

# Dialogue on Tolerance and Nationality as Prevention of Religious Radicalism in Higher Education

Wasino<sup>1</sup>, Endah Sri Hartatik<sup>2</sup> and Fitri Amalia Shintasiwi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Semarang, Taman Siswa Street, Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Diponegoro, Tembalang, Semarang City, Central of Java, Indonesia

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Abstract: The results of academic studies on the tolerance index in Indonesia show a decline in the spirit of religious tolerance. This attitude is comparable to the increasing issue of religious radicalism in the mass media community. In the news it was mentioned that several campuses became arenas of developing intolerant attitudes through closed religious forums. This study aims to model dialogue between student organizations on campus to narrow the potential for the development of ideas of religious radicalism. This research was conducted using qualitative methods with a phenomenological design. The data source of this research came from participants who were functionaries in student organizations. The results showed that 1) the campus accommodated religious activities of students, but was more dominant towards Muslims; 2) space for followers of other religions is very limited, especially in the context of building positive dialogue; 3) after conducting focus group discussions involving various elements of student organizations, a joint agreement emerged on the dissemination of tolerance ideas in each organization to prevent the development of radicalism ideas. The implication of this research is that dialogue between student organizations on campus is needed as a bridge to build a peaceful Indonesia and prevent the development of religious understanding that is oriented towards contention and division.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Religious radicalism in the journey of the Indonesian people is not something new. From time to time, radicalism continues to grow with the times. Since the time of the Indonesian Islamic State which was pioneered by Kartosuwiryo in West Java (Anderson, 1993) until the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the spirit to establish an Islamic state under the banner of the Islamic Khilafah continued (Muhtadi, 2009). Religious radicalism is a problem that is never finished in the process of disseminating the idea of nationalism. Efforts to build a new generation that has a sense of nationalism and patriotism beyond the old generation is hindered by the still developing religious radicalism in Indonesia (Arifianto, 2018). This indicates that the consensus of the nation's founders still leaves many problems regarding the meaning of the unity and form of the Indonesian state. Groups like HTI still use history as their weapon in arguing about the ideals of forming an Indonesian state under the Khilafah. Most pro-Khilafah sympathizers with intellectual

backgrounds, both as lecturers and students. Budi Gunawan, Head of the Indonesian State Intelligence Agency (BIN) when speaking at the IV Congress of the Nahdlatul Ulama University Student Executive Board (BEM) throughout the Nusantara on April 28, 2018, revealed that about 39 percent of students from the number of universities had been exposed to radical understanding. This research was conducted by BIN in 2017, after the study there were 15 provinces in Indonesia that became BIN's attention as an area of religious radicalism movement ('Radikalisme Agama dan Perguruan Tinggi', 2018). Both the results of the Setara Institute research revealed two forms of religious radicalism in higher education, namely a form of religious puritanism and a form of political-ideology. In the form of religious puritanism, the religious radicalism movement emphasizes religious methods that are more stringent in accordance with religious doctrines. Religious puritanism also appears in the way of viewing and attitude towards scientific science. For puritans, science must be built on a foundation and developed within the framework of

religious doctrines (Eliraz, 2004; developer, 2019). Research conducted by the Setara Institute also indicates a decline in the spirit of tolerance between religious communities in Indonesia.

The explanation above shows the campus becomes a place that supports the spread of the idea of radicalism. In a small observation and observation of the behavior of student institutions on campus shows the results that student organizations on campus with various backgrounds and objectives do not have an effective communication forum to capture the issues and problems that develop. Therefore, students are very easily fragmented and utilized by groups in the name of religion who want to change the country's foundation (Fealy, 2004; Lim, 2005). Religious radicalism is a problem in Indonesia considering that Indonesian society consists of various tribes and religions. Radicalism has the potential to trigger disharmony in society that threatens the integrity of the nation-state. As a multicultural country, Indonesia has large social capital to advance social life (Suparlan, 2014), multiculturalism, according to Banks, is an inseparable idea in community management in developed countries (Banks, 2008). Multiculturalism serves as a guideline to build religious harmony, in the context of religious radicalism, multiculturalism is a concrete idea that can be used to counter narratives produced by radical groups and jihadists (Castro, 2013). Religious radicalism that develops on campus must be interpreted as infiltration of radical groups and jihadists in the intellectual world which is full of struggles of ideas and thoughts. Constitutional methods are inadequate to stem the development of radical ideas. Efforts to habituate social agendas that occupy all groups of students from various backgrounds are a more humane way, given that the meeting has the potential to bring together ideas from each group to create an understanding of the problems faced. From there a resolution can be drawn up on efforts to create tolerance and social harmony on campus and the community that begins with dialogue between student organizations.

Based on the above reasons, this research question 1) how is the communication model between student organizations appropriate to counter the development of the idea of religious radicalism on campus? This research focuses on the language and functionary actions of student organizations from various backgrounds. Language and action imply their ideas of tolerance and nationality (Hegel, Rauch and Sherman, 1999).

## 2 METHOD

This research was conducted using qualitative methods with a phenomenological design (Creswel, 2009). The phenomenon of this research is the widespread influence of radicalism and the development of these ideas on campus. This research is specific and intense at Semarang State University. This study involved 60 participants, they were functionaries of student organizations with various categories, the most striking of which were religion and social politics. Organizations that have religious ideologies such as Islamic Spirituality, Christian Spirituality, Hindu Spirituality, Buddhist Spirituality, and Konghuchu Spirituality. Organizations with socio-political backgrounds on campus are the Student Executive Board (BEM) and the Student Association (HIMA). In addition, there are organizations that combine religious and socio-political ideas known as off-campus student organizations, such as the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Unit (KAMMI), the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), the Student Movement of Liberation, the Islamic Student Association (HMI). The data of this study were collected using interview techniques and focus group discussions. Data analysis in this study used an interactive model (Miles et al., 1994).

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of religious radicalism in tertiary institutions is a reflection of the unmet fulfillment of the responsibilities of tertiary institutions (Hadiz, 2008). It also means that the momentum of religious radicalism is the driving force for universities to form a holistic and universal epistemic worldview. DT1 argues:

"Higher education has never mediated or brought together student organizations in a forum to discuss the issue of religious radicalism, so that groups considered radical and jihadists can be free to move, but we understand that campus managers and students have the same prejudice and sensitivity about the issue".

The importance of the meeting forum between student organizations was also conveyed by DT3:

"Inter-group dialogue is needed to form a collective understanding of the campus community, we have concerns about the issue of religious radicalism, there are several mosques or prayer rooms in the faculty that are free to be used by any group, some of our members indicate one

mosque at a particular faculty has been used for the activities of radical groups and jihadists".

This is a serious threat to the campus, considering that groups with a strong Islamic outlook need a place or arena to develop, from a narrow to broad arena. Infiltration of radical ideology based on religion is indeed tempting for students, this is the biggest problem that must be understood by campus managers (Azra, 2004; Hosen and Mohr, 2011; Wasino, Kurniawan and Shintasiwi, 2019). Student organizations such as spiritual groups have a more open view of religious radicalism, DT2 argues:

"The development of religious radicalism on campus no longer needs to be covered up, we are very aware of their existence and continue to build strength bases on campus mosques, in addition they take advantage of moments when other groups of organizations based on nationalism do not have enough criticism and literacy, so their development is very rapid, I think policy interventions need to be carried out, especially in faculties, for organizations that are based on more moderate religions and accept differences, this is also a gap for radical groups and jihadists to infiltrate, their groups are large and vocal, so do not just mention that they are a small group and do not have the power".

The above view represents the thoughts of most of the campus community, religious radicalism is indeed the most difficult to eradicate (Jati, 2013), because it involves other people's beliefs. In the historical record, the group who wanted the establishment of the Islamic State of Indonesia under Kartosuwiryo in a very fast growing rapidly throughout Indonesia (Van Bruinessen, 2002). This has become a valuable lesson to build a more tolerant future of Indonesia, in this context the campus situation has not made it possible to form a new force or alliance against radical groups and jihadists. So we need an alternative movement based on thinking about multiculturalism and social harmonization to prevent religious radicalism from expanding and strengthening.

Religious radicalism on campus has become the spotlight of the government, but until now there has been no strategic action to counter the spread of radical ideas (Sumandoyo, no date; Arifianto, 2018). DT4 argues:

"Discussion forums that raise national themes need to be multiplied by the campus, so that in the forum HIMA, BEM, and Spiritual Groups of various religions are able to dialogue and redefine the direction of the nationalist and patriotism-oriented student movement. such academic talk is rarely carried out, it is only natural that there are

many gaps for radical groups and jihadists to develop their teachings on campus".

This view is in line with Azra argue, who explains that religious radicalism on campus should be addressed through strategic policies on campus, lest efforts to address the issue of radicalism damage campus freedom, as the campus authority holder has the right to hold academic forums in discussing this crucial issue (Azra, 2006). The results of the Focus Group Discussion conducted resulted in several important agreements, namely the need for student organizations with various backgrounds to hold regular discussions about nationality and diversity. It is intended to familiarize multicultural behavior and ideas for students. Religious organizations need to conduct joint studies on multiculturalism from various perspectives, this aims to close the possibility of prejudice and stigma between religious groups. The meetings were a concrete effort to build a model of tolerance dialogue that provided opportunities for the growth of religious harmony from within the campus. In the Focus Group Discussion activity, DT2 argued:

"All student organizations should support efforts to disseminate the ideas of nationality and tolerance, especially we must call for this campus to be brave against radical actions that are contrary to religious and cultural values. In addition, this kind of dialogue is needed to equalize perceptions, lest, as fellow campus members, we are prejudiced. We must unite against efforts to disintegrate the nation".

The meeting activity has proven that dialogue is a need for students to be able to formulate steps to deal with strategic issues in the community. Radicalism and religious jihadism are efforts to divide the Indonesian nation which has been born as a multicultural nation, however the will of the will is not desired by every citizen of the nation. The results of this study also support Banks, Azra, Hosen and Sirozi, that actions and thoughts about religious radicalism must be prevented humanist, to show their groups about humane religious life. Awareness efforts through dialogue of tolerance and nationality need to be multiplied in campuses to form new opinions about religious thoughts that are more moderate and far from violence (Azra, 2002; Sirozi, 2005; Banks, 2006; Hosen, 2013).

## 4 CONCLUSION

Religious radicalism needs to be taken seriously by the academic community in university. Management of student activities needs to be done with

consideration of issues that are developing in the community. Campus as an intellectual arena and has freedom in it is often used by certain groups to disseminate ideas that are contrary to the basic philosophy of this country. Efforts to prevent the spread of the idea of religious radicalism by conducting dialogue of tolerance and nationalism between student organizations. In addition, students also need to be directed so they can network with the entire campus community. The power of that relationship can effectively prevent the development of radical ideas. By establishing good relations between students and lecturers, alumni and student organizations both intra or extra, lecturers who in fact as parents within the campus are able to direct so that the activities carried out by students are always in the right corridor and in accordance with the principles of the state and religion. Campus can be a funnel in voicing ideas of tolerance and nationality through social capital, namely intellectuality and solidarity of the academic community.

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