Radical ideology in universities: Palopo students' perceptions

by Sukirman Sukirman

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Abstract

This study aims to examine students' perception on radicalism dealing with religion and state ideology at State Islamic Institute and three private universities in Palopo (a developing regency in South Sulawesi – Indonesia). It applied a descriptive qualitative research. Then, the subjects of this study were the students who are active in Islamic studies organizations such as Wahdah Islamiyah, Hidzbut Tahrir Indonesia, and others. The findings showed that the students do not dichotomize between religion and state, but rather integrate the values of these two things to create safe and peaceful social lives. It was found that; 1) 94 percent of respondents are categorized as having anti-radical perspective; 2) 6 percent of respondents are categorized as having perspectives tending to be radical; and 3) none of respondents are categorized as having slightly and very radical perspectives. All parties must work together to continuously oversee and control the students to not be tainted with radical ideology by providing positive and beneficial activities such as social activities involving the students.

Keywords: Indonesian Universities, Radicalism, Radical Ideology, Students' Perceptions

Introduction

College is a place for intellectuals who have different backgrounds such as culture, religion, and language to enhance their insights. In college, students have to compete fairly to hone their talents, leaderships, skills, and knowledge. To support that, some intra-campus organizations are established as a place to actualize the sciences that they obtain in the

classroom such as Scout and Indonesian Red Cross Society. In addition to intra-campus organizations, extra-campus organizations are also developing well following the development of intra-campus organizations. In this case, it cannot be refused if the Islamic studies held by the senior off-campus contain radical ideology (Sabatier, 2012; Saxton,1981; Sternberg, 2010). Therefore, it should be anticipated both by students and parents as well as universities.

Some recent radical actions indicate that the radical ideology has seeped in to university lives. This is supported by the evidence that some college alumni are involved in radical actions. They are; 1) Bahrum Naim, the bomber at Starbucks Coffee, Sarinah Police Station, and the car park of Menara Cakrawala on January 14, 2016, who was a graduate of University of Sebelas Maret, Solo; 2) Pepi Fernando, a terrorist of Books bomb in Jakarta on March 15, 2011, who was a graduate of State Islamic Institute of Syarif Hidayatullah; 3) Hasanuddin and Firmansyah (students of University of East Indonesia), Salman Alfarizi and Abdul Azis (students of University of Muhammadiyah Makassar), and Andi Irawan (a student of STIKPER Gunung Sari) arrested in Palu on May 22, 2015 due to unexpectedly being in Santoso's terrorist networks; 4) and so on.

Multiculturalism in universities (Banda & Peck, 2016; Kağnıcı, 2012; Rath, 2012) will provide enormous potential for students who are still in the process of searching for identity to be recruited by radical groups (Sirozi, 2005). In general, new students are a very tasty meal for radical groups to be recruited into their organizations. Their innocence and curiosity are actually used by the radicals to brainwash them so that they will join the organization. Then, the students' involvement in the radical group is a threat (Subramaniam, 2012) to college, which should be anticipated comprehensively, because it does not rule out that the students who have been recruited beforehand will recruit other students to join the radical groups that they have attended.

Therefore, this study aims to assess students' perspective in some universities of Palopo against radicalism. In addition, this study also aims to determine whether students in Palopo have been contaminated with radical ideologies that they obtain in religious studies both inside and outside the campus. The findings of this study are important information for both the campus and National Terrorism Management Agency of Indonesia (called *BNPT*, which stands for *Badan Nasional Penaggulanan Teroris*) in eradicating radicalism that is more volatile in the community. In addition, it is also used as a data source in providing the guidance and supervision of students who have radical ideologies.

Literature Review

Aseri, Bayani, and Mariatul (2015, p. 195) found that the views of the students in State Islamic Institute of Antasari, University of Lambung Mangkurat, and Polytechnic Banjarmasin regarding the relationship between religion and state are generally more forthcoming. They state that the values of *Pancasila* (political philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia) are the fundamental foundation to create a harmonious pluralistic society in Indonesia. Furthermore, Nur (2015, p. 17-25) found that many steps have been taken in dealing with terrorism cases in Indonesia. They are; 1) creating a policy both nationally and internationally, both bilateral and multilateral such as Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 16 of 2003 concerning Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2002 on Combating Terrorism, In Bombing Bali Incident on October 12, 2002, introducing such in to law; and 2) establishing international cooperation dealing with terrorism in Indonesia such as cooperating with the members of ASEAN and Australia.

Jati (2013, p. 268-287) has also conducted a research on the Islamic perspective of populism against radicalism. They view that radicalism in Indonesia was born because of the strong spirit to liberate Muslims from inequality and political marginalization. However, the

populism movement in the struggle for the enforcement of Islamic law and state in Indonesia failed to become a main political force because of the strong influence of secular and nationalist politics in formal politics. The failure factor makes Islam populist movement radical because of the failure of formal politics. In addition, Tan (2008, p. 199-213) investigated the terrorist threat in the Asia Pacific. He found that in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, there is an increase in combating radicalism because of the participation of the counter-terrorism community. On the other hand, Eastern Indonesia such as Sulawesi and Maluku are still vulnerable to radical action because of the failure of post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, he stated that the eradication of radicalism requires a comprehensive approach, by not panicking, forming a counter-radicalism consensus, and cooperating with all the countries in the world. In addition, Beard (2003, p. 13-35) found that radical planning in the political environment may be very tight, but it is the result of a long-term process of social learning that can create the strength of institutions and collective action. Then, Baidhawy (2010, p. 268-286) found that Islamic radicalism is happening in Indonesia due to the hostility and hatred of the local culture as a source of superstition and heresy, foreigners who come from Western countries, and also the non-Muslim community.

Fealy (2004, p. 105) views that radical connotes with the words rejection and condemnation. In connection with Islamic radical groups, he defines such as a group that wants to implement Islamic teachings literally based on the Qur'an (a holy text of Islam) and Sunnah (practices and customs taught by Muhammad). Besides, they hate a government that deviates from Islam, so they want to rebuild communities and countries that apply totally Islamic laws in government. Then, radicalism is an ideology, discourse, and activities that attempts to change the political system, social system, and culture by carrying out violence. Also, Maarif (quoted from Fanani, 2013, p. 5) distinguishes the meanings of radicalism and terrorism. Radicalism is more associated with the model attitudes and the ways in expressing

one's diversity, while terrorism explicitly includes criminal acts for political purposes. Furthermore, Tormey (quoted from Azca, 2013, p. 25) considers radicalism as a contextual and positional concept; in this case its presence is the antithesis of orthodox or social, secular, scientific, and religious mainstream.

Further, there are two factors that cause radicalism (Hamilton-Hart, 2005, p. 303-325). Firstly, political interests; when a country runs dirty politics that are unfavourable to the welfare of society. This condition will create underground movements, which want to make change through violence. Second, religious (especially for Islamic radicalism); it is driven by the will to establish totally an Islamic state. In the context of Indonesia, a radical group does not accept the ideology of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and democracy as a pillar in running the government. They have a strong determination to apply totally the teachings of Islam without regard to the local culture and ideology of the nation. Meanwhile, Muzakki (2014, p. 19) states that there are four factors that led to the emergence of radicalism in Indonesia; 1) the political regime among the political elites; 2) socio-economic; 3) globalization; and 4) the support of Arab countries. Moreover, poverty is also a major factor affecting the development of radicalism in Indonesia. The discontent of certain groups on the government's performance that cannot protect the rights of the citizens is also a factor affecting the radical actions in Indonesia. On other hand, radical actions occur when someone feels empty spiritually, dogmatism, and lack of critical thinking.

There were a series of radical actions which occurred in Indonesia. In 2002, Indonesia was shocked by the bombings in Bali (three series of bombings); the first two explosions occurred at Paddy's Pub and Sari Club, and then the third blast occurred near the US Consulate. These bombings killed more than 200 people. In the same year, precisely on December 5, 2002, Indonesia was also struck by the bombings at a McDonald's in Ratu Indah Mall Makassar, South Sulawesi. The action occurred when the restaurant was packed with

visitors for breaking fast and dinner. Subsequently, on January 10, 2004, a bombing also occurred in Palopo, precisely in Kafe Bukit Indah Sampoddo, Palopo - South Sulawesi. Then, in 2011, there was a suicide bombing in Cirebon Mapolresta Mosque. This suicide bombing occurred during Friday prayers. Then, in the same year, there was also a suicide bombing in GBIS Kepunton, Solo - Central Java. It happened when the Christians finished praying and were leaving the church. More recently, precisely on January 14, 2016, Indonesia was shocked again by the bombings and shootings in Starbucks Coffee, Sarinah Police Station, and parking Horizon Tower. Some protesters of this radical action were shot dead by the police and some were arrested.

There are two ways to tackle radicalism (Prof. Hamdi Muluk). First, the crackdown; it is in the form of arrest, prosecution, counter-intelligence, imprisonment with isolation techniques, and other methods within the domain of law, military, and intelligence. Second, soft action; it is divided into three responses; 1) education response leads to educators teaching their students about the anti-radicalism and being more directed to the learning of critical thinking, pluralism, tolerance, and being undogmatic; 2) media response is a highly strategic method to change the radical ideology - news published is preferably invitations to fight radicalism; and 3) ideology response is paralyzing the radical ideology as a key factor. The first step aims to reduce the supply side or reduce the intake of linked radical ideology.

Methods

This study applied a descriptive qualitative research. It aims to collect data, in either spoken or written form, observed by the researchers. Then, the detailed objects were observed in order to capture the implied meaning in the document or object.

Participants

The study was conducted at four universities in Palopo. First, State Islamic Institute of Palopo (called *IAIN Palopo*), which is the only one state higher education in Palopo, and has

approximately three thousand Muslim students from east areas of Indonesia. In addition, it focuses more on integrating Islamic studies with other sciences. Second is Andi Jemma University (called *Unanda*), one of the private universities in Palopo, where the students are not only Muslims but also Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist. Third, Tjokroaminoto University, called *Uncok*, is another private university viewed as the biggest university in Palopo due to the biggest number of students that it has. In line with Unanda, the students' religions are varied starting from Islam, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist. The last is STIE Muhammadiyah (called *STIES Muh.*). It is also a private university where all the students are Muslim.

Further, the subjects of this study were 50 students (age 20-22) from the four Universities as stated previously. They were randomly selected based on Islamic studies organizations that they follow such as *Wahdah Islamiyah, Hidzbut Tahrir Indonesia*, and others. In this case, the researchers did not classify the students based on their gender since it was quite hard for them to find students who were willing to be interviewed, especially for the females. As a result, the researchers only interviewed students randomly both females and males. In addition, they were randomly chosen from eight Islamic boarding school alumni spread across Indonesia.

Data Collection

The research instrument utilized in this study was interview guidelines. The researchers developed interview guidelines based on the collected data. To obtain valid data, the researchers developed unstructured interview guidelines. In this case, the researchers only listed the core questions; 1) the question dealing with the respondents' identity; 2) the questions dealing with the respondents' organization; and 3) the questions dealing with the respondents' point of view towards radicalism. These core questions were developed based on the respondents' answers. There were some questions developing during the interviewing

process. Finally, the researchers used a recorder as a tool for recording all critical data during the interview.

The data collection procedures were: 1) identifying the student being selected as the respondents; 2) requiring the students who had been selected a willingness to be the respondent by signing a contract stating that the researchers would guarantee all the respondents' privacy; in addition, the respondents' personal identity would not be asked and recorded to make them feel free, open, and honest; 3) arranging for an interview with the respondents by recording as well as taking notes on the important things delivered by the respondents so that none of the important data was left out; 4) interviewing the respondents in accordance with the agreed time in which the duration of the interview depended on the respondents' answers – it could be long if they had a host of information to share but the researchers estimated about an hour; 5) analysing and describing the findings of the interview; and 6) reporting the findings.

Data Analysis

To analyse the collected data, the researchers applied Interactive Analysis models proposed by Milles and Huberman (1984). This model includes three components. First, data reduction; the researchers classified both required and unrequired data. Second, the data display (presenting data); the researchers presented the data by describing them clearly and easily to be understood. Third, the conclusion; the researchers concluded the findings based on the analysed and presented data. Finally, the researchers conducted triangulation to make valid the data by re-interviewing some students dealing with the answers from specific questions that needed to be clarified to other students.

Results and Discussion

First, the findings dealing with students' perceptions on Islamic Sharia indicated that 78.5 percent of respondents from four universities in Palopo disagreed with the

implementation of Islamic Sharia (Law) in Palopo. It is not appropriate to be applied because Palopo is not only inhabited by the Muslim community but also populated by some religions, such as Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist. Indonesia is not an Islamic state but a Republic, so it is very concerning if the implementation of the law of one religion interferes with other faiths. Furthermore, 19 percent of respondents from four universities pointed out that the Islamic law should be integrated with the character of the nation, especially Palopo, as done by the previous scholars. For example; *Wali Songo*, a propagator of Islam in Java in the 14th century, was successful to Islamize society by acculturating the local culture with the Islamic law.

Then, 2.5 percent of respondents pointed out that it is necessary to enforce Islamic law because the majority of the population in Palopo is Muslim. The effectiveness of Islamic law in creating a comfortable and peaceful atmosphere in society is not in doubt such as done by Prophet Muhammad SAW. Moreover, the enforcement of Islamic law will keep people out of poverty caused by the corruptors. Another example is *Daerah Istimewa Aceh* (the capital city of Nanggro Aceh Darussalam, Indonesia) - the application of Islamic law in this area makes the followers of other religions thank the local authorities because they feel safe and comfortable.
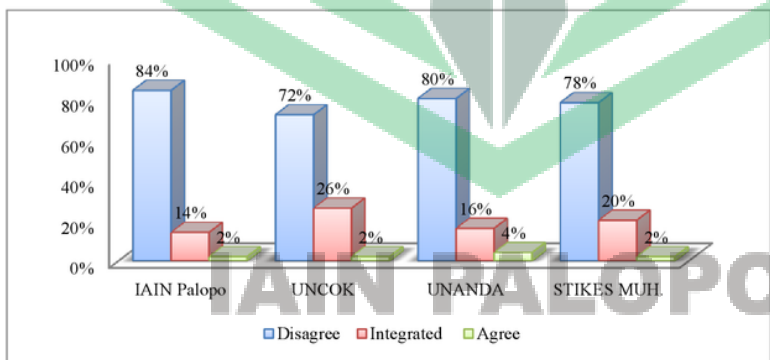

Figure 1 Students' Perceptions on Islamic Sharia

Second, the collected data dealing with the students' perceptions on *Jihad* (struggling concept in Islam) showed that most of the respondents disagreed linking radical action with Jihad. They affirmed that the actual concept of Jihad in Islam is very different from the concept of Jihad associated with the acts of terrorism. The meaning of Jihad in Islam is very broad. It does not mean having to fight and kill innocent people. In addition, it is the last alternative by Muslims if there is interference from outsiders. As long as it can be communicated, why it should be resolved with violence that leads to bloodshed.
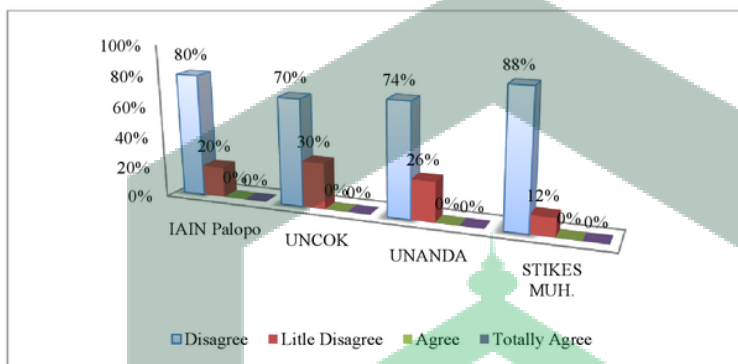
Figure 2 Students' Perceptions on Jihad

Third, the findings dealing with students' perceptions on the concept of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (called *NKRI* standing for *Negera Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*) indicated that none of the respondents considers the concept of NKRI (homeland) contradicts Islamic law. Furthermore, 20 percent of respondents stated that the concept of NKRI slightly contradicts Islamic law. The contradiction can be seen by subordinating the Qur'an and Hadith in the determination of laws in Indonesia. It would be perfect if the implementation is based on the Qur'an, even some of the teachings of the Qur'an have been integrated in the Constitution 1945 and Pancasila. Then, 40.5 percent of the respondents view that NKRI does not conflict with the concept of the Qur'an teachings. It is an implementation of the Qur'an teachings in living in a state where the society has several ethnicities and religions. Finally, 39.5 percent of respondents firmly believed that NKRI is absolutely no

contradiction to the teachings of Islam. Implementation of Islamic teachings could be anywhere and anytime, especially in terms of governance. Not a single verse in the Qur'an is contrary to the concept of NKRI. This is one of the advantages of Islam as it can be applied in any circumstances.
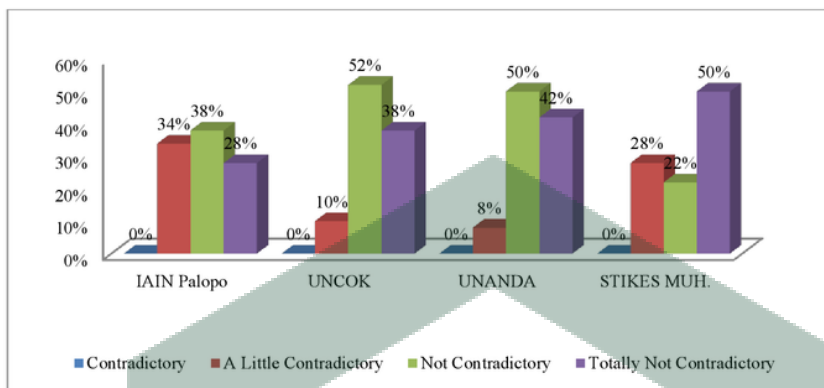
Figure 3 Students' Perceptions on the concept of Negera Kesatuan Republik Indonesia

Fourth, it was found that 9 percent of respondents view that democratic system applied in Indonesia, especially Palopo, is really detrimental to society. It only results in trading in important positions in the government where the candidates are willing to spend a lot of money only to get the position they seek. In the end, all that happens is corruption because they find a way to recover the money they spend at the election. On the other hand, they also viewed at that the *Caliphate System* (a system that applies Islamic law in the government of a country) implemented at the time of the Prophet was much more effective and took the side of smaller people rather than the democratic system, which is a legacy of the colonialists, does. Furthermore, 31.5 percent of respondents view democratic system has both positive and negative impact on government system in Indonesia, especially in Palopo. The concept of democracy is basically very good because it is designed by the people for the people. In this case, all levels of society have the same opportunity to become leaders or representatives in the government system. However, on the other hand the elected officials forget the sweet promises that had been made during the election process. Greed makes the

actors of democracy destroy the concept of the system. The implementation of a democratic system is certainly not contrary to the values of Islam if the actors have controlled awareness dealing with their duties as representatives of the society. Finally, 59.5 percent of respondents consider that the democratic system is most appropriate in Indonesia because it will prevent people from social conflicts. In this case, all levels of Indonesian society have an equal opportunity to be a leader without privileging certain races and religions. On the other hand, the application of the Caliphate system only leads to ethnic and religious disunity.
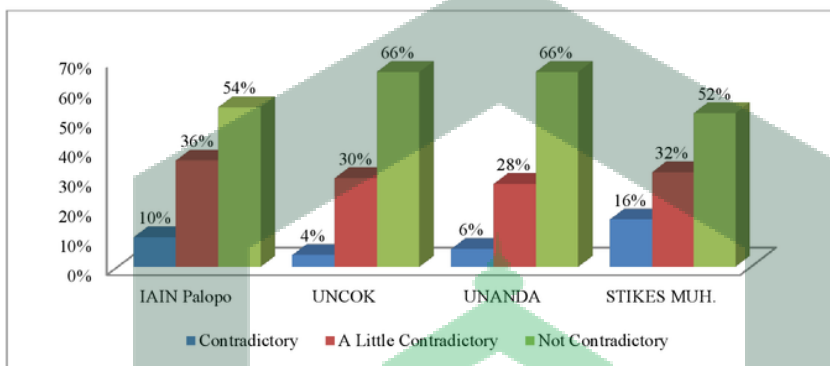
Figure 4 Students' Perception on the Democratic and Caliphate System

Fifth, the data dealing with the students' perception on Pancasila showed that 2 percent of respondents pointed out that Pancasila is not appropriate to serve as the basis of the state. As the majority of Muslims, the Qur'an and Hadith should be implemented in the government system. The Muslims should not put Pancasila above Qur'an even though the values of Pancasila contains the values of the Qur'an. Furthermore, other data showed that 98 percent of respondents agreed with the establishment of Pancasila as the state. They believe in the formulation of Pancasila involving all parties, including the Islamic scholars as in the past. There are no values of Pancasila in conflict with the teachings of the Qur'an from the first principle to the last. All values described in the Qur'an are very clear. Determination of Pancasila as the state is merely as a symbol of national identity as Indonesia is not an Islamic state but a Republic inhabited by some religions.
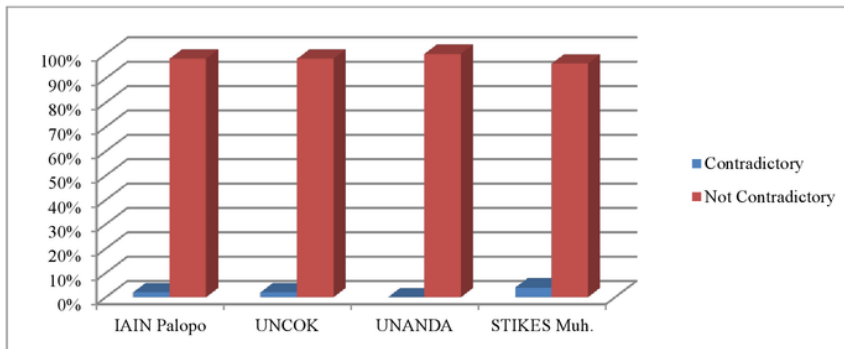
Figure 5 Students' Perception on Pancasila

Finally, the findings dealing with the students' perception on *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Indonesia's official national motto with the meaning "Unity in Diversity") indicated that almost all of the respondents (99%) agreed with the concept of the national motto. It is in line with the concept of Muslim brotherhood existing in the Qur'an. Both of these concepts uphold the values of tolerance in society. A wide variety (different religions, cultures, languages, and ethnicity) can be unified in a harmonious life by applying these concepts in public life. On the other hand, about 1 percent of the respondents viewed that this concept should be replaced with an Islamic concept, the concept of Muslim brotherhood, although both have almost the same values. They stated that the concept of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika is a legacy of previous religions.
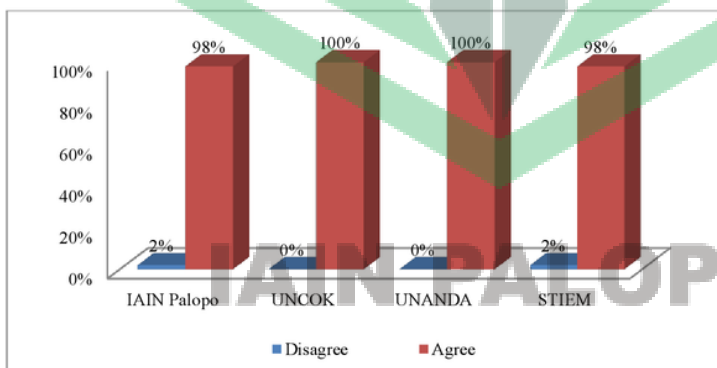
Figure 6 Students' Perception on Bhinneka Tunggal Ika

Conclusion and Recommendation

Students' perceptions on radicalism were analyzed by correlating their views on the relationship between religion and state. It was to examine whether the views of these two things separately or integrated might lead them to be close-minded in tolerating any diversities in their environment dealing with their religious practices and government performance. The data collected in this study showed that the students both in Islamic and private universities are very open-minded about the relationship between religion and state. They do not dichotomize between religion and state, but rather integrate the values of these two things to create safe and peaceful social lives. Such attitudes strongly affect students' awareness to keep harmony in the multi-religion, multi-culture, and multi-tribe environment that the societies of Palopo have. Finally, the findings of this study provide evidence that the students in Palopo will take care of and protect the unity of Indonesia, especially Palopo from every single radical threat by applying persistently the values of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika that are in line with Islamic Sharia.

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