutions and Their Connection to the Mainstreaming of Religious Moderation

1. Portraits of Salafi Jihadis in Educational Institutions

In the context of educational institutions, some data shows how Salafi Jihadi ideology has penetrated quite profoundly into schools. This discussion is obtained from various media observations related to Salafi Jihadi ideology.

- a. Research against 110 Perpetrators of Terrorism Themed "*Research on Motivation and Root Causes of Terrorism*" conducted by The Indonesian Research Team, 2012; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, INSEP and Densus 88. This study found that 47.3% of terrorism perpetrators were young people with an average age of 21-30 years. Perpetrators of terrorism are young people with a high school education level (63.6%) (Mandailing, 2016).
- b. Institute for Islamic Studies and Peace (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Perdamaian/LaKIP*) conducted a study involving Islamic religious teachers and high school students in the Jabodetabek area. The survey data found several findings, i.e., 62.4 percent of religious teachers refuse to have non-Muslim leaders. 68.6% of religious teachers oppose the appointment of non-Muslims to their principals. 73.1% of religious teachers reject non-Muslim houses of worship in their neighborhoods. 85.6% of religious teachers forbid their students from celebrating activities considered "Western traditions". 87% of religious teachers forbid their students from studying other religions. 61.1% reject the new sect in Islam. 67.4% of respondents feel more as Muslims than as Indonesians. 58.9% of respondents supported stoning, 47.5% of respondents supported the law of cutting off hands for thieves, and 21.3% agreed to provide the death penalty for apostates from Islam (Sanaky & Safitri, 2016).

- c. Alvara's survey of 4,200 students in Java and several significant cities outside Java yielded as follows: 1) Almost 25% of students are 'ready to wage jihad for the establishment of an Islamic state/caliphate' 2) Less than 20% of students prefer Islamic ideology over Pancasila. 3) Almost 20% of students agree that the *Khilafah* is the ideal form of government compared to the Republic of Indonesia, 4) About 20% of students consider Sharia Regional Regulations appropriate to accommodate followers of the majority religion, 5) Almost 25% of students agree with the statement 'Islamic states need to be fought for the implementation of Islam *Kaffah* (thorough) (Sitepu, 2017).
- d. Survey of the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat/PPIM*) to 2,237 Muslim teachers in 34 provinces. Several essential data stated that: 1) 57% of teachers have an intolerant view towards followers of other religions, 2) 37.77% of respondents are willing to commit intolerant acts, 3) 82.77% of teachers agree that Islam is the only solution to overcome all problems of society. 4) 62.22% of teachers agree that only a system of government based on Islamic Sharia is best for the country. 5) 75.98% of teachers agree that the government should enforce Islamic law for its adherents. 6) 79.72% of teachers agree that in choosing leaders (president, governor, regent/mayor), Muslims are obliged to elect candidates who fight for the implementation of Islamic law. 7) 23.42% of teachers agree that the Indonesian government based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution is *Thaghut* for having taken away Allah's right as a lawmaker., 8) 64.23% of teachers agree that non-Muslims are not allowed to be President in Indonesia(Admin, 2018).
- e. The National Counterterrorism Agency said seven prominent campuses were indicated to be exposed to radicalism. The seven campuses are the University of Indonesia (UI), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Diponegoro University (Undip), to the November 10 Institute of Technology (ITS), Airlangga University (Unair), and Brawijaya University (UB) exposed to radicalism. Even the Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education (Menristekdikti) for the 2014-2019 period Mohamad Nasir said exposure to radicalism on campus has been going on since 1983, when the government's decision to implement the Normalization of Campus Life/Student Affairs Coordinating Board (NKK/BKK), so that practically political life on

campus was prohibited. The void is filled with groups that spread radical ideas (Newswire, 2018).

- f. Habibie Center research shows that the seeds of radicalism on campus have existed since the reform because many transnational Islamic organizations entered campuses. Not only that, the Habibie Center also mentioned that Public Universities, especially science and technology, are more vulnerable to radicalism than Religious Universities (Hadi Kuntjara et al., 2019).

The Habibie Center graphs the framework of various radicalism processes in universities in Indonesia as follows:

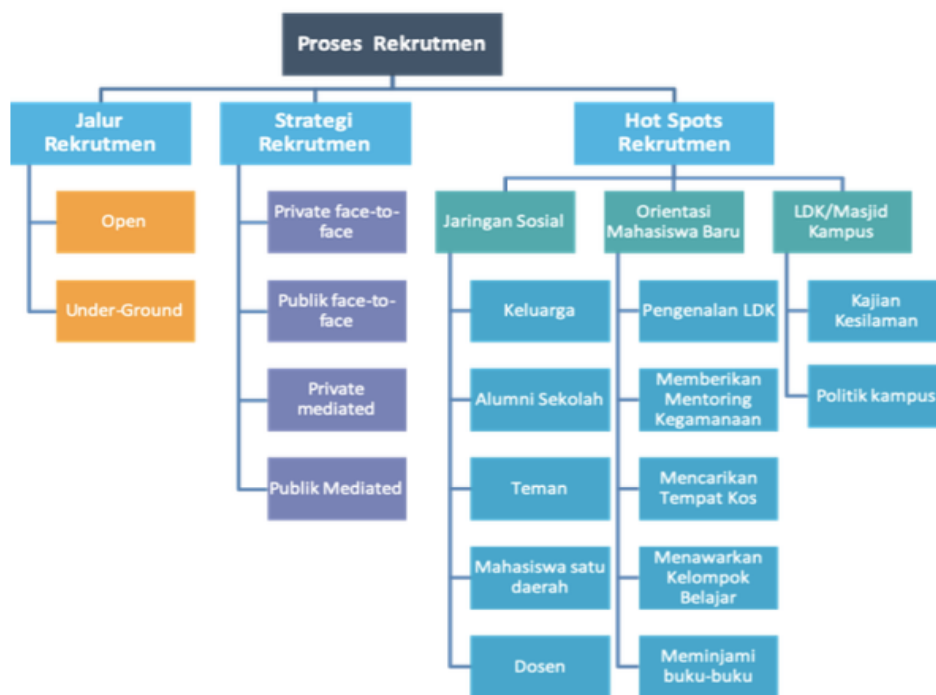


Figure 1. The Process of Radicalism at PT

2. Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Educational Institutions

The interpretation of moderation in this context is not only carried out individually. However, it becomes a strategy carried out rationally and systematically to make moderate religious views, attitudes, and behaviors as a perspective and basis for thinking mutually accepted in building human resources (HR) integrated into various institutions, including education.

The infiltration of Salafi Jihadist ideology emphasizes the need to influence religious moderation in educational institutions. Through an inclusive, educative, and dialogical approach, religious moderation can be a strong foundation against extremism. Extreme people often get caught up in religious practices in the name of God to defend

His majesty while leaving aside the human aspect. People who are religious in this way are willing to kill their fellow human beings "in the name of God" when safeguarding humanity is part of the core teachings of religion (Wibisono et al., 2019). In the 21st century, extremism is often seen as one of the most dangerous threats to humanity (Manshur & Husni, 2020). Mainstreaming religious moderation in education in Indonesia is a response to some groups' dynamics and problems of diversity and religion. Religious moderation is urgently needed to build civilization and humanitarian solidarity in this context.

Educational institutions serve as environments where inclusive, tolerant, moderate, and multicultural mindsets and attitudes are nurtured and developed. These mindsets and attitudes must be formed through perspectives and behaviors in the middle position without exaggeration in the religion (Saifudin, 2019). According to Lukman, religious moderation has become mainstream in the religious pattern of Indonesian society. Moderate religion has emerged as a distinctive feature among religious individuals in Indonesia, reflecting the country's pluralistic society. The religious model has long been practiced in the life of the Indonesian nation by placing an understanding that pays attention to religious texts, the country's constitution, local wisdom, and tolerance. A moderate, fair, and balanced mental attitude is the key to managing the diversity of the Indonesian nation.

Based on the interviews, the influence of religious moderation in educational institutions must be the leading force in implementing and strengthening religious moderation. Indeed, religious moderation is a terminology born from the Islamic spirit of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*. Therefore, infiltration and mainstreaming strategies for religious moderation in educational institutions are carried out in various terms that are in accordance with the characteristics, goals, vision, and mission of the education system itself. Religious moderation in educational institutions can be infiltrated with various efforts through a) Curriculum; b) Culture; c) Policies; d) Good practices.

Mainstreaming religious moderation in the learning process through the curriculum can be done both in formal and non-formal education. In formal education, teaching related to religious moderation can be done by inserting material related to a tolerance that accepts and rewards differences, respect for culture, love for the homeland and the struggle of the founding fathers, and nonviolence. In the interview session, the informant confirmed that:

"In every learning material, it is necessary to exemplify good deeds; this confirms that our disagreement with something can be conveyed well without anarchist speech and attitude".

This opinion is reinforced by Dinar in his research, revealing that formal education is the right way to structure religious moderation activities systematically. Non-formal institutions are very effective in the formation of moderate attitudes, this is inseparable from the practice of community life. Religious moderation in informal educational institutions such as *taklim* assemblies, Islamic boarding schools, and religious organizations is a strategic place because the role of actors is one of the keys to providing moderate religious knowledge and attitudes (Naj'ma & Bakri, 2021).

The establishment of a culture of religious moderation in educational institutions serves as an effective means to foster inclusive attitudes among the entire academic community. One of the efforts in bridging the formation of this culture is through the House of Religious Moderation (*Rumah Moderasi Beragama/RMB*) in religious universities and the *Griya Moderasi Beragama dan Bela Negara* (MBBN) in public universities. Through the RMB and Griya MBBN, the spirit of moderate Islam can become a shared value among all academic community members as a preventive measure against radicalism within the campus environment. In an interview, the informant revealed:

"Through MBBN with its various activities, it is hoped that it can produce students who become role models and agents of change in the family, campus, and community in instilling attitudes, behaviors, and characters that have a high sense of religious tolerance and can place diversity".

The policy of religious moderation in higher education is integrated through the three pillars (*tri dharma*) of higher education. In the field of teaching, the subject of religious moderation is made a mandatory course in universities or incorporated as teaching materials from a perspective of religious moderation. In the field of research, religious moderation is regarded as a value that can be developed across various disciplines so that research outcomes can contribute to evidence-based decision-making on religious moderation policies. In terms of community service, universities are essential in promoting a moderate and tolerant attitude, rejecting violence, and preserving local traditions within society. This includes promoting moderate religious literacy as part of these efforts.

The mainstreaming of religious moderation can then be done through good practices that have been carried out by various institutions and individuals, such as the example of the Wahid Foundation with the Peace School and Peace Village programs,

this can be emulated and applied in various other schools and villages to implement the same spirit with the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation between religions. Increasing the practice of different religious experiences so that cooperation between religious believers and socio-religious moderation approaches in religion and state is the main capital in creating a harmonious religious and state life amid differences.

Mainstreaming religious moderation in educational institutions provides short-term benefits and long-term impacts in shaping a society based on tolerance, harmony, and humanity. Educational institutions have a strategic role in creating a more harmonious and inclusive future through strengthening religious moderation and can be an essential step in countering radical ideological infiltration. This approach is taken in line with the ownership of social capital of the Indonesian nation, which is the sociocultural basis, including values, norms, relationships, outlook on life, and bonds of solidarity.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that educational institutions in Indonesia are becoming critical sites in the ideological contestation between Salafi-Jihadist doctrines and religious moderation. This ideological infiltration, if left unchecked, threatens the foundational values of tolerance, inclusivity, and pluralism that characterize Indonesian Islam. The research identifies specific mechanisms through which Salafi-Jihadist ideologies are disseminated, ranging from informal student religious groups to digital da'wah networks operating within campus boundaries. Empirical findings demonstrate that educational policies, curricular design, and institutional structures such as Rumah Moderasi significantly affect the success of moderating initiatives. Moreover, the study underscores that religious moderation can no longer be treated merely as a moral imperative, but must be structurally embedded within the academic culture to counteract extremism effectively. In sum, the findings highlight the importance of institutional resilience, pedagogical intervention, and value-based leadership in sustaining the ethos of moderate Islam amid ideological contestation in Indonesian higher education.

The findings presented in this article contribute meaningfully to the growing body of scholarship on religious education and ideological radicalism, especially within the Indonesian Islamic context. As an empirical exploration of how Salafi-Jihadist ideology interacts with educational structures, the study fills a significant research gap in

understanding institutional vulnerabilities and resilience strategies. Theoretically, this study refines the discourse on religious moderation (*wasatiyya*) by situating it within institutional mechanisms, offering a sociological framework that links ideology, pedagogy, and state policy. The articulation of initiatives like *Rumah Moderasi* and their practical implications uniquely contributes to policy development and institutional reform. In academic terms, this study shifts the discussion from abstract theological debates toward practical intervention models that can be adopted across diverse educational settings. Ultimately, this work repositions religious moderation not merely as a normative concept, but as a dynamic, institutionalized response to ideological extremism that is pedagogically grounded and policy-relevant.

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, this study is limited in scope by its reliance on historical and policy analysis without extensive ethnographic or longitudinal engagement within the educational institutions themselves. This limitation may restrict the depth of insight into the lived experiences of educators and students who navigate the tension between radicalism and moderation. Furthermore, the study has yet to fully capture the digital dimension of Salafi-Jihadist propagation, particularly through social media platforms and algorithmic influence that target young Muslim audiences. Future research should prioritize multi-sited ethnography, including digital ethnography, to explore how Salafi-Jihadist ideologies evolve and adapt to emerging digital ecosystems. It is also crucial to examine the roles of key stakeholders, such as policymakers, religious authorities, student organizations, and alumni networks, in crafting and sustaining counter-extremism strategies. Investigating these dimensions will provide a more comprehensive and contextually responsive understanding of ideological resilience and inform more adaptive, proactive educational interventions. Salafi Jihadist ideology and movements on social media platforms. These areas warrant further investigation to enhance our understanding of the subject matter and inform more effective strategies for countering extremist ideologies within educational settings.

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