

Mitigating Radicalism amongst Islamic College Students in Indonesia through Religious Nationalism

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Radicalism has the potential to become more widespread in a younger generation of Muslims who are too textual, exclusive, extreme and uncritical. Their ethos of struggle has created a momentum to contest radical ideologies of Islamic radicals. This study investigates the potential for the radicalisation of Islamic students in Indonesia and formulates an approach of integrating national and religious values to mitigate the potential for radicalism. A qualitative research approach is used, and data were collected by distributing questionnaires to Indonesian Islamic student activists. Interviews were also conducted with experts to strengthen secondary sources of information. The results show that the potential for Islamic student to be exposed to radical activists is high. Through categorisation, interpretation and analysis, it was found that the concepts and spread of radicalism were more influenced by religious interpretations than social tolerance factors. In addition, the religious nationalist approach is formulated based on religious terminology and religious narratives.

Contribution: This research contributes by assisting colleges' efforts in building a detection system and mitigating the risk of student radicalism through a religious nationalist approach.

Keywords: religious nationalism; radicalism; integration; student; Islamic colleges.

Introduction

The spread of radicalism in Islamic higher education institutions amongst students is quite high. The Community and Islamic Studies Centre of Jakarta State Islamic University's research provides very relevant data. The research published in the book *Kebhinekaan di Menara Gading* (Nisa et al. 2021) presents two aspects, namely attitudes and behaviour concerning Muslims' religious tolerance of non-Muslims in the university environment. The survey results, conducted in 34 provinces with 2866 student respondents, show that the majority of Muslim students gave responses indicating an attitude of high or very high religious tolerance. Around 69.83% of students indicated an attitude of high religious tolerance and a very high religious tolerance towards non-Muslims. Meanwhile, another 30.16% of students indicated an attitude of low religious tolerance or complete intolerance.

There are many factors that influence intolerant behaviour amongst students. One of them is the impact of social media, as the reference for the younger generation's understanding of Islam comes from social media (50.89%), which influences their views on jihad, tolerance and the application of Islamic law (Rustan, Amin & Haramain 2020). Apart from social media, radicalism also spreads through the existence of internal and external campus organisations that tend to be exclusive in influencing the development of intolerant attitudes, because they are reluctant to associate with other organisations (Arifianto 2019). In addition, radicalism is spread through the learning process in class and religious books that tend to be textual, as well as conservative lecturers' perspectives on religion (Maulana 2017; Tambak 2021).

Many studies show that Indonesian educators do not yet have a demonstrable attitude of openness and respect for differences, minority groups and marginalised groups (eds. Künkler & Stepan 2013; Raihani 2018; Spiegel 2012). In higher education, a study shows the spread of extremism amongst Indonesian colleges (Ali et al. 2021; Suhendi, Sawahel & Abdillah 2020). In addition, religious education textbooks used in public colleges show an increased propensity for exclusivism (Logli 2022). The increase of radicalism comes from Muslim student activists who have a religious understanding which is exclusive (Ahnaf 2018; Sunesti, Hasan & Azca 2018), as these students conduct various religious activities on campus that encourage the development of exclusive religious views. This trend is inseparable from the infiltration of radicalism on campus through campus mosques (Weda & Ihsan 2020) by enforcing the students.

Based on statistical data, 39% of students in seven state colleges have been exposed to radicalism (Hakim, Bainus & Sudirman 2019).

Regarding the study of the development of radicalism in Indonesia, the Research and Development Agency of East Java Province, in collaboration with the Research and Community Service Institute, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel (UINSA) Surabaya (Hamdi, Mukaffa & Masrifah 2019), studied students' exposure to radicalism on campus and also teenagers who were involved in discussions and forums at religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, *ta'lim* [instruction] assemblies and recitations. This study only provides solutions in terms of deradicalising efforts through law enforcement and supporting moderate religious figures.

Other relevant research was conducted by Research and Development and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. This research describes the potential for religious radicalism of students at the religious colleges and the supporting factors but does not provide a solution to prevent it. Akhmad Bukhari's (2019) research however, does offer a solution to the problem of radicalism at state Islamic religious colleges (Perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam negeri [PTKIN]). The recommended solution is deradicalisation efforts by inculcating Islamic values in students, strengthening student organisations and instilling an Islamic nationalist perspective. In the research to date, a paradigmatic model or approach to preventing radicalism amongst students at PTKINs in Indonesia has not been found, something that is very much needed.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive perspective regarding the potential scale of radicalism in educational institutions. In particular, this study seeks (1) to describe the potential for radicalism amongst students, who show little tolerance of the existence of other religions and groups; (2) to identify the causes and factors of the spread of radicalism in educational institutions in Indonesia; and (3) to describe the need to prevent the spread of radicalism from becoming more widespread by applying the religious nationalist model or approach.

Apart from being driven by globalisation conditions, the potential for radicalism in higher education institutions is also influenced by the decreasing sense of nationalism amongst students. Today, some higher education institutions (7 from 122 universities) tend to be centres of radicalism, which is contrary to national values. The National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) found that there are seven state universities that tend to be exposed to radicalism in Java. The seven state universities are the University of Indonesia (UI), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Diponegoro University (UNDIP), Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS), Airlangga University (Unair) and Brawijaya University (UB). The growth in radicalisation amongst students has the

potential to undo any progress in developing feelings of nationalism. Therefore, a study of the potential for student radicalism and the formulation of a model of integration of religious nationalist understanding is proposed in order to solve the problem of radicalism. This study contributes to understanding the potential for religious beliefs to generate extremism and cause violence, and the tools to counter this process of radicalisation.

Literature review

Religious nationalism

Religious nationalism is a way of thinking and behaving. Its behaviours demonstrate high levels of loyalty, concern and respect for one's physical, social and cultural environments by placing the interests of the nation and state above the interests of oneself and one's groups (Sukatman et al. 2019:41). This religious nationalism arose because of the rejection of ethnic, religious, cultural and even legal plurality (Neo & Scharffs 2021:10). The religious nationalist concept emerged to realise the spirit of religious nationalism and a nationalist religious spirit, for the sake of more substantial national unity and integrity (Sukatman et al. 2019:141). Thus, in the religious nationalist understanding, there is a compromise between nationalism, religion and Pancasila as a national ideology (Burhanuddin 2015:361).

The development of religious nationalist movements and discourses is an essential step in overcoming the potential for religious radicalism (Sriyanto, Suharini & Trimasukmana 2018:185). This development aims to raise awareness of nationalism so that the community can build immunity against understandings and movements that tend to attack national sovereignty (Khamdan 2016). One of the ways to develop religious nationalism is through education. Religious nationalist concepts are two aspects of character values taught explicitly in the learning process (Lestari & Hermanto 2019). Learning about religious nationalism is carried out in a higher education environment as one of the efforts to strengthen national resilience. In addition, religious nationalist character education in higher education is integrated with learning plans through standard elements of character learning, learning outcomes, study programmes, the course syllabus (Sukatman et al. 2019). In addition, the implementation of religious nationalist character education in higher education is also carried out by incorporating the values of religious nationalist characters into the plan of learning devices (Hadi 2018).

There are several arguments about religious nationalism having an impact in overcoming religious radicalism: (1) Indonesian society is a pluralistic nation that has differences in ethnicity, culture, language and customs, including religion. One of the important elements that affect the life of the nation is religion. (2) The majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, so many of the terms used in the language are terms adapted from Islamic religious

traditions, although they are also used by other religious people. For this reason, the use of national terms with religious terms and narratives is more easily accepted by the community. (3) There are two important elements that influence the ideology of political life in Indonesia: nationalist and faith-based groups. These two groups often have conflicts of interest and cause conflicts in society, so the religious nationalist strategy is the solution to these problems.

Prevention of radicalism

Radicalism is an attitude that leads a person to change and weaken pre-existing ideas or understandings (Hafid 2020:31). This concept is in line with the opinion of Idris, Widyawan and Adji (2024) who defined radicalism as a principle that expects a form of change, rejection or even resistance to ideas, assumptions, institutions or values. Radicalism is also considered a narrow-minded and over-reactive movement, which employs violent means to achieve its goals (Wahid 2018). Radicalism is often associated with fundamentalism or people who represent or support extreme political orientations (Hysing, Olsson & Dahl 2016). However, radicalism is not the same as terrorism, because terrorists are groups that use violence against civilian targets. Furthermore, radicalism itself is generally considered to lead to (although not always result in) participation in terrorism (Snook et al. 2021). Therefore, radicalism is considered something that disrupts or creates divisions in the social system, because it aims to destroy the existing balance to achieve the movement's desired changes (Cao 2017; Silver 2018). From given definitions, it can be concluded that religious-based radicalism is a principle, idea, attitude and movement that uses more religion-based violence in dealing with differences and achieving goals.

Radicalism, previously found in the less well-educated community, has now extended to educated groups or university students. Several university leaders have identified radicalised students on campus (Basri & Dwiningrum 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to prevent potential radicalism by using a strategy of moderation (Davids 2017; Emelin & Tkhostov 2019). Moderation is the point between two opposite things or two extremes (Ushama 2014). The concept of moderation has become part of a strategic effort to prevent radicalism. Understanding moderation will encourage a balanced, open and tolerant religious attitude (Islam 2020). Meanwhile, various modes of moderation are used in student deradicalisation efforts, such as re-internalising Pancasila and religion so as to prevent the spread of radicalisation on campus. The significance of religious moderation is based on at least three reasons. Firstly, the presence of religion maintains human dignity, with *rahmah* [compassion] as the main message. Secondly, religious thought is historical, whilst reality continues to move dynamically. Thirdly, the Republic of Indonesia must be approached through a cultural strategy. In addition, deradicalisation efforts can be carried out through campus student organisations by promoting

moderate religious understanding and implementing Pancasila values as the basis of state philosophy (Kesuma et al. 2019).

Student activists

Students are an educated group at the forefront of making changes in society (Reger 2018). In the campus environment, students can be divided into two groups, namely academic and activist. Academic students are often considered students who only focus on their university studies. Meanwhile, student activists become members of organisations who operate inside and outside campuses and are involved in the organisation's work programme (Broadhurst 2014). A number of studies show there are significant differences between academic students and student activists, which can be seen from general knowledge, ways of thinking, knowledge and socialisation, sciences, leadership and leadership management that are not taught in the higher education curriculum (Silva 2018). For instance, student activists can learn things related to changes based on science and society. In addition, student activists have better-developed emotional intelligence compared with academic students, because they have more responsibilities than students who are not actively organised (Kesuma et al. 2019:155).

Student activists with high collective self-esteem tend to protect and defend their group from pressure from other parties (Arifianto 2019:4). In addition, the tendency of students' exclusive thinking has given birth to textualist, militant and radical activists (Iswahyudi 2020). One of the activists on campus is an Islamic movement activist who views himself as a *da'wah* [proselytising] activist. *Da'wah* activists result from continuous interaction with their social world, thus influencing the formation of self-confidence with their religious identity (Irham & Lubis 2021). In practice, there are ideological differences amongst activists of Islamic student organisations in preaching *kaffah* [a complete return to] Islamic teachings, even at the level of perceiving the Qur'anic hadith texts and translations. These differences tend to trigger the emergence of narrow fanaticism towards the organisation, which is considered to have the most perfect ideological truth, religious system, form, style and method of movement as an affirmation of the identity and existence of the organisation. In this condition, it is not uncommon to find cadres or members rejecting other understandings and views outside of the group (Haryani et al. 2018).

Method and design

This study uses a qualitative research design. A mixed methods analysis is applied in this study by combining two approaches, namely qualitative and quantitative. Creswell (2010:5) revealed that the mixed method is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Sugiyono (2011:18) defined the combination as one that is able to make the data

obtained more comprehensive, with advantages in terms of validity, reliability and objectivity.

The strategy used in this research is to interview participants to obtain qualitative data, after previously conducting a survey to obtain quantitative data. This is what Creswell (2010:313) called a sequential explanatory strategy. The researcher collects and analyses quantitative data, then refines it with qualitative data findings. Data were collected by distributing questionnaires and conducting in-depth interviews. This research used a Google Forms survey questionnaire to collect data from student activists throughout Indonesia. The questionnaire was distributed over the period of 08–15 September 2021. There are 15 surveyed Islamic colleges in Indonesia, such as Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Syekh Nurjati, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN) Mngkalis, IAIN Pontianak, IAIN Pekalongan, IAIN Kediri, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin (STS) Jambi, IAIN Metro Lampung, UIN Ar-raniryh, IAIN Palopo, UIN Saizu Purwokerto, UIN Bengkulu, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, UIN Raden, Fatah Palembang, UIN Mataram and IAIN Kerinci. The seven Islamic universities in Indonesia were selected based on regional representation of Indonesia and the existence of institutions under the Ministry of Religion.

The research informants used respondents from the research setting to provide information about the situation conditions in the campus environment. A simple random sampling method was used to determine a representative sample. Respondents came from PTKIN students who were distributed proportionally. Based on the data from this survey, the potential for Indonesian Islamic students' radicalism, especially from Islamic colleges, can be identified.

The questionnaire was developed into a question section, a direct statement section and an agree–disagree section. The development of the questionnaire was based on several themes, including nationalism, Islam, religious moderation and radicalism. The assessment of the potential for radicalism was measured through the detailed responses given by the respondents. The collected data then enabled the researchers to assemble a picture of the potential radicalism of Islamic students.

The answers collected from the questionnaire distribution were unprocessed data about the potential for radicalism amongst PTKIN students. To supplement this data, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the respondents. In addition, the information collected was broadened by gathering information from relevant literature studies. By involving student activists as respondents, researchers sought to collect comprehensive information based on the activists' knowledge and practical experience on and off campus. Meanwhile, nonstudent activists at IAIN Syekh Nurjati were also involved as respondents to obtain information from students who only focused on routine

activities on campus. By involving these two categories of respondents, the researchers sought to get different findings. However, the questionnaire results indicated the same tendency that PTKIN students had the potential to be exposed to radicalism.

To complete the study of the survey data findings, the researcher conducted additional in-depth interviews with experts and scholars who are close to the discourse of radicalism. Interviews were conducted to obtain information and meet research objectives, using a question-and-answer process with the informants. The informants had been involved in social life for a relatively long time and were familiar with the discourse of radicalism and terrorism.

Results and discussion

Portrait of potential radicalism amongst Islamic college students

The given data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to student activist respondents from amongst 15 PTKINs throughout Indonesia and nonstudent activists at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. The data collected is then analysed to determine the potential exposure to radicalism amongst PTKIN students, as presented in Table 1.

In addition, Table 2 displays the respondents' answers to the questionnaire.

Based on the findings in Table 2, the researcher confirmed several respondents' responses as being aware of the penetration of radicalism in Islamic colleges. Student Activist 1 stated:

'Regarding radicalism, Islamic higher education as a centre of excellence must carry out repositioning in the external

TABLE 1: Potential exposure to radicalism amongst Perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam negeri students.

No.	Student category	No. of students	Potential exposure to radicalism
1	Islamic college students in Indonesia	396	274 (68.7%)

TABLE 2: Respondents' answers to the questionnaire.

Questions	Option 1 (%)	Option 2 (%)
1. As a Muslim, do you prefer the state to be an Islamic state or in another form?	Islamic state form 68.8	Other form 31.2
2. As a citizen and a religious person, do you prefer to obey either state law or religious law?	Religious law 77.7	State law 22.3
3. To live as a nation and state, you need rules or regulations that all people must obey. Do you prefer to obey the governments' or religious leaders' rules?	Government 51	Religious leaders 49
4. There is a saying that 'hubul wathon minal iman' [love for the homeland is part of faith]. Do you agree that defending the Republic of Indonesia is part of faith?	Agree 95.6	Disagree 4.4
5. Based on religious texts ('there is no compulsion in religion' [Qur'an 2:256] and 'if you are honoured with something of respect, then repay that respect with something better than it or repay the honour with something similar. Verily, Allah takes all things into account' [Qur'an 2:86]), respect for people of other religions is an obligation for every Muslim. Do you agree with this opinion?	Agree 95.6	Disagree 4.4

environment through internal restructuring efforts that are planned, implemented and evaluated properly on an ongoing basis. The hope is that it will not be infiltrated by transnational ideologies that tend to be destructive.' (State Islamic Institute, Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, 23 years old)

The extremism that shapes a student's identity can harm his or her religious life. Exclusivism and puritanism are always fought for. On the other hand, national commitment should concern higher education institutions. Diversity education is under attack from various transnational ideologies and narrow religious beliefs. The first interview is supported by the second interview with Student Activist 2, stating the causes of the degradation of nationalism:

'Factors causing the degradation of our nationalism are the influence of intolerant and textualist groups, the weakness of national history education, the influence of an Arabisation in understanding, the distortion of social media on religious values and the emergence of radical religious organisations. That means the degradation factor of nationalism does not come entirely from internal students.' (State Islamic Institute Metro, Lampung, 21 years old)

In the third interview with Student Activist 3, the nature of radical ideology and how it is used to attack others gives momentum to the potential development of student radicalism. They will be more and more blinded by their narrow beliefs and feel only they are right:

'Things indicating students are exposed to radicalism: experiencing ideological changes that change how they view the world; promote a rigid understanding of their beliefs; more often use ideological languages that discriminate against others; extreme ideology has become a personal identity and uses more ideological language hateful rhetoric.' (State Islamic University, Mataram, 24 years old)

From the given interviews, it can be identified that there are two respondents who are tolerant and intolerant towards differences of understanding. Tolerant students have a national understanding based on the concept of unity in diversity (*bhineka tunggal ika*) and plurality of social realities, whilst intolerant students have the assumption that national understanding is contrary to religion, because human loyalty, according to them, is only to God and should not be given to anyone or anything but God.

The growth of radicalism in educational institutions should sound the alarm for its impact on increasingly eroding national values and character, working against unifying all levels of society. National values such as love for the homeland, patriotism, tolerance, unity and integrity, obedience to the state (loyalty) and religious values such as *ukhuwah* [brotherhood], *tawasuth* [moderation], *ta'adul* [being fair], *tasamuh* [tolerance] and *tawazun* [harmony] are no longer practised and have even begun to disappear (Alam 2020; Nur et al. 2020). Educational institutions, especially colleges, have become a breeding ground for new ideologies and understandings that are entirely contrary to the realisation of an open and enlightened educational climate. This pattern

occurs when young people take the Qur'anic propositions and traditions literally without considering the cause of the verses' or hadiths' revelation. The problem lies in the preference for certain topics, in which *jihād* [struggle] and *khilafah* [caliphate] are most in demand. It comes as a consequence of the weakening of higher education's authority as an institution and its inability to produce generations with religious nationalist insights.

According to Armstrong (2011), religion can be viewed as a guideline that regulates a belief system and worship of God. Religion also regulates human interaction with the environment. Therefore, religion is seen as a belief system and an institutional ritual of a supernatural God. However, religion in practice is very private and isolated from all secular activities.

Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes (2000:7–8) defined religion as the 4Cs, namely creed, code, cult and community structure. These four things are fulfilled by social institutions, which can be called religion. Creed is related to belief in something that is absolute and considered true in life, which can be in the form of belief in God or something else. Then, the code is a guide to the behaviour of religious people, because they believe in something that is in the creed. Next, cult is a ritual activity related to the transcendent relationship between religious adherents and their God through worship practices. In addition, community structure is related to the relationship between religious communities. This behaviour then becomes a reflection of individual religiosity.

Islamic colleges need to be able to effectively carry out the mainstreaming of religious moderation. This idea aligns with the religious nationalist view, which is open to a wider discourse. According to the Research, Development, Training and Education Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2021), religious moderation needs to be discussed, recited, translated and echoed within the framework of managing a multicultural Indonesian society. In principle, the theory of religious moderation requires a fair and balanced attitude that needs to be taught and cultivated on campus in order to develop the three main qualities needed in students, namely wisdom, purity and courage.

In addition, Menchik (2016) and Anwar (2016) argued that religious tolerance is indispensable in society. Religious etiquette is a religious attitude that balances individual religious practices (exclusivity) and respect for the religious practices of other people of different religions.

Islamic state and Islamic law

In terms of this survey's findings, the data on the alignment of the Islamic state (see Table 2) can be linked to the survey results of the Uhamka Research Institute (2012). This survey found that the majority of Muslim respondents in Jakarta want to see the establishment of an Islamic state. In mid-2018, the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (*Badan*

Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT) and the National Intelligence Agency (*Badan Intelijen Nasional*, BIN) also conducted field studies at various state colleges in Indonesia. The BIN found that as many as 24% of students agreed with a form of Islamic state in Indonesia. Furthermore, BNPT found that there were seven radical state colleges in Java. The seven state colleges are University of Indonesia (UI), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Diponegoro University (UNDIP), Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS), Airlangga University (UNAIR) and Brawijaya University (UB).

Student radicalism can give rise to anti-nationalism, essentially a rejection of the state, state law, government and intolerance (see Table 2). A survey conducted by UIN Jakarta in 2017 with a sample size of 1522 student activists, 337 students and 264 teachers spread across 34 provinces found that 51.1% of Muslim respondents had an intolerant view of Ahmadiyya (a sect within Islam) and Shi'a (another branch of Islam), who comprise minority Muslim groups in Indonesia. Meanwhile, 34.3% of the same respondents have a biased opinion of religions other than Islam. The BNPT investigation found that 58.5% of student respondents held radical religious views. As expressed by Student Activist 3:

'Ahmadiyya and Shi'a are religious beliefs that deviate from the true teachings of Islam, because the Ahmadiyya followers have their own prophet and apostle, namely Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad from India. Even the Ahmadiyya holy book is also different from the Qur'an, which is called Tadzkirah. Teachings like this must be kept away from the Indonesian people so that we are not affected by the bad effects.'

Historically, religious radicalism has taken one of two forms. The first form is radicalism in mind (fundamentalism). The second form is radicalism in action, namely terrorism. The radicalism that metamorphoses into anarchic actions usually legitimises violence to achieve its desires and interests. Rahmatullah (2017) stated that the symptoms of radicalism can be characterised by several things, namely being oppositional, rejection of hermeneutics and rejection of pluralism and relativism. Taking an oppositional position is resistance to everything that is considered to endanger the existence of their religion. Furthermore, the rejection of hermeneutics is refusing to be critical of the text and its interpretation. The third symptom is the rejection of pluralism and relativism. This kind of rejection will generate a narrow fanaticism, believing that only their group is right. The research, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC) in Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta in 2018, suggested that the threat of radicalism or extremism amongst people aged 15–24 years old is particularly alarming.

Factors supporting radicalism amongst students

Theological and sociological factors influence the potential for radicalism amongst students. Theological or ideological factors are internal factors of religious understanding and are manifested as, amongst other things, (1) demands for a

religious state, (2) enforcing religious law as state law, (3) support for extreme religious movements to enforce religious teachings, (4) support for religion-based programmes and (5) the preference for religion-based parties. Based on the survey results, this study shows that students prefer to obey religious law rather than state law (see Table 2).

Religious understanding is carried out by becoming inculcated with the moral basis of religion from the holy scriptures, including religious traditions that developed in religious groups. These teachings are interpreted so that they can be used to control and even legitimise acts of violence. Violent behaviour carried out by Muslims always involves aspects of religion and ideology (at least as a moral basis), the legitimacy of their actions, encouragement, provocative material and threats. Some religious figures argue that radical actions by certain Muslim groups on the pretext of religion cannot be justified because Islam principally teaches peace and tolerance. In this case, the Ahnaf's research findings (2018) explained that radical Islamic groups use religious foundations to legitimise radicalism by only selecting the verses of the Qur'an with confrontational nuances whilst ignoring the verses that have peaceful nuances.

The International Crisis Group (2003) stated that Islamic radicalism in Indonesia is not only triggered by religious theological factors but also major sociological factors, namely political conflict, poor governance, globalisation and Arabic acculturation. These sociological factors are caused by a person's dissatisfaction with the surrounding environment.

Radicalism, from a sociological perspective, is related to the question of what factors in a society increase or decrease the likelihood of violence. On the other hand, the challenge faced is new radicalism, which becomes a problem when violence must also arouse widespread subjective concern. Sociology sees inferential relativity in understanding the phenomenon of radicalism, with various theories and axiomatic differences used in studying it, even though Horton, Leslie and Larson (1991) define the phenomenon of radicalism as a natural thing that happens in society (a criminal is a natural part of society).

In Breuer and Elson's (2017) frustration-aggression theory, not getting what you want leads to frustration and anger or aggression. Several recent studies also support that frustration plays a role in causing aggression. Gurr (1970) in Dalton (2005) suggested that the main cause of protest movements and social violence is the development of dissatisfaction, which is then politicised so that the actualisation of violence against the targeted groups and actors emerges. King and Taylor (2011) explained that the feeling of being treated unfairly will motivate individuals or groups to act both on one another and on themselves in order for feelings of injustice to turn into feelings of fairness. Factors that influence the notion of radicalism in Indonesia, both theological and sociological, also specifically affect Islamic students in

Indonesia (Interview with Suady, 28 September 2021). The given description shows that the factors supporting radicalism amongst students are not only influenced by theological factors or religious understanding but also sociological factors that influence their activities.

Integrative approach of religious nationalism

According to Stenmark (2017), religion needs to be understood in its essence to affirm religious beliefs logically and scientifically. As a way of life, religion can answer every problem in life. The practice of religion can make its adherents more tolerant. According to Madjid (2013:65–67), the religious spirit must be based on the vision of bringing goodness to all (*Islam rahmatan lil 'alamīn*), not communal exclusivity. Religion must be understood in its entirety and practised in alignment with the values of justice and humanity in the form moderation (*kalimatun sawā*), pluralism and inclusivism.

The study of religious nationalism in Indonesia is furnished with several different terms, such as Nurcholish Madjid's 'Islam and Nationalism' and Abdurrahman Wahid's 'indigenisation of Islam'. The idea of 'Islam and Nationalism', formulated by Nurcholish Madjid, responded to the historical context of Indonesia in the 1970s. Theologically, religious nationalism emerged because of the rise of religious fundamentalism and exclusivity. According to Madjid (2013), since Islam was the dominant religion, Indonesian Muslims needed to be aware of the importance of pluralism and inclusiveness.

Madjid's criticism of fundamentalism is directed at those Muslims who seek the establishment of Islamic law in Indonesia. Madjid's inclusive thinking can be studied from the moderate and substantive spirit of Islam and the multicultural Indonesian spirit to counterbalance and correct formal-exclusive religious interpretations, which had the potential to become the embryo of horizontal conflict at that time. This idea is aligned with the thought expressed by Juergensmeyer (2019):

The marriage between religious faith and the nation-state is an interesting turn in modern history, fraught with dangers, for even if it is possible, the radical accommodation of religion to nationalism may not necessarily be a good thing. A merger of the absolutism of nationalism with the absolutism of religion might create a rule so vaunted and potent that it might destroy itself and its neighbors. (p. 387)

In addition to the given terms, the indigenisation of Islam can also be associated with a religious nationalist approach. Abdurrahman Wahid in Syabibi et al. (2021) initiated the idea of indigenising Islam in the 1980s. This concept tries to accommodate culture with Islam. Indigenisation is neither an attempt to avoid the emergence of resistance from local culture nor is it a process of equating culture with the religious practices of Muslim communities in the Middle East. The essence of the indigenisation of Islam is to keep accommodating the local cultures, norms and values whilst Islam as a religion is also received in peace.

The concept of indigenisation of Islam, according to Abdurrahman Wahid in Naim (2017), departs from three factors. Firstly, the indigenisation of Islam is part of the history of Islam, both in its home country and in Indonesia, as promoted by Sunan Kalijaga. Sunan Kalijaga was a preacher of Islam on the island of Java who was known as an artist who was able to create artistic and cultural tools as a medium for the spread of Islam on the island of Java. The concept of *da'wah* is syncretic and adaptive. He combined Javanese-Hindu arts and culture as a medium for spreading Islam with Islamic teachings as the substance (Fauzan & Rohmadi 2021; Rubaidi 2019). Secondly, indigenisation is crucial for Indonesian Muslims as it can accommodate local cultures, norms and values together with Islam. Thirdly, the indigenisation of Islam is related to the relationship between *fiqhiah* [Islamic jurisprudence] and *adat* [custom]. In this case, Gus Dur adhered to the rules of *fiqhiah* [Islamic jurisprudence] commonly used in Islamic boarding schools, namely *al-adah muhakkamah* [traditions become the law] (Naim 2017).

In the Indonesian context, Nurcholish Madjid in Rozak et al. (2015) argued that if religious formalism is pulled into the realm of practical politics, it can create tensions that threaten state stability, unity and national unity. On the other hand, religion plays a significant role in civilisation and effecting changes in a nation, such as implementing the *Shariah* economy. Rieffer (2003) stated that religious nationalism led to sustainable change in the 21st century with various achievements and goals. The stronger the religious nationalist influences on the national movement, the greater the likelihood that discrimination and human rights violations will occur.

Juergensmeyer (2019) stated that:

Religious visions of moral order will continue to appear as attractive solutions, and religious activists will continue to attempt to impose these solutions in violent ways, seeing themselves as soldiers in a cosmic drama of political redemption. (p. 20)

Religious nationalism, according to Grzymala-Busse and Science (2021) becomes a powerful force to shape religious behaviour and institutional empowerment efforts in formulating various kinds of policies to prevent various forms of threats of internal and external violence.

Concerning an integrative approach, this study proposes an approach that combines national values with religious values, both in terms of terminology and narrative. Muslim students in Indonesia readily accept religious terminology in explaining national values rather than the existing general terminology of nationalism. The survey results indicated that participants respond positively to nationalism, correlated with religious phrases such as 'hubul wathon minal' [love for the homeland is part of faith], that is, love for the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is part of faith (see Table 2). In contrast, students still seem to reject the general terms and narratives of national values. It is different when the

term nationalism is associated and narrated with terms based on religious traditions and narratives.

The survey gauged the issue of religious tolerance by asking respondents whether they agreed with the statement that respecting people of other religions is an obligation for every Muslim (see Table 2). The survey results indicated that most respondents (95.6%) agreed with respecting other religions because it is an obligation found in Islamic teachings. It shows that using national values with religious doctrine can reduce the potential for religious radicalism amongst students.

The integrative model of national and religious values to prevent potential radicalism amongst students in Indonesia is formulated with two integrative approaches. Firstly, there should be integration with the terminology used in national and religious languages, such as expressing love for the homeland using religious terms. Secondly, there should be integration through narratives that substantially contain national and religious values. The second approach explains tolerance as a national language with a religious teaching, namely respect for other religious people as an obligation of Islamic teachings.

Mainstreaming religious terminology and religious narratives in Islamic colleges

Fleming (2013) explained the importance of building an inclusive university. It can be done in three phases: changing the institutional structure, promoting the value of openness and generating inclusive knowledge. An inclusive university can be started by cultivating religious terminology and religious narratives. The first stage eliminates the exclusivity of higher education with its various movement models. The second phase takes place by building a campus environment that allows for more inclusive sharing. In the third phase, knowledge products are developed with inclusion on campus.

For students, they bring with them a belief in a revealed God. The student also draws on the nation's culture, which contains spiritual values of life and ancestral heritage (Nandan Iskandar 2019). Students need to understand the essence of religion and religious experience through religious narratives and religious terminology, namely an approach that can show that behind various expressions of thought, behaviour and social interaction, religion has an inner nuance that goes beyond the psychological dimension. Religion needs to present a spiritual reflection of the encounter with something beyond the world's transience which is sacred and sublime. In addition, the theological approach places religion as something privileged by God to humanity. However, it must also be understood that the actual reality of religion can be seen in applying religious values to life, which certainly does not contradict national values (Fidiyani 2017).

A spiritual yearning has been present in humans throughout the history of their existence on Earth, and religion is based

on very human needs, at least in terms of human emotions themselves (Azyumardi Azra in Ansari 2020:155). Religion then becomes an article of belief and used as the basis for a worldview, because religion in its exalted position is considered as God's blueprint, which is formulated to be further used as a reference to solve all life's problems (Quraish Shihab in Islam 2020).

Fromm (2013) explained that religion as a universal value system has an intrinsic appeal and 'is of compelling interest to mankind'. As Wach (2019) said, religion has three forms in expressing its universal values, namely a system of belief, a system of worship and a system of social interaction.

At the level of religious values, religion has five dimensions, including ideology (belief system), the religious practice (practice), experience (feeling), knowledge and the dimension of religious consequences (effect) (Zarzycka & Rydz 2014). Departing from these facts, the discussion about the inclusive university is in understanding religious texts and social praxis comprehensively. The moderate perspective in understanding religious texts should not only serve as an operational standard on paper but also permeate social praxis. Another challenge is how to establish this moderation into a lifestyle for millennials, who are currently swept away by disruptive life patterns.

The spread of radicalism in Indonesian educational institutions is growing due to the era of openness that allows previously restricted groups to express their views. The Reformation era provided an environment for the growth and development of various forms of radical religious expression which denied the existence of other groups and even tended to be radical. Radicalism in the world of education was seeded, changing from the New Order-controlled conditions to a wide latitude for exercising freedom.

The planting of the seeds of radicalism in education is a form of denial by radicals and radical organisations of the fact that the Indonesian nation is plural, especially concerning religious ideas. At the same time, this denial indicates a shift in national understanding, which was previously cohesive and based on noble values such as religious-inclusive values, to become radical-exclusive. The world of education is no longer a medium for disseminating knowledge to create a social life order that is more open and based on mutual respect, instead becoming a place where radicalism is introduced, grows and develops. The notion of religious nationalism is no longer found amidst the more complex challenges of national life.

Given the rise of radicalism, building an early detection and handling system on campus is of great importance. It can be achieved in several ways, including raising awareness of the academic community on the risk of violent extremism, developing skills in detecting early warning signs, improving digital and media literacy skills, supporting student social

initiatives to train social cohesion and empathy and developing policies for campus preparedness systems.

A study carried out by the Research, Development, Training and Education Agency for the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2021), undertaken at three state religious colleges in Indonesia (UIN Jakarta, UIN Bandung and UIN Yogyakarta), showed unstable external and internal empathy values in almost all circles for students, lecturers and education staff. It indicates a severe problem for applying religious moderation proclaimed in the 2020–2024 Presidential Decree No. 18 of 2020 concerning the National Five-Year Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional-RPJMN*). According to Muchtadlirin in Bamualim (2015), strategies to insert religious moderation into the higher educations can be carried out through social bounding, social bridging, and social linking strategic issues on religious moderation.

It is conducted as a preventive effort to stop the radicalisation of students' thoughts and actions. The phase where a person is being exposed is pre-radicalisation, which includes political, historical, psychosocial, instrumental and theological narratives. There is self-identification that focuses on internal and external factors such as looking for identity, leaving old teachings and looking for new values. Furthermore, there is indoctrination through understanding spiritual sanctions and strengthening beliefs about the unconditional adoption of jihadist ideology. The climax is the act of terrorism through the obligation of jihad, training, strengthening of faith and planning of action (Milla, Putra & Umam 2019).

This study explains the emergence of radicalism in educational institutions driven in an era of openness in responding to differences. Inclusivism is taboo because it is considered an understanding that accepts anything without distinction. The strengthening of truth claims in social groups, such as amongst students, is a sign of the weak control of colleges on student attitudes and activities. Within educational institutions there is the potential for radicalism, which seeds terrorism. This also occurs in noneducational institutions such as mosques (Hidayah & Sunarso 2018). If radicalism in educational institutions intensifies because of the availability of space for expression that was previously shackled, in mosques it occurs because of an intolerant attitude towards the existence of different religious groups and understandings. This dissemination of radical ideas can occur through the curriculum and lectures, thus requiring early prevention efforts.

Conclusion

Religious teachings can ideally guide and direct each of their followers in the right direction. Every religion provides teachings about goodness as a guide for living and interacting with others. Therefore, it is inappropriate if religious teachings are used to direct their followers to radicalism, which will harm themselves and others. In this context, religious teachings significantly influence the understanding and actions of radicalism.

This study examines the potential for radicalism amongst Islamic student activists drawing on data from a formulated questionnaire. The research data show that the potential for exposure to radicalism for Indonesian Islamic student activists is relatively high. In addition, by implementing two integration strategies of religious nationalism, namely religious terminology and religious narratives, researchers provide policy recommendations in building religious intellectuality. These data deserve the attention of relevant stakeholders to develop targeted and effective mitigation and deradicalisation programmes.

This research provides a theoretical contribution in the form of an integrated approach to religious nationalism in preventing the potential for radicalism in society or amongst Islamic higher education students in Indonesia. This approach combines nationalism with religious values. It is 'religious nationalism'. This study has limitations, particularly regarding the data collection, so further research needs to be undertaken to confirm the results of this study to explore more factual actions of radicalism amongst Islamic college students.

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Authors' contributions

I.N., S.G., A.H., S.S. and R.R. contributed equally to this research article.

Ethical considerations

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