

STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION TO COUNTER RADICALISM AMONG ISLAMIC EDUCATION TEACHERS IN SURABAYA SCHOOLS

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penguatan moderasi beragama untuk melawan radikalisme bagi gur-guru PAI di Sekolah di Surabaya. Bahaya radikalisme beragama di Indonesia masih menjadi ancaman bagi Masyarakat pada semua jenis profesi, termasuk guru-guru pendidikan agama Islam (PAI). Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) dan penggalan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, studi dokumentasi, dan diskusi terfokus dengan 20 informan, tentang radikalisme dan moderasi beragama guru-guru PAI pada sekolah-sekolah di Surabaya. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa sebelum diberikan tindakan penguatan moderasi beragama, secara kognitif, kecenderungan radikalisme guru-guru PAI termasuk dalam kategori tinggi (83%) dan kecenderungan moderasi beragamanya juga tinggi (85%). Setelah dilakukan pendampingan dalam bentuk pelatihan moderasi beragama, maka kecenderungan radikalisme beragamanya menurun menjadi rendah (55 %) dan kecenderungan moderasi beragamanya meningkat menjadi sangat tinggi (97 %). Hal ini menunjukkan pentingnya pendampingan untuk penguatan moderasi beragama bagi guru-guru PAI dan masyarakat secara luas agar mereka memiliki pemahaman dan sikap yang moderat dalam beragama dan anti radikalisme dalam beragama. Mengingat, guru-guru PAI merupakan aktor penting dalam membelajarkan materi-materi keagamaan bagi peserta didiknya.

Kata Kunci: Radikalisme, Moderasi Beragama, dan Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)

ABSTRACT

This article aims to describe the strengthening of religious moderation as a strategy to counter religious radicalism among Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in schools across Surabaya. The threat of religious radicalism in Indonesia continues to pose a serious risk to society across all professional sectors, including Islamic Religious Education teachers. This study adopts a *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach, with data collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and focused group discussions involving 20 informants. The research explores the dynamics of radicalism and religious moderation among PAI teachers in schools throughout Surabaya. The findings indicate that prior to the intervention aimed at strengthening religious moderation, the cognitive tendency toward radicalism among PAI teachers was categorized as high (83%), while their tendency toward religious moderation was also high (85%). Following a mentoring process in the form of religious moderation training, the tendency toward radicalism decreased to a low level (55%), while the tendency toward religious moderation significantly increased to a very high level (97%). These results highlight the crucial role of continuous mentoring and training programs in enhancing religious moderation among PAI teachers and the wider community. Such efforts are essential to cultivating a moderate understanding and attitude toward religion and rejecting religious radicalism. Given their strategic position, PAI teachers are key actors in delivering religious education to students.

Keywords: Radicalism, Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teachers

A. Introduction

Radicalism remains a significant issue for scholars and/or the government in Indonesia. Various incidents of violence perpetrated by individuals or groups with radical ideologies have frequently dominated mass media coverage. For instance, the suicide bombing at the Makassar Cathedral Church (March 28, 2021), as well as the attack on the Indonesian National Police Headquarters by a woman (March 31,



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2021), ¹ these are part of the *modus operandi* of radical movements that operate quietly. These two trivial cases rekindle memories of a series of terrorist acts from the past.² This serves as a warning to the government and society that the latent danger of radicalism remains a ticking time bomb if not addressed seriously at its roots. The reality of radicalism in Indonesia has actually existed in the past, for example, with the Darul Islam (DI) organization, which vocally sought to replace the Pancasila ideology with Islam during the early years of Indonesia's independence. Radicalism and its movements became more manifest after the collapse of the New Order regime, with groups such as Jama'ah Ikhwanul Muslimin, Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jamaah Anshar al-Daulah (JAD), and others.³ These movements did not appear or emerge abruptly.

The emergence of religious radicalism movements can be traced back far into history. In the study by Ahmad Najib Burhani, the genealogy of these movements is actually quite complex. One of the contributing factors to this complexity is the theological aspect. Religious texts that are understood in a hasty, literal, and scriptural manner, which ignore historical and sociological contexts, are key factors underlying the emergence of radicalism movements.⁴ As a result, they are inclined to legitimize and justify their acts of violence. This issue is not only prevalent in Indonesia, but also in various other Muslim countries, such as Pakistan, Palestine, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, and Malaysia.

There are many factors that trigger religious radicalism movements. In the study by Azyumardi Azra, radicalism in Indonesia occurs as a response to authoritarianism.⁵ For example, during the New Order era, the discourse of Islamic movements as a common enemy was tended to be 'preserved' to perpetuate the hegemony of power. This phenomenon erupted due to a wave of resistance from local communities against Westernization and modernization, which were seen as distancing society from welfare and Eastern culture, as they were 'defeated' in the global competition, particularly by Western dominance. The framing of Islam as a religion that fosters radicalism was amplified by pro-foreign (Western) media to the global community, thereby indirectly tarnishing Islam's image as a bearer of peace (*al-samhah*). Another tragic fact is the involvement of millennials and women in suicide bombing acts, such as the one that occurred at the Makassar Cathedral Church (March 28, 2021), which involved a newlywed couple who had been married for only a few months. To borrow the term from Akh. Muzakki, this has targeted women.⁶ In line with this, Musdah Mulia states that suicide bombing acts have

¹ <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210328150157-20623072/daftar-kasus-ledakan-bom-di-indonesia-2-dekade-terakhir> (accessed 26 August 2023).

² <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/12/25/07485601/kaleidoskop-2019sejumlah-teror-yang-guncang-indonesia-bom-bunuh-diri-hingga> (accessed 22 August 2023).

³ As' ad Said Ali, *Ideologi Gerakan Pasca-Reformasi: Gerakan-Gerakan Sosial-Politik Dalam Tinjauan Ideologis* (Yogyakarta: LP3ES, 2012).

⁴ Ahmad Najib Burhani, 'Al-Tawassuṭ Wa-l i 'tidāl: The NU and Moderatism in Indonesian Islam', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 40, no. 5-6 (2012): 564-81; Ahmad Najib Burhani, 'The Banning of Hizbut Tahrir and the Consolidation of Democracy in Indonesia', *ISEAS Perspective* 7 (2017): 1-10.

⁵ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam in Southeast Asia: Tolerance and Radicalism* (Centre for the Study of Contemporary Islam, Faculty of Law, University of Melbourne, 2005).

⁶ <https://www.jawapos.com/opini/02/04/2021/gendering-terrorism/?page=2> (accessed 28 August 2023).

involved women in recent years. Similarly, Gentry and Sjoberg argue that women's participation in this regard can be categorized as participation in terrorism.⁷

Radical ideologues are also highly inclined to target millennials. Millennials⁹ To borrow the term from Masdar Hilmy, they become potential recruits who are easily persuaded by the 'thin narrative' of radical ideology.⁸ According to him, young people are a vulnerable and naïve age group when it comes to being influenced by radical religious ideologies. The productive age group, particularly millennials, needs to be provided with and instilled with the correct religious concepts as early as possible. Young people are a demographic that is susceptible to exposure to radical religious ideologies. Another group that is also suspected of being exposed to radical ideologies is the Civil Servants (ASN), police officers, military personnel, and even Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in schools whose religious understanding is limited (shallow). According to research conducted by PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, many PAI teachers in schools have limited religious knowledge. Many PAI teachers lack understanding of the narratives and practices of religious moderation. Furthermore, the religious textbooks used in schools offer limited perspectives on diversity.⁹ Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the narratives, commitments, and practices of religious moderation as an effort to counter radicalism for PAI teachers in schools or madrasahs.

Several relevant studies include the work of Saiful Jazil, et al., which focuses on strengthening Aswaja an-Nahdliyah as an effort to anticipate radicalism among prospective Islamic Education teachers at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.¹⁰ Furthermore, Ali Sabri, et al., found the implementation of religious moderation and the attitude of *tasamuh* among students at MAS Al-Huda, which had implications for the development of better religious and social attitudes, manifested in practices such as devotion in worship, respect for others, fostering close relationships, social concern, nationalism, tolerance, and adherence to rules.¹¹ Next, Amjed Mohammad Alabd Alazeez, et al., identified the role of teachers in promoting Islamic tolerance culture among tenth-grade students in Jordan, focusing on the relationship between tolerance and variables such as gender and place of residence.¹²

⁷ Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, 'Female Terrorism and Militancy', in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies* (Routledge, 2016), 161-72. <https://www.routledge.com/Terrorism-Gender-and-Women-Toward-an-Integrated-Research-Agenda/Phelan/p/book/9780367623081> (accessed 28 August 2023). <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2016/12/30/gendering-terrorism-in-indonesia> (accessed 28 August 2023). Bilqis Rihadatul Aisy et al., 'Penegakan Kontra Radikalisasi Melalui Media Sosial Oleh Pemerintah dalam Menangkal Radikalisme', *Jurnal Hukum Magnum Opus* 2, No. 1 (2019): 276592.

⁸ Masdar Hilmy, 'Anak Muda di Tengah Pusaran Radikalisme', *Opini Jawa Pos*, 2015.

⁹ <https://ppim.uinjkt.ac.id/2016/11/09/penelitian-ppim-direspon-positif-oleh-menteri-agama-ri/>, (accessed 30 August 2023).

¹⁰ Saiful Jazil, et.al., "Strengthening Aswaja An-Nahdliyah to Anticipate Radicalism for Islamic Education Teacher Candidates", *Edukasia*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2023), 135-144. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v18i1.24595>.

¹¹ Ali Sabri, et.al., "Implementing Religious Moderation And Tolerance Attitude In Akidah Akhlak Learning", *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2022), 1266-1277. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v5i3.2649>

¹² Amjed Mohammad Alabd Alazeez, et.al., "Islamic Tolerance Among Tenth-Grade Students in Jordan From The Students' Point of View", *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2024), 59-76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4139>.

Another relevant study is by Mardan Umar, et al., who stated that each educational institution (Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Syarikat Islam) embodies a moderate character in the form of *tawasut*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal*. These values are manifested in the teaching process to shape moderate Muslim character and to become a mercy to all the worlds (*rahmatan lil alamin*).¹³ Then, Muhammad Fahmi, et al., discovered the practice of organic tolerance and interfaith harmony (Muslim-Hindu) at a pesantren called Bali Bina Insani.¹⁴ Based on several studies above, the article titled 'Counteracting Radicalism through Strengthening Religious Moderation for Islamic Education Teachers in Schools,' with the setting located in Surabaya, has not been written by others, thus its novelty is unquestionable.

This article aims to strengthen religious moderation for Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools located in Surabaya. PAI teachers exposed to radicalism may be due to their lack of understanding of the essence of moderate Islamic teachings. Therefore, understanding the moderate teachings of Islam and the concept of *rahmatan lil alamin* as essential values embedded in religious moderation policies and movements needs to be internalized in PAI teachers. This is crucial as they have the responsibility to teach religion to their students. If the religious content taught is radical, it will give rise to and develop a radical generation of the nation, which is dangerous and harmful. However, if the religious content taught is moderate (tolerant), it will foster a generation of the nation that is moderate. It is in this context that the participatory action research (PAR) study titled 'Counteracting Radicalism through Strengthening Religious Moderation for Islamic Education Teachers in Schools' with the setting in Surabaya becomes urgent and significant to conduct.

B. Methods

Research Approach and Type

This study employs a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. PAR is a form of social research conducted by professional researchers in collaboration with organizational groups, aimed at examining and initiating change within those groups through a continuous learning process. "Participatory research is defined as systematic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for purposes of education and taking action or effecting change."¹⁵ Chevalier and Buckles formulated the integration of three key aspects carried out

¹³ Mardan Umar, et.a., *Transforming of Moderate Character Education in Islamic Educational Institutions*, Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2024), 171-188. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4168>.

¹⁴ Muhammad Fahmi, et.al, "Organic Tolerance and Harmony in the Pesantren Bali Bina Insani", *Ulumuna*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2022), 500-524. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v26i2.567>.

¹⁵ Green, et.al, "Appendix C: Guidelines for Participatory Research in Health Promotion," in Minkler, Meredith and Nina Wallerstein(eds), *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2003); Greenwood, D. J., Whyte, W. F., & Harkavy, I, [Participatory Action Research as a Process and as a Goal](#). *Human Relations*, 46 (2), 1993, 175; Stephen Kemmis & Robin Mc Teggart, *The Action Research planner*, 3rd, (Victoria: Deakin University, 1988); Reason, P. and Bradbury, H., 'Introduction', in P. Reason and H. Bradbury (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (Sage, CA, 2008), 5.

by researchers (PAR practitioners) in the research process: participation, action, and research.¹⁶ As shown in Figure 1.

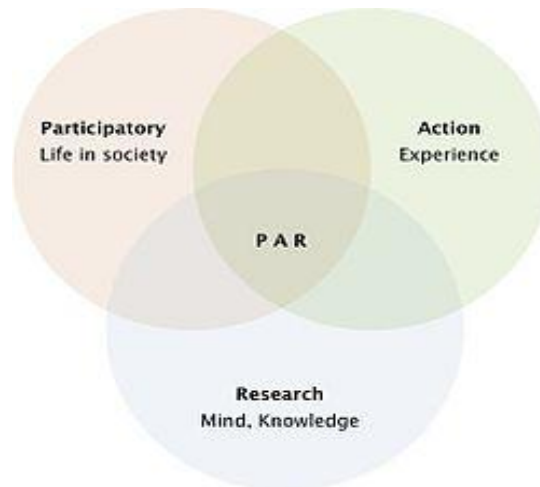


Figure 1: The Three Aspects of Participatory Action Research

The key principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) include recognition, social capital, collaborative partnership, the integration of knowledge and action, addressing social inequalities, involving cyclical processes, and disseminating findings and knowledge.¹⁷

Research Location, Period, and Subjects

This study was conducted in Surabaya from June to August 2023. The subjects of the research were Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at various schools across Surabaya. The PAI teachers involved in the efforts to strengthen religious moderation came from both primary (elementary) and secondary education levels, including junior high and senior high/vocational schools (SMP-SMA/SMK). A total of 20 PAI teachers from public schools in Surabaya participated in the study, consisting of 7 teachers from public elementary schools (SDN), 7 from public junior high schools (SMPN), 3 from public senior high schools (SMAN), and 3 from public vocational schools (SMKN). These PAI teachers represented diverse social and cultural backgrounds and included various gender identities (13 male and 7 female teachers). The success criterion for this action research was based on a relative measure—comparing outcomes before and after the intervention. The specific benchmark for this PAR study was that the average score of participants' capacity in terms of knowledge and attitudes toward religious moderation should fall within the “very high” category. This was assessed through observation and post-tests, with results indicating that 90% of participant responses demonstrated a strengthened understanding of religious moderation.

Sources and Types of Data

¹⁶ Chevalier, J.M. and Buckles, D.J., *Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry* (Routledge UK. [ISBN 978-0415540315](#), 2013), 10.

¹⁷ Israel, Barbara; Amy Schultz; Edith Parker and Adam Becker, *Review of Community-Based Research: Assessing Partnership Approaches to Improve Public Health*. Annual Review of Public Health 19, (1988), 10.

*The use of data sources aims to identify the origin of the information obtained, thereby facilitating the process of tracing and referencing that information.*¹⁸ Data sources refer to the subjects from which data are obtained. The primary sources of data in this study are words and actions, while secondary sources include supporting materials such as documents and other relevant records. The data for this research were derived from individuals, activities or events, and the situations present within the research setting, specifically Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in schools across Surabaya. The selection of research informants was conducted using purposive sampling. This technique involves selecting informants based on specific considerations. These considerations may include individuals who are believed to have the most relevant knowledge concerning the research focus, or those who hold key positions that facilitate access to the social objects or situations under study.¹⁹ In this purposive sampling technique, the researcher selects research subjects with the specific aim of identifying key informants who are aligned with the focus of the study. This selection is conducted deliberately and naturally, without manipulation, in order to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained.

Data Collection Method

*The method used for data collection in this study is in-depth interviewing, which involves gathering information directly from the source through detailed and structured conversations.*²⁰ Next is participant observation, which involves actively engaging in the setting to obtain a concrete understanding related to the focus of the study and the research object. This method captures both the objective conditions in the field and the researcher's observations and perspectives on the research subject.²¹ Then, document study, which is a data collection method conducted through the examination of written documents such as articles, official records, personal notes, certificates, and other relevant materials,²² which are related to the issue of counter-radicalism through the strengthening of religious moderation. Furthermore, questionnaires were used as a data collection instrument consisting of both closed and open-ended questions. Data collection was also conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), a form of discussion involving individuals who are experts or assumed to possess the necessary knowledge relevant to this research.

There are four indicators used to verify the validity of the data: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The credibility of the data is examined using techniques such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, referential adequacy, negative case analysis,

¹⁸ Suharismi Arikunto, *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktek*, (Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta, 2002), 61.

¹⁹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014), 219.

²⁰ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, Terj: M. Djauzi Mudzakir, *Studi Kasus: Desain dan Metode*, (Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada, 2006), 111. Lexy Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016), 186; Imam Robandi, *Becoming the winner riset, Menulis Ilmiah, Publikasi Ilmiah dan Presentasi*, (Yogyakarta: CV Andi, 2008), 122.

²¹ Hasyim Hasanah, "Teknik-Teknik Observasi (Sebuah metode Pengumpulan data kualitatif ilmu social", *Jurnal At-Taqaddum*, Vol. 8 No. 1 (Juli 2016), 36.

²² Imam Robandi, *Becoming the winner riset...*, 206.

member checking, thick description, dependability audit, and confirmability audit.²³ In this study, data validity was calibrated using triangulation (of sources and methods), persistent observation, and referential adequacy.²⁴

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques used in this study are descriptive-qualitative and descriptive-quantitative. Descriptive technique refers to a method used to examine the status of a human group, including objects, conditions, systems of thought, or events at a specific point in time.²⁵ Thus, in this study, the data collected from interviews, field notes, questionnaires, documentation, observations, discussions, and other sources related to counter-radicalism through the strengthening of religious moderation among PAI teachers in schools across Surabaya were processed and analyzed descriptively. The data analysis model employed in this research is the interactive descriptive model as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which involves three steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation refers to the processes of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data.²⁶ As shown in Figure 2.

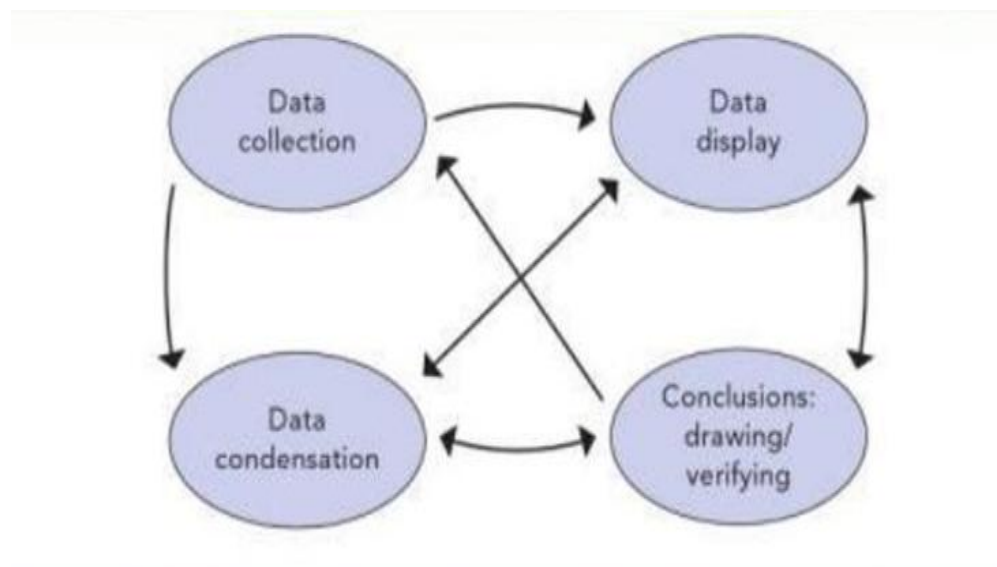


Figure 2: Interactive Descriptive Analysis Model

C. Result and Discussion

Result

The research activities, in the form of action to strengthen religious moderation as a means to counter radicalism among PAI teachers in schools across

²³ Nusa Putra, *Metode Penelitian kualitatif Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada), 106.

²⁴ Sugiyono, *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2006), 110.

²⁵ Moh. Nasir, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 1988), 63.

²⁶ M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman & J. Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Sage Publications), Terjemahan (Jakarta: UI Press, 2014), 10-14.

Surabaya, were carried out through training sessions, discussions, and open interviews. These focused on the condition of the target community, particularly their understanding of and tendencies toward radicalism and religious moderation. The indicators of radicalism-related topics explored in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Radicalism Indicators

No	Indicator	Statement Item
1	Rejection of all forms of rational interpretation of texts	I adhere to the Qur'anic texts in a sacred manner, without rational interpretation.
2		I use reason to interpret Qur'anic texts contextually.
3	Firm belief in the truth of one's own program or strategy, leaving no room for dialogue	I am confident in my da'wah programs and strategies and doubt those of others.
4		I am confident in my da'wah programs and strategies and see no need to engage in dialogue with others.
5	Tendency to accuse or declare others with different views as misguided or infidels	Religious groups with different views from mine are wrong, even considered infidels.
6		Religious groups with different views from mine must change and follow my religious understanding.
7	Justification of violence against those with differing views in pursuit of utopian ambitions	Those who differ in religious understanding from me may be fought against.
8		The blood of those who differ in religious understanding from me is lawful (they may be killed).
9	Orientation toward establishing an Islamic state	For a nation to prosper and for its people to be prosperous, it must be based on Islamic principles.
10	Re-establishment of sharia in various aspects of human life	All societal and governmental affairs must be based on religious law (sharia).

The table above illustrates that radicalism represents a religious orientation or belief system that rejects all forms of rational interpretation of sacred texts. It is characterized by unwavering confidence in the truth of one's own programs or strategies, leaving no room for dialogue. Such a perspective easily leads to declaring those with differing views as infidels, even justifying violence against them in pursuit of utopian ambitions, such as establishing an Islamic state and reinstating sharia in all aspects of human life.

Meanwhile, the indicators of religious moderation explored in this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Indicators of Religious Moderation (RM):

No	RM Value	Indicator	Statement
1	National Commitment	Loyalty to the national consensus, particularly regarding the acceptability of Pancasila as the foundation or ideology of the state	Flag ceremonies should be taught to students to instill love for the homeland.
2			I always participate in flag ceremonies held at school.
3	Tolerance	Providing space and not interfering with others' rights to believe and express their beliefs; having an open, accepting, voluntary, and gentle attitude in embracing differences; respecting and accepting those who are different	I allow students to perform religious rituals according to their respective beliefs.
4			I teach students to respect others, even if they hold different beliefs.
5			I teach students to believe in the truth of their religion without invalidating the beliefs of others.
6	Anti-Violence	Rejecting violence and embracing gentleness, compassion, and mercy toward others, including those with different beliefs	I teach students to be gentle toward others, even if they differ in opinion.
7			I appreciate individuals who prefer dialogue to resolve conflicts.
8			I disagree with individuals or groups who act anarchically toward others who differ from them.
9	Accommodative of Local Culture	Having a welcoming and accommodative attitude toward local traditions and cultures, as long as they do not contradict Islamic law	Religious practices should be integrated with local culture as long as it does not contradict Islamic teachings.
10			I teach students to be willing to participate in religious cultural rituals that are part of community traditions.

There are four (4) indicators of religious moderation that serve as the focus in this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study. First, national commitment, which ranks as the primary indicator of religious moderation, serves as a reference for assessing one's religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices that influence loyalty to the foundational national consensus—particularly in terms of one's acceptability of Pancasila as the state ideology and the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945) as the legal foundation of national and civic life. Second, tolerance

(tasamuh), which refers to the willingness to provide space and refrain from infringing upon others' rights to believe and express their beliefs, even when such beliefs differ from one's own. Third, non-violence, given that violence is strictly prohibited within the framework of religious moderation. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently guided his followers to act with gentleness and to engage in peaceful proselytization. Fourth, accommodation of local culture, wherein individuals who tend toward religious moderation exhibit a friendly and accommodative stance toward local traditions and cultural practices, as long as these do not conflict with Islamic law.²⁷

Before the mentoring program, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in Surabaya schools were given a pre-test instrument related to the topics of religious radicalism and religious moderation. The results indicated that their tendencies toward both radicalism and moderation warranted intervention. In general, the responses showed that the teachers' potential for radicalism was in the "high" category (83%). On the other hand, their tendency toward religious moderation was also high (85%). This suggests that within the PAI teachers in Surabaya schools, there exists both a potential inclination toward radicalism and a tendency toward moderation. This dual tendency highlights the critical need for mentoring programs aimed at strengthening religious moderation as a strategy to counter radicalism. This finding is further supported by a statement from one of the mentoring participants, who emphasized that PAI teachers need to enhance their understanding of religious moderation as a countermeasure to religious radicalism, in order to foster greater tolerance and a firm anti-radicalism stance.²⁸

The description above serves as a foundational basis for the necessity of strengthening both the understanding and inclination toward religious moderation, as an effort to anticipate or reduce the tendency toward radical religious ideologies. According to one participant, the limited comprehension of religious moderation among PAI teachers is likely influenced by their diverse educational backgrounds and religious experiences. Many of them previously attended general (non-religious) schools before enrolling in Islamic Education (PAI) programs at university, where they were not adequately introduced to foundational concepts related to religious moderation during their earlier education.²⁹ On the other hand, the topic of religious moderation is still relatively new and remains a current and relevant issue today.

Therefore, it is essential for Islamic Education (PAI) teachers to be equipped with a tolerant attitude through guidance or training on strengthening religious moderation, as a proactive effort to counter the deeply concerning spread of religious radicalism. This is particularly important because these teachers are responsible for delivering religious education to their students. They must be provided with substantial knowledge on religious moderation, which emphasizes moderate, tolerant, inclusive, and compassionate Islamic teachings (rahmatan lil

²⁷ Kemenag RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 43-44.

²⁸ Guru PAI dengan Inisial MF, *Wawancara*, 5 Juni 2023.

²⁹ FH, RH, ZF, MSB & M (Inisial Guru PAI), *Wawancara*, 5 Juni 2023. Hasil diskusi antara peneliti, narasumber dan guru-guru PAI pada 5 Juni 2023.

'alamin), as a means to resist radical ideologies. Such efforts are crucial to preventing the infiltration of radical teachings into schools through the influential role of religious educators.

The mentoring materials provided to Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools included: an overview of religious life in Indonesia, mapping of radical groups, as well as the introduction, deepening, and strengthening of religious moderation teachings. These were aimed at equipping teachers with an understanding of religious moderation as a foundation to counter the rise of religious radicalism. The teachings of religious moderation include religious content and national insights that can guide participants to practice their faith in a moderate manner. This means developing a moderate understanding, attitude, and religious competence that fosters tolerance and a strong stance against radicalism.

After the mentoring sessions, the Islamic Education (PAI) teachers were given an instrument to complete as a form of post-test. The results showed that participants' tendency toward radicalism, which was previously high (83%), decreased to a low level (55%). Meanwhile, their tendency toward religious moderation increased from high (85%) to very high (97%).³⁰ Thus, the mentoring program aimed at strengthening religious moderation as a countermeasure to the tendency toward radicalism can be considered effective in reducing radical tendencies and enhancing the inclination toward religious moderation among Islamic Education (PAI) teachers. It is therefore expected that they will develop a moderate spirit and an anti-radicalism attitude.

The above description is illustrated in the comparison between the tendencies of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers before and after the mentoring program, as presented in Figure 3, which shows data indicating a decrease in the tendency toward religious radicalism after the mentoring intervention.

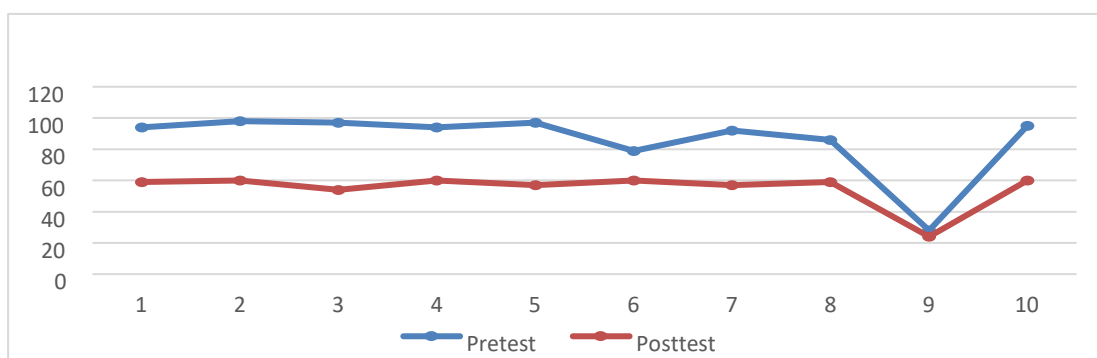


Figure 3: Pretest and Posttest Results on the Tendency Toward Radicalism

In tabular form, the decrease in participants' tendency toward radicalism before and after the mentoring can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Pretest and Posttest Results on the Tendency Toward Radicalism

No	Pretest	Posttest
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³⁰ Hasil pendampingan pada 5, 12, dan 19 Juni 2023.

	Score	Categori	Score	Categori
1	83%	High	55%	Low

Meanwhile, the questionnaire data (pretest and posttest) on the participants' tendency toward religious moderation show a strengthening trend: from a pretest result of 85% (high) to a posttest result of 97% (very high). This indicates the effectiveness of the mentoring in strengthening religious moderation as a counter-radicalism effort in religious practice. This trend is illustrated in Figure 4.

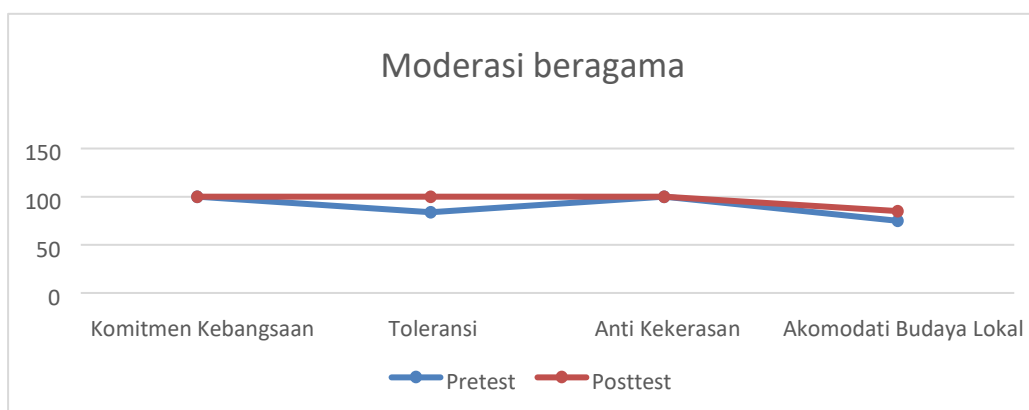


Figure 4: Result of Pretest and Posttest on the Tendency toward Religious Moderation

In table form, the strengthening of participants' tendency toward religious moderation before and after the mentoring program can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Result of Pretest and Posttest on the Tendency toward Religious Moderation

No	Value of Religious Moderation	Pretest		Posttest	
		Score	Category	Score	Category
1	National Commitment	90%	Very High	100%	Very High
2	Tolerance	84%	High	100%	Very High
3	Anti-Violence	91%	Very High	100%	Very High
4	Accommodation of Local Culture	75%	Moderate	85%	High
Total Religious Moderation Score		85%	High	97%	Very High

The above scores are based on the percentage analysis technique criteria adapted from Ngalim Purwanto, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Percentage Analysis Technique Criteria

Percentage Score	Category
86%-100%	Very High

76%-85%	High
60%-75%	Moderate
55%-59%	Low
≤54	Very Low

The results of strengthening the understanding and tendency toward religious moderation among Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools, as indicated by the average scores across all indicators falling into the "very high" category, demonstrate that the mentoring program has been successful. However, this success cannot yet be taken as a definitive measure that the participants are fully capable of exhibiting the expected tolerant attitudes and behaviors without further monitoring. This situation calls for continuous implementation of similar action research or Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the future.

D. Discussion

Materials on religious radicalism are included as part of the content in the religious moderation strengthening program, aimed at countering radicalism. This serves as a preventive measure for Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools to protect themselves from the spread of radical ideology. PAI teachers are encouraged to develop moderate or tolerant religious insights and attitudes, and to avoid adopting radical religious behaviors. Prior to the mentoring program, PAI teachers in Surabaya demonstrated a high tendency toward radicalism, at 83%. After the mentoring intervention, this tendency decreased significantly to 55%, which falls into the "low" category. The high level of radical tendencies prior to the mentoring may have been due to a lack of cognitive understanding regarding the indicators of radicalism. However, once they were provided with material that specifically addressed these indicators, their understanding improved. As a result, when the data were reexamined, it was evident that their radical tendencies had declined. This outcome underscores the importance of intensive mentoring in strengthening religious moderation as an effective effort to counter radicalism—both for PAI teachers and the wider community.

Based on the above description, it can be understood how dangerous religious radicalism can be when it takes root in the hearts of Muslims—especially among Islamic Education (PAI) teachers. The practice of extremist-radical religious behavior carries at least three fundamental weaknesses. First, it is generally disliked by human nature. Second, it is unsustainable and unlikely to endure over time. Third, it is highly susceptible to causing harm and infringing upon the rights of others.³¹ The implication is that this model of religious practice is strongly discouraged in Islam. On the other hand, there are three general tendencies of radicalism. First, radicalism often emerges as a response to current conditions. Typically, this response takes the form of critique, rejection, or even resistance. Second, radicalism does not stop at mere rejection. It tends to snowball—expanding

³¹ Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah: Baina al-Jihad wa al-Tatarruf* (Kairo: Bank atTaqwa, 2001), 23-29.

progressively—with the aim of replacing an established order with a new one. Third, radical groups tend to possess a strong conviction in the truth of the principles or strategies they uphold, making it difficult to challenge or critique them. This conviction is often accompanied by the negation of the legitimacy of other systems they seek to substitute.³²

The negation of the truth claimed by other groups leads radical groups to fall into the problem of *takfiri* (the tendency to declare others as infidels). This *takfiri* issue represents the theological root of conflict in Islam, historically associated with the Khawarij. The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who disagreed with them were deemed infidels and considered lawful to be killed. This ultimately led to a plan for assassination, with Ali becoming their victim.³³ Radical groups tend to be literalist and lack contextualization³⁴ and consider those who oppose them as belonging to *Dar al-Harb*, thereby justifying the killing or seizure of rights in such areas — including acts like killing children, raping women, and executing all residents or prisoners.³⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that radical groups (such as the Khawarij) are infamous for their brutality through violent and anarchic actions. The radical-Khawarij movement is known as a puritanical group, extreme in religious practice, and upholding an idealism of equality within their movement — unfortunately, such ideals are misplaced and overly generalized.³⁶ In Harun Nasution's words, this group possesses strong faith but narrow-minded thinking, along with blind fanaticism. As a result, they are unable to tolerate, let alone respect, differences — thus, the path they take is one of violence.³⁷ According to Marty,³⁸ there is a typology of radical groups, namely those that are violent and quick to blame or condemn other groups that differ from them.

Meanwhile, the doctrine of religious moderation contains four main indicators: tolerance, non-violence, national commitment, and appreciation of local culture. This aligns with the teachings of Aswaja An-Nahdliyah, which upholds four key principles in religious life: *tawasuth* (moderation), *i'tidal* (justice or uprightness), *tawazun* (balance), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). As stated by Sukarja

³² Bahtiar Effendy dan Hendro Prasetyo (eds.), *Radikalisme Islam* (Jakarta: PPIM-IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 1998), xvii-xviii.

³³ Muhammad Haniff Hassan, "The Danger of Takfir (Excommunication) Exposing is 'Takfiri Ideology,'" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9.4 (2017): 3-12. Hayat Alvi, "The diffusion of intra-Islamic violence and terrorism: The impact of the proliferation of Salafi/Wahhabi ideologies," *Middle East Review of International Affairs (Online)* 18.2 (2014): 38. Mohamed Badar, Masaki Nagata, and Tiphane Tueni, "The Radical Application of the Islamist Concept of Takfir," *Arab Law Quarterly* 31.2 (2017): 134-162.

³⁴ Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim Ahmad Al-Syahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.). Abul Hasan Ismail al-Asy'ari, *Maqalat al-Islamiyyina wa Ikhtilaf alMushallin* (Mesir: Maktabah al-Nahdlah Al-Misriyyah, 1950). Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Tarikh al-Madzahib al-Islamiyyah* (Mesir: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.).

³⁵ Achmad Gholib, *Teologi dalam Perspektif Islam* (Jakarta: UIN Jakarta Press, 2005), 52. Azyumardi Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam, dari Fundamentalisme, Modernisme, hingga PostModernisme* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996), 141. Harun Nasution, *Islam Rasional: Gagasan dan Pemikiran Prof. Dr. Harun Nasution* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 124.

³⁶ Adeng Muchtar Ghazali, *Perkembangan Ilmu Kalam dari Klasik hingga Modern* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2003), 82-83.

³⁷ Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia* (ISEAS Publishing, 2010).

³⁸ Martin E. Marty, and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and society: Reclaiming the sciences, the family, and education*. Vol. 2 (University of Chicago Press, 1997).

Salam, *tawasuth* means taking the middle path, *i'tidal* refers to being just and upright, *tawazun* implies maintaining balance, and *tasamuh* denotes a tolerant attitude.³⁹

These four principles are explained in the Noble Qur'an. *Tawasuth* (moderation) is mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, which means: "And thus We have made you a just and balanced nation so that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger may be a witness over you." *I'tidal* (justice or uprightness) is explained in Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 8, which means: "O you who believe! Be steadfast in upholding justice and bear witness to the truth for the sake of Allah, even if it is against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Let not the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just: that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Aware of what you do."

Meanwhile, *Tawazun* (balance) is explained in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hadid verse 25, which means: "Indeed, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs and revealed with them the Scripture and the balance (of justice) so that mankind may uphold justice." *Tasamuh* (tolerance) is described in the Qur'an, Surah Ta-Ha verse 44, which means: "So speak to him (Pharaoh) both of you (Prophet Musa AS and Prophet Harun AS) with gentle words, perhaps he may take heed or fear (Allah)."

Religious moderation also adheres to the example set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions, in terms of belief, outward practices, and inner character. *Iman* (faith), *Islam* (submission), and *Ihsan* (spiritual excellence) are the three pillars that every Muslim must believe in and practice universally. These three aspects must be maintained in balance to avoid any form of imbalance. Historically, different disciplines of Islamic knowledge have emerged to address each of these components. The dimension of *Iman* is studied in the field of *Aqidah* (theology), *Islam* is explored through the science of *Shari'ah* (jurisprudence), and *Ihsan* is examined through the science of *Akhlaq* (ethics) or *Tasawwuf* (spirituality). The essence of life's purpose is to achieve balance—between worldly and spiritual interests—while continuously drawing closer to Allah SWT. *Shari'ah* serves as the foundation for reaching spiritual truth (*Haqiqah*). This is the principle upheld by the teachings of religious moderation.

Materials on religious moderation were delivered during anti-radicalism training sessions through strengthening religious moderation for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in several schools in Surabaya. In addition to introducing the participants to the landscape of radical groups, the training also included comprehensive materials on religious moderation. One of the fundamental characteristics of religious moderation is the attitude and behavior of *wasathiyah* (moderation or balance). This moderate stance is essential in religious practice because it helps protect the community from the pitfalls of religious behavior that often encounters issues of radicalism. Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of being tolerant, having a strong commitment to national values,

³⁹ Sukarja Salam, dkk, *Ke-NU-an, Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah An-Nahdliyah Untuk Kelas 11 Madrasah Aliyah (MA), Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) dan Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK)* (Yogyakarta: LP Ma'arif NU Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2017), 9.

rejecting violence, and treating culture in a balanced and proportional manner.⁴⁰ A moderate attitude in the form of appreciating local culture, as exemplified by the Walisongo in spreading Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, is important to practice.

The understanding and tendency of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers regarding religious moderation, which was initially at a high level (85%), increased to a very high level (97%) after the counter-radicalism mentoring through the strengthening of religious moderation. Thus, the research, mentoring, and training programs on strengthening religious moderation can be considered highly successful. This indicates the importance of providing ongoing assistance to PAI teachers and the wider community in order to enhance their awareness and attitudes toward religious moderation, as a concrete effort to counter the persistent threat of radicalism.

E. Conclusion

The process of strengthening religious moderation to counter radicalism among Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools in Surabaya was carried out through mentoring activities in the form of religious moderation training, as a preventive measure to counter the negative effects of radical religious ideologies. The materials provided during the mentoring included an overview of religious life in Indonesia, a map of radical groups, and the urgency of religious moderation as a counter-radicalism strategy. This process was conducted in a participatory manner by encouraging participants to actively share as much data and perspective as possible during the mentoring or training sessions.

The results of this initiative in strengthening religious moderation to combat radicalism among PAI teachers are reflected in the data showing that the teachers' cognitive tendency toward radicalism, which was initially high (83%), decreased to a low level (55%). Meanwhile, their tendency toward religious moderation, which was originally high (85%), strengthened to a very high level (97%). This indicates the importance of mentoring programs to strengthen religious moderation for PAI teachers and the broader society, so that they may develop a moderate and anti-radical attitude in their religious practice. In other words, there is a strong need for continuous mentoring and capacity-building efforts in religious moderation to effectively combat radicalism among PAI teachers and the general public.

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