



## Efficacy of Women Counselors in Mitigating Religious Violent Extremism in Families in the East Bandung Area

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**Abstract:** This study explores the efficacy of female religious counselors in mitigating religious-based violent extremism within the domestic sphere, focusing on East Bandung—an area with a high susceptibility to radicalization. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of field activities conducted by female religious counselors. The findings reveal that these counselors adopt a feminine da'wah strategy rooted in empathy, dialogue, and everyday narratives, which significantly contributes to building critical awareness, behavioral transformation, and ideological resilience within families and grassroots communities. Their performance demonstrates competency across Bloom's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, allowing for the effective transmission of moderate religious values and the cultivation of tolerant attitudes. Despite their strategic role, these women face structural challenges, including patriarchal resistance, limited access to specialized deradicalization training, and a lack of institutional support. The study contributes theoretically to discourses on gender, religious communication, and community-based security, highlighting female counselors as transformative agents in the fight against extremism. Practically, it underscores the necessity of integrating gender-sensitive policies in national counter-extremism strategies and calls for formal recognition and empowerment of female religious counselors as vital actors in promoting peace, inclusivity, and social resilience.

**Keywords:** community strategy; feminine da'wah; religious counselors; social efficacy; violent extremism

### Introduction

Religious-based violent extremism has become a global challenge that has continued to grow over the last two decades, including in Indonesia (Vergani et al., 2022). This phenomenon not only has an impact on the ideological and national security levels, but also infiltrates the smallest social dimension: the family. The family is the initial space for instilling religious values and beliefs. When exclusive and intolerant religious ideas begin to take root in family relations, the potential for radicalization and religious-based violence will become greater (Ali, 2025). In this context, mitigation against violent extremism cannot rely solely on a state security (hard) approach; rather, it requires a socio-cultural approach based on community and interpersonal relations (soft approach), especially through the family (Partov, 2022).

The East Bandung region is one of the strategic areas on the map of vulnerability to the spread of religion-based extremism. Based on data collected from reports and field observations, West Java has the highest number of terrorist perpetrators nationally. Of the 249 terror perpetrators arrested as

of October 2019, 69 people came from West Java. Apart from that, since 2017, this region has also faced the phenomenon of deportation of Indonesian citizens who support ISIS, and Bandung has become one of the cities where these deportees come from. Even an important figure in the ISIS network in Indonesia, Aman Abdurahman, comes from Sumedang and actively recruits sympathizers from ethnic Sundanese circles. These facts show that the Greater Bandung area, including the East Bandung area, harbors serious latent dangers (Nazmudin, 2017).

In the midst of these conditions, women are not only vulnerable to being exploited in extremism narratives—either as supporters, facilitators, or even suicide bombers in some cases—but also hold great potential as agents of peace and mitigating radicalization (Brown, 2020). A gender-based approach to deradicalization shows that women have a unique capacity to detect early symptoms of radicalization in families and communities, build peaceful religious narratives, and intervene socially and emotionally before violent ideologies develop further (Aga, 2022).

Women religious counselors, especially those under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, are a key element in this process. Counselors are not just preachers or transmitters of religious messages in public spaces, but are also mother figures, spiritual companions and social facilitators in society (Patmawati, 2024). The Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the Pokjaluh (Instructor Working Group), has developed various programs to strengthen religious moderation for female extension workers to strengthen social resilience at the grassroots level. In the mentoring program carried out between August and November 2021, female counselors were provided with a pocketbook on religious moderation and training to internalize and socialize the values of moderation in daily life, especially through strengthening the role of the family (Supardi, 2023).

Women have high social-cognitive-affective capacity in carrying out their role as deradicalization agents (Huriani et al., 2022). With a motherly approach, female counselors are able to build empathetic relationships with the community, bridge discussions between family members, and detect suspicious changes in behavior and thought patterns in the surrounding environment. This approach is in line with previous research results, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which emphasizes the importance of involving women in peace processes and conflict prevention.

Apart from that, local socio-cultural factors in East Bandung, which are still dominated by patriarchal values, present both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, female instructors often face social resistance because they are seen as unequal to male instructors in terms of religious authority (Aysha et al., 2024). However, on the other hand, they also gained great trust among the women of the *ta'lim* assembly and the family community, which opened up a more informal, personal and in-depth space for preaching and counseling. This is the strategic strength of female extension workers that other da'wah actors often do not have.

This article aims to evaluate the efficacy of female religious counselors in efforts to mitigate religious-based violent extremism in the family environment, with a focus on the East Bandung area. The efficacy in question is not only seen from their level of participation in the moderation program, but also from their ability to internalize moderate values, convey messages effectively, and change the thought patterns and behavior of assisted families in a more inclusive and peaceful direction (Syahri et al., 2024). This evaluation is important to see to what extent a women's and family-based approach can be an alternative strategy in dealing with the growing threat of violent extremism.

By referring to a theoretical approach that places women as agents of social change, and using a religious moderation and efficacy framework based on Bloom's taxonomy (cognitive, affective, psychomotor), this research is expected to provide scientific and practical contributions in the development of community-based deradicalization policies. The involvement of female extension workers in domestic and community spaces becomes a bridge between the state and society in building inclusive, tolerant and peaceful ideological resilience (Sarmiento Salazar, 2024).

Religious moderation is a religious approach that emphasizes the importance of balance (*tawazun*), justice (*i'tidal*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*) in understanding and practicing religious teachings (Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023). This concept is based on a framework *wasatiyah* in the Islamic tradition, which was developed by a number of contemporary thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Wahbah az-Zuhaili. Both of them see that Islam, which is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, can

only be realized through the interpretation of inclusive, non-extreme, and contextual teachings. Qaradawi, for example, in *Fiqh al-Wasatiyyah* emphasizes the importance of balance between text and context, between principles and benefits, so that religion is not separated from the social reality of its people (Al-Qaradawi, 2010). Meanwhile, (Az-Zuhaili, 2006) sees moderation as a *fiqh* instrument to answer the dynamics of the times without losing the essence of Sharia values. Religious moderation in this framework is not just an individual approach, but also acts as a social paradigm and public policy.

In Indonesia, religious moderation has been systematically institutionalized in national policy, particularly through the 2020–2024 National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN), which makes moderation one of the priority programs of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This approach is measured through four main indicators, namely: national commitment, tolerance between believers, rejection of violence, and acceptance of local culture (Rubaidi et al., 2020). In this context, moderation is not solely the institutional responsibility of the state, but also involves the active participation of civil society and religious agents at the grassroots. One important actor in this process is female religious instructors, who strategically have a unique role in bridging religious values with social realities that are plural and often full of ideological tension (Hefni & Ahmadi, 2022).

The effectiveness of the role of female religious instructors from the perspective of (Bandura, 2009), that an individual's belief in their abilities will influence the extent to which they are able to act in certain social situations. This efficacy is an important basis in explaining the performance of female religious instructors in carrying out missionary duties and socio-religious education, especially in areas that are vulnerable to radicalization. Furthermore, this effectiveness can be studied through Bloom's taxonomy, which divides the domains of competence into three: cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Ullah et al., 2020). In the cognitive realm, counselors are required to master religious discourse critically and be able to analyze the seeds of extremism in the community. In the affective realm, social sensitivity and the ability to build empathy are the main assets in developing vulnerable communities. Meanwhile, in the psychomotor domain, communication skills, dialogue facilitation, and social advocacy are the main instruments for internalizing moderation values in daily religious practice.

Previous studies show that women have an advantage in detecting subtle symptoms of radicalization that appear in the family and community environment, and are more effective in building a peaceful narrative based on maternal values and love (Huriani, 2021) for example, it highlights how women in positions as mothers, educators and informal religious figures act as guardians of social stability and promoters of peace at the grassroots. The same thing was emphasized by (Samsudin & Febrini, 2018), who emphasized that the involvement of women in religious counseling strengthens social resilience against the spread of violent ideology because they are able to influence the domestic space, which is often an invisible arena for radicalization. Therefore, the role of women is not just a complement, but an integral part of the national strategy in building a moderate, tolerant and peace-loving religious society.

Interestingly, religious moderation in Indonesia does not stand on the separation between religion and culture, but instead thrives because of its ability to integrate religious values with local wisdom (Fuadi et al., 2024). In this case, female religious instructors also act as cultural agents who are able to bridge religious teachings with traditional practices that exist in society. This approach is in line with the views of (Geertz, 2022), who emphasizes that religion always undergoes an indigenization process so that it can take root in people's lives. Traditions such as *slametans*, traditional recitations, and performing arts with religious nuances are not only used as media for preaching, but also as a means of internalizing the values of tolerance and social harmony. In this context, religious moderation becomes an epistemological bridge that unites revelation with local reality.

Thus, religious moderation is not just an abstract discourse or identity politics agenda, but is a practical paradigm that requires effective and broad-minded social actors. Female religious instructors, in this case, play a crucial role, which is supported by interrelated affective, cognitive and psychomotor capacities. When this approach is strengthened by synergy between the state, civil

society and higher education institutions, moderation will not only become a counter-radicalism strategy, but also become the foundation for the formation of a plural, peaceful and just society (As'ad et al., 2022).

## Method

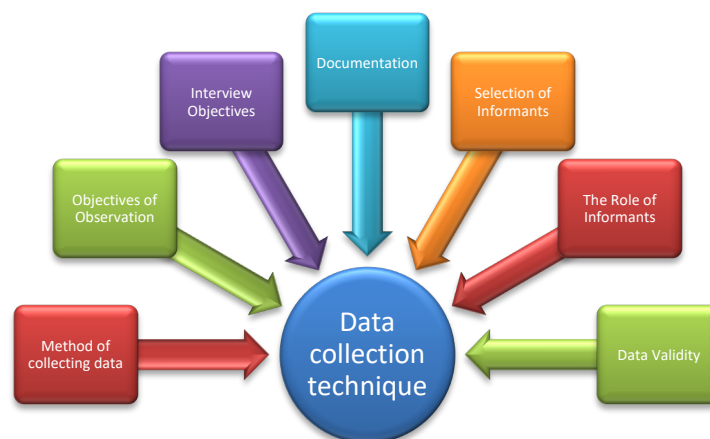
This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, an approach that allows researchers to explore in depth the social, psychological and cultural dynamics surrounding the effectiveness of female religious counselors in preventing violent extremism in the domestic sphere. This approach was chosen because the nature of the problem is complex, contextual, and cannot be reduced only to numerical data. The main focus of this research is to answer how the strategies, interpersonal approaches, and affective and cognitive capacities of female counselors can reduce the potential for radicalization at the family level—a space that is often a hidden arena for the sowing of violent ideologies (Rukajat, 2018).

The research location is centered in the East Bandung area, an area with high population density and socio-religious diversity, as well as being an important pocket in the Greater Bandung Pokjaluh religious extension work network (Hermawati et al., 2017). Several sub-districts were selected based on the active involvement of women counselors in religious moderation programs and their track record of success in assisting families. In this context, the research area is not only a geographical setting, but also a dynamic social space that shows the interaction between religious doctrine, local culture, and extremism prevention strategies.

Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods that complement each other: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation is carried out by directly following outreach activities in the field, thereby enabling researchers to capture emotional dynamics, communication patterns, and community responses to moderation messages. In-depth interviews were conducted with female extension workers, community leaders and assisted families who had been the targets of the extension program. With this approach, researchers obtain data that is not only factual but also reflective and interpretive from key informants.

The selection of informants was carried out purposively, taking into account a number of criteria: at least two years of experience as an active counselor, direct involvement in counter-extremism programs, and success in fostering vulnerable families. In this case, the informant is not only positioned as the object of the interview but also as co-constructor of meaning, which together builds an understanding of the praxis of religious moderation in the family realm. To ensure data validity, this research uses source and method triangulation techniques, namely comparing information from various types of informants and different collection techniques, in order to produce richer and more reliable findings.

Figure 1. Data Collection Technique used in the research, 2024



Source: (Silverman, 2015)

## Results and Discussion

### Feminine Da'wah Strategy in the Family Scope

In the context of the increasing threat of violent extremism infiltrating the domestic space, the role of female religious counselors has become very strategic and cannot be underestimated. This research found that extension workers in the East Bandung area developed a feminine da'wah strategy that was full of empathy, emotional involvement, and participatory dialogue. This approach shows how women's capacity is not only limited to conveying moral messages, but also as agents of social transformation that are rooted in everyday life (Chuliá, 2023).

The feminine da'wah strategy used by female extension workers is reflected in a communication style that is warm, narrative and full of affection. They use religious forums such as recitations, religious assemblies, and other informal activities attended by housewives and young women as a medium to insert messages of religious moderation. This message is packaged in inclusive language and daily narratives that are easily understood by the grassroots community. An extension worker from Bandung City, RM, stated that, "Mothers need to be convinced that they are not only listeners of sermons, but also agents of change in their own homes" (Interview with RM, a worker, October 2024). This statement emphasizes the importance of a maternal approach as a symbolic force that not only touches emotional aspects but also raises awareness of the strategic role of women in preventing radicalization (Slavutzky, 2023).

Theoretically, according to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in concept *wasatiyah al-Islam*, namely Islam, which is in the middle, rejects violence, and prioritizes justice, balance and tolerance (Al-Qaradawi, 2010). In the Indonesian context, religious moderation has become a national priority program promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024 (Yusuf & Mutiara, 2022). Indicators such as national commitment, non-violence and accommodating local culture are benchmarks for the success of this program. The female extension workers in this research practically realized these three indicators through family-based da'wah strategies (Saleh et al., 2023).

Apart from that, the effectiveness of feminine preaching can also be understood through the lens of social efficacy theory, as developed in Bloom's taxonomy (Panigrahi et al., 2021). In the cognitive realm, female religious instructors demonstrate the ability to convey religious knowledge and dissect extremism issues in a down-to-earth way. In the affective domain, they are able to build empathy and social sensitivity in the target community. Meanwhile, in the psychomotor domain, instructors demonstrate the capacity to act through advocacy activities, coaching and facilitating public discussions that discuss sensitive issues such as intolerance and radicalism.

Different from the traditional da'wah model, which tends to be top-down and in one direction, female religious counselors actually adopt a dialogical approach. They open space for the audience to ask questions, share experiences, and discuss problems faced, both within the family and the community. Some of them even formed small discussion groups at the RW level to discuss incidents of intolerance that occurred at school, on social media or at home. This innovation not only shows courage in opening up issues that were previously considered taboo, but also shows the flexibility of instructors in adapting da'wah strategies that are relevant to the social realities of society (Putri et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of this approach is strengthened by the social position of the instructor as a mother figure or adult woman in the community. In the context of Indonesian culture, which places a high value on the role of motherhood, this status provides moral legitimacy as well as strong emotional access to influence the way family members think and behave (Antasari, 2021). They can advise without patronizing, guide without forcing, and set an example through daily behavior. This is in accordance with the principle of da'wah *bil hal*, namely, conveying religious teachings through real actions and exemplary life (Gunawan & Muhid, 2022).

The narrative preaching method, especially through real-life stories, is a powerful

weapon in touching the affective side of the audience (Duduit, 2024). One of the inmates, Mrs. SK from Bandung Regency, stated that "All this time we mothers have only been in the kitchen, now we can know and convey the importance of living in peace and tolerance to our children." This testimony indicates a shift from domestic roles to public roles, where women are no longer just guardians of the household but also supporters of broader social stability.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, this dialogical and participatory process of feminine preaching reflects the formation of social meaning that emerges from reciprocal communication (Kurfi, 2018). In this framework, the message of da'wah is not merely a transfer of knowledge from one party to another, but rather the result of social construction formed through symbolic interactions between the instructor and the congregation. One of the *ta'lim* assembly activists, SA, said, "So we can have direct dialogue, not only listen, but also participate in formulating solutions together. Now our activities feel like teamwork that supports and develops each other" (Interview with SA, a *ta'lim* assembly member, October 2024). In this way, counseling spaces turn into collective arenas for building awareness and joint action.

Support for this approach is also seen in the experiences of other residents such as AG, who emphasized the importance of collective learning spaces. "If you yourself are often confused and don't know who to ask, sometimes looking for solutions yourself will make you even more confused. But when there are instructors and training together, you will understand better and feel like you are not alone in learning" (Interview with AG, an *ustaz*, October 2024). This testimony emphasizes the role of learning communities as a means of strengthening individual capacity in understanding contemporary religious issues, as well as strengthening a sense of belonging to the values of moderation (Kadri & Lubis, 2025).

The social interaction that is built through this da'wah program also gives birth to associative social practices. In da'wah forums and *ta'lim* assemblies, participants not only receive information, but also share tools, ideas and experiences. They have become more organized, both in building communities and in participating in citizen forums. This process changes the previously passive and vertical missionary relationship into a productive partnership relationship, which encourages the emergence of solidarity and motivation to act collectively in dealing with complex religious issues (Dheedene, 2024).

Through this feminine da'wah strategy, female religious counselors not only contribute to strengthening religious moderation but also revive social potential that has been hidden in the domestic sphere. They make the home a center for cultivating the values of tolerance and justice, bridging private and public spaces in the work of social transformation. In other words, they succeeded in making da'wah not just a ritual activity, but a social movement rooted in everyday life (Lozano, 2024).

In the context of social efficacy, the success of these strategies also reflects strengthening individual and group perceptions of their ability to overcome challenges and achieve collective goals (Hamann et al., 2024). When women feel able to convey messages of peace to their children, and when communities feel they have space to discuss and act together, a social network is formed that is resilient to the penetration of violent ideologies. Thus, the feminine da'wah strategy developed by female religious counselors in East Bandung shows that an empathetic, dialogical and community-based approach is able to reduce the potential for violent extremism at the family level.

### **Structural, Social and Cultural Challenges**

Despite having strategic potential as agents of change, female extension workers in the East Bandung region face various complex structural, social and cultural challenges. The first challenge relates to limited access to special training that focuses on the issue of deradicalization and religious-based extremism. Many religious counselors admit that they have never received intensive training that equips them with theological and psychosocial approaches in dealing with radicalism. The training program that has been organized by the

Ministry of Religious Affairs is general in nature and has not specifically targeted strengthening capacity in terms of preventing extremism. As stated by RD, a religious instructor: "Training programs are really needed so that we can understand and explain the issue of extremism correctly to the public" (Interview with RD, a *ta'lim* instructor, October 2024)

The second challenge comes from the patriarchal social structure, which is still deeply rooted in conservative Sundanese society. In local religious structures, religious authority tends to be attached to male figures, which causes female instructors to often be seen as mere complements (Maemonah et al., 2022). As a result, they are rarely given the opportunity to be the main speakers in official forums, and more often play the role of moderators or prayer readers. This perception also hinders the recognition of female counselors as the main agents in religious moderation efforts.

The third challenge relates to cultural resistance that appears in the form of negative stereotypes against women who are active in public spaces (Hamann et al., 2024). Some extension workers who are vocal in raising the issue of tolerance and pluralism are labeled as too liberal or even suspected of deviating from religious teachings. Apart from that, there are still many people who do not understand the concept religious moderation in its entirety, which resulted in confusion and even rejection of this theme in the preaching of the extension workers. This condition requires extension workers to have communication strategies that are adaptive and sensitive to the local context.

Despite experiencing restrictions on access and movement in formal religious forums, many female counselors continue to show resilience by building strong social relationships. Based on the results of field observations, the instructors succeeded in establishing sustainable relationships with community leaders, PKK (Family Welfare Development) cadres, and *ta'lim* (religious study club) council administrators as active and supportive missionary partners.

Apart from social and cultural barriers, other challenges also come from limited digital infrastructure and funding (Maemonah et al., 2022). Many extension activities are still carried out manually due to limited access to information technology. According to field observations, the process of formulating outreach content was hampered by a lack of training in creating creative and contextual materials. This is exacerbated by the lack of financial support for developing content that is relevant and interesting to the public.

Another significant obstacle is limited human resources, especially in terms of the capacity of the extension audience. Many of the participants who attended the outreach activities were of an older age group, who tended to have limitations in accepting a comprehensive approach to religious moderation. This also influences the effectiveness of transforming people's understanding of contemporary religious issues (Pratama et al., 2024). As stated by R, Bandung City Religious Counselor (20 August 2024), community training programs actually have great potential as a motor of change, but are currently still in the initial development stage.

Limited mastery of information technology is also an obstacle in itself. Due to the lack of training and digital facilities, both instructors and *ta'lim* councils have not been able to optimize the use of digital media in conveying da'wah messages (Nurulita, 2021). This makes extension methods tend to be conventional and less attractive to the younger generation. Difficulty in determining appropriate and relevant content to society's needs is also an important challenge. A resident, Mrs. SS from Bandung Regency (20 August 2024), stated that: "The content that is prepared must be truly interesting and relevant so that it can be known to many people. This extension is not something that can be completed in a short time. Apart from that, good funding management and bookkeeping are also really needed in every extension activity" (Interview with SS, resident, October 2024).

This outreach program is relatively new, especially for the *ta'lim* assembly activists who are the main movers in society, especially housewives who previously spent more time in the domestic sphere. However, if this program can be developed systematically, there is great hope from the

community that outreach will be able to encourage understanding and practice of the concept of religious moderation in everyday life.

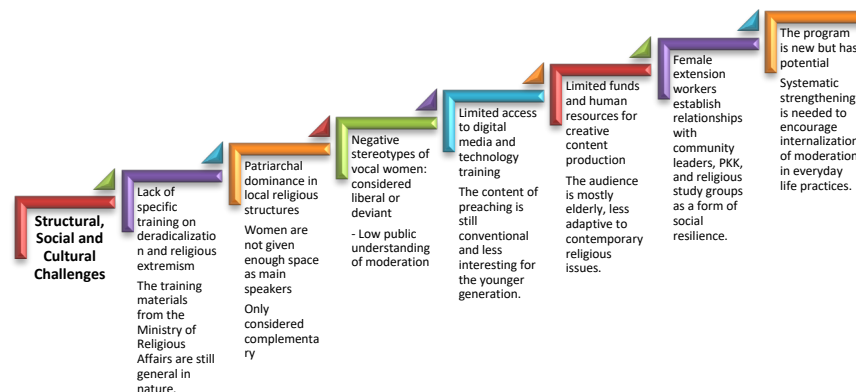


Figure 2. The role of religious counseling in empowering individuals through Resource Mobilization and Social Learning  
Source: (I. Ahmad & Islam, 2024).

Field observations show that in context resource mobilization, religious counseling has the potential to change people's position from objects to active subjects in the social learning process. With a participatory and collaborative approach, citizens are not only recipients of information, but are also empowered in overcoming the social challenges they face (I. Ahmad & Islam, 2024). In this framework, the success of social movements is not solely determined by the availability of funds, but also by the strength of collective knowledge and solidarity (Da Costa et al., 2023). In Bandung City, Bandung Regency, and Cimahi City, extension institutions have succeeded in creating local initiatives such as programs Baitul Mal, Al-Qur'an Education Park, youth recitation, savings and loan cooperatives, livestock groups, and skills training that have a real impact on the socio-economic life of the community.

### Social Impact and Efficacy of Extension in Mitigating Extremism

The efficacy of female religious counselors in efforts to mitigate extremism based on religious violence is an important aspect that has not been studied in depth in the academic literature. In fact, in the context of Indonesia as a country with high social and religious plurality, the presence of female counselors actually plays a strategic role in building social resilience at the grassroots level (S. Ahmad & Saepudin, 2023). This efficacy is not simply measured by the number of activities or area coverage, but rather by the social transformation that occurs in the daily lives of the communities they support, especially in families and local communities (Ohta et al., 2021).

Based on the results of field observations and in-depth interviews with extension workers, it was identified that there had been a significant change in public awareness of the dangers of radicalism. Before the outreach program was carried out, many people were apathetic towards the issue of extremism. They tend to think that radicalism is a problem for political elites or security forces, not part of their daily lives (Yuminah & Si, 2024). However, through a communicative, humanist approach and based on down-to-earth religious values, female religious counselors are able to change this perception slowly but consistently.

One of the main indicators of the efficacy of female counselors can be seen in the increased participation of housewives in open and inclusive religious discussions (Fatahillah & Hariyadi, 2024). In communities that were previously closed and full of suspicion towards outsiders, informal discussion groups are now starting to grow, which regularly discuss current issues such as tolerance, the dangers of hate speech, and how to protect families from the influence of radical digital content. For example, in several sub-districts in the East Bandung region, groups were formed of "consciously moderate mothers", which became a forum for joint learning to address



the issue of extremism from a peaceful religious perspective.

It is important to note that the role of extension workers in this context is not only as educators, but also as agents of social change. They are present in the midst of the community, not with a top-down structural approach, but rather through equal and empathetic horizontal interactions. The extension methods used are participatory and contextual. They combine a narrative (storytelling) approach, case simulations, small group discussions, and interactive dialogue that allow for a healthy and productive exchange of views (Chevalier, 2019). In many cases, this method is more effective than one-way lectures, which tend to be boring and do not get to the root of the problem.

This social transformation also includes changes in the affective and psychomotor aspects of the family. A number of counselors reported that after several months of mentoring, changes in behavior began to appear in the assisted families. Children and teenagers who were previously exposed to intolerant narratives through social media are starting to show a more open attitude, are less likely to judge other beliefs, and have empathy for differences (Singleton, 2015). This shows that counseling has real psychosocial effects, which do not stop at the cognitive level but also touch on affective dimensions and real behavior.

A mother in Antapani District, for example, said that her child, who previously often uttered intolerant sentences, had now changed after he actively participated in a moderation discussion group facilitated by religious counselors. She said, "My son used to say that everything outside of Islam was deviant; now he can be talked to about differences" (Interview with IR, a mother, October 2024). This testimony shows that there is a fairly deep internalization of the value of moderation, which does not solely come from the transfer of information, but is more due to the exemplary and emotional approach carried out by the instructors on an ongoing basis (Ahmadi et al., 2024).

No less important is the cognitive dimension of counseling efficacy. Many female religious instructors are able to convey complex religious material, such as pluralism, intra- and inter-religious tolerance, as well as contextual and applicable understanding of schools of thought. They avoid using technical terms that are difficult for ordinary people to understand, and prefer analogies from everyday life as a tool for understanding. This means that moderation messages are no longer elitist or academic, but become part of everyday conversations that are relevant to people's life challenges (Aidid, 2022).

It needs to be emphasized that the success of these instructors cannot be separated from gender factors. Female counselors have a special emotional closeness to housewives, who in the Indonesian cultural context have a central role in forming children's values and character. This relationship creates a space for dialogue that is more open, honest and full of empathy. In many cases, housewives tend to be more comfortable discussing with fellow women, especially on sensitive issues such as children's education, husband-wife relations, and teenage identity crises (Mulia, 2011).

Apart from that, female counselors also demonstrate the capacity to be adaptive and reflective spiritual companions. They not only convey normative religious material, but are also able to relate it to the real-life experiences of the participants. In discussions about extremism, for example, instructors not only discuss religious doctrine, but also invite participants to reflect on their daily experiences—for example, when they encounter radical content in family WhatsApp groups, or when their children begin to be influenced by intolerant viewing on YouTube. In this way, extension workers succeed in bridging the big narrative about moderation with the micro realities faced by society (Hasani, 2019).

The long-term impact of these efforts is starting to be seen. Several fostered communities have developed internal programs such as parenting training based on moderation values, digital literacy forums, and productive economic activities based on the values of tolerance and cross-faith cooperation. These activities show that effective outreach can encourage the formation of a civil society who are resilient to the threat of extremism (Musyafak & Nisa, 2020). In this framework, female religious counselors are not only agents of deradicalization, but also the driving force of broader social transformation.

**Table 1. Contribution of the Female Instructors Working Group**

| <b>Dimensions</b>              | <b>Key Indicators</b>  | <b>Short Description</b>   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Strategic Social Role          | Closeness to community; cultural influence                                 | Directly touching the base of society through a down-to-earth socio-religious approach.      |
| Critical Awareness             | Increased understanding of the dangers of extremism                        | Encouraging changes in mindset towards the issue of religious-based violence.                |
| Collective Participation       | Moderated value-based group activities                                     | Building a space for shared dialogue at the family and community level.                      |
| Methodical Approach            | Storytelling, participatory discussion, simulation                         | Increasing message effectiveness through communicative and reflective methods.               |
| Psychosocial Effects           | Changes in children's and families' attitudes towards differences          | The emergence of attitudes of empathy, tolerance and openness in the family.                 |
| Inclusive Communication        | Simple language and local narrative  | Convey complex values contextually and easily understood.                                    |
| Gender Sensitivity             | Emotional relationships and comfort in dialogue                            | The presence of women as instructors creates a safe space for expression and interaction.    |
| Spiritual Reflection           | The relationship between religious values and the reality of everyday life | Teachings are conveyed through participants' concrete experiences.                           |
| Sustainable Impact             | Formation of local initiatives based on peaceful values                    | The community is active in mainstreaming tolerance in various aspects of life.               |
| Transformative Social Function | Role as an agent of social change  | Extension agents become catalysts for value transformation from within the community itself. |

Source: Personal Field's Findings, 2024.

However, this significant contribution still does not receive adequate recognition in public policy. Many female religious instructors work in limited conditions, with minimal facilities and incentives. In this context, the state needs to be present to strengthen its role through continuous training, professional recognition, and mainstreaming the issue of religious moderation in the extension education curriculum (As'ad et al., 2022). In addition, there is a need to integrate outreach programs with the national strategy for countering violent extremism, so that efforts at the grassroots can synergize with broader macro policies.

The efficacy of female religious counselors in mitigating extremism cannot be underestimated. They are key actors who work at the front line in building society's social and spiritual resilience against radicalism. Through a personal, empathetic and contextual approach, they succeeded in transforming religious values into a soothing and unifying social force. Therefore, it is time for the state and society to pay more serious attention to the silent work of female religious counselors as the front guard in creating an Indonesia that is peaceful, inclusive and highly resilient to religious-based violent extremism (Haboddin, 2024).

## Conclusion

This research confirms that female religious counselors play a strategic and transformative role in mitigating religious-based violent extremism at the family level, especially in the East Bandung area

which has a high level of vulnerability to radicalization. By adopting a feminine da'wah approach that is empathetic, participatory, and based on daily narratives, female extension workers not only function as transmitters of religious teachings but also as agents of social change who are effective in building collective awareness, strengthening the values of moderation, and forming ideological resilience in grassroots communities. In terms of efficacy, counselors demonstrate skills in three domains of Bloom's taxonomy—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—which have direct implications for changing thought patterns and behavior in assisted families. This da'wah approach is able to bridge religious doctrine with the complex and plural social realities of society. However, this strategic role still faces a number of structural obstacles, such as patriarchal cultural resistance, limited thematic training on deradicalization issues, and a lack of institutional support. The main contribution of this research lies in strengthening the argument that the active involvement of women in counter-extremism strategies is not just an additional approach, but a strategic necessity in designing community-based deradicalization policies. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on the relationship between gender, da'wah and social transformation, and opens up space for the redefinition of women's roles in the construction of cultural security. Practically, these findings offer an applicable framework for policymakers to expand, strengthen and institutionalize the role of women counselors as the front guard in building a society that is tolerant, inclusive and resilient to violent ideologies.

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