Religious Attitudes and Radical Behavior of Islamic Boarding School Students

Sarbini[1]*, Moh. Dulkiah[2]
[1] Fakultas Psikologi, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
[2] Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
*e-mail: sarbini1@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

Previous studies on radicalism among Islamic school students mostly focused on those residing in boarding schools. However, some students did not reside in the boarding school but usually participated in radicalism as "non-resident students". This study aimed to examine the influence of religious attitudes on radical behavior among non-resident students. A quantitative correlational approach was used and involved 100 subjects aged 12-20 years from 10 boarding schools in Cirebon Regency, West Java. The results showed that religious attitudes significantly influenced radical behavior of non-resident students, with a contribution of 32%.

Keywords: religious attitudes, radical behavior, boarding school, Islamic school students

Abstrak

Selama ini kajian-kajian tentang radikalisme di kalangan santri selalu membahas santri yang didefinisikan sebagai pelajar yang menetap di pondok pesantren. Padahal, terdapat pula santri yang tidak menetap (tinggal) di pesantren namun mengikuti kegiatan pesantren seperti pada umumnya yang disebut dengan istilah "santri nonmukim". Studi ini bertujuan mengkaji pengaruh sikap keberagamaan terhadap perilaku radikalisme di kalangan santri *nonmukim*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional, melibatkan subjek sebanyak 100 santri berusia 12 – 20 tahun yang berasal dari 10 pesantren di kabupaten Cirebon Jawa Barat. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa sikap keberagamaan memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap perilaku radikal santri nonmukim dengan kontribusi sebesar 32%.

Kata Kunci: sikap keberagamaan, perilaku radikal, pesantren, santri

Introduction

The construction of religious attitudes has been a subject of interest for various circles, particularly after the emergence of several cases caused by radical actions and behaviors. Radicalism is considered as a threat to society and the country, hence, the government has implemented a deradicalization program that mandates officials to minimize, limit, and capture its agents (Botma, 2020; Syukur, 2019).

According to a 2017 survey by the Center for Islamic Studies in Society (PPIM) at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta on religious tolerance in Indonesia, there is an increasing trend of intolerance and radicalism among the younger generation (Nisa et al., 2018). PPIM also found that 34.3% of respondents from the youth group

considered *jihad* as a form of opposition against non-Muslims. The millennial generation, comprising teenagers born in the 2000s, is among the groups in society that are susceptible to intolerance and radicalism. This generation is part of the student age group in both formal and non-formal educational environments. The survey showed that 51.1% of respondents had intolerant opinions toward Muslim minorities, such as Ahmadiyah and Shia, while 34.3% had intolerant attitudes towards other religious groups. Ironically, 58.5% had religious views on radical opinions (Muthahhari, 2017).

Other studies on radicalism and students also focused on resident students (those who reside and study in pesantren). Muazza et al. (2018) concluded that the government needed

to provide an additional curriculum for resident students in Islamic boarding schools to prevent them from having intolerant thoughts. Syukur (2019) emphasized the use of balanced teaching methods to prevent the teachers from monopolizing the truth alone. Although absolute religious truth needs to be conveyed at certain points, students should be critically taught according to the needs of times (Syukur, 2019; Agung & Zakso, 2019).

Supratno et al. (2019) emphasized the urgency of introducing multiculturalism and nationalism education in Islamic boarding schools. Currently, these two basic concepts of education are rarely introduced in boarding schools, resulting in an increasing prevalence of radicalism among students. Therefore, both concepts should be incorporated into the curriculum. Radicalism often emerges in education, which calls for cooperation between elements of society, both in and out of the education world. It is important to weaken radical ideologies and prevent their further development. According to Supratno et al. (2019) and Botma (2020), radical actors need guidance, and not avoidance, as they need to be re-thaught the peaceful and serene teachings of Islam. The role of schools in addressing radicalism is considered very significant, as young people are often the targets of these ideologies. Schools should provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of true Islamic teachings. Religious education methods that prioritize dialogue need to be continuously developed, particularly multicultural education related to deradicalization.

To address radicalism, it is necessary to implement deradicalization material in institutions, including religious institutions, as a strategy for deradicalization among young people. Previous studies showed that the existence of Islamic study units in schools did not usually guarantee the avoidance of radicalism because the learning process was performed by third parties (Kuntarto, 2019).

Most studies investigating radicalism in Islamic boarding schools focused on the description of radicalism among resident students. For instance, according to Malik et al. (2016), the culture of boarding schools inclined toward radicalism cannot only be measured from the existence of jihad or other curricula but can also be observed from the hidden curriculum, which tends to be measured through the phenomena and expressions of non-resident students and *ustadz*. This is due to the continuity of students' behavior that is passed down to others, as a result of residing in boarding school. Sodiq and Astuti (2019) investigated the perspective of rural students in Java about radicalism and found that it was caused by wrong religious education. Therefore, the stereotype of Islamic radicalism was rejected by this study.

Radical behavior being referred to is the understanding of negative exclusivist attitudes, including the claim that only one religion is right and all others are wrong, as well as the rejection of social interactions and even the "condemnation" of other religions. Such exclusivist attitudes create a view that their religion is the only right one, while others are false and should be eliminated or have their followers converted, as the religion and its followers are cursed in the eyes of God. This attitude has been dominant in history and remains prevalent today (Nisa et al., 2018). The demand for the truth they believe in is directly connected with exclusivity demands. When a statement is declared true, the conflicting statements cannot be true. This exclusive attitude leads to the perception of other religions as entering the wrong path and misleading their followers. This paradigm has been the dominant view throughout history and continues to be embraced currently, making claims of truth become very fundamental (Supratno et al., 2019).

The exclusive attitude is not always wrong in religion (Saputra et al., 2021). An exclusivist attitude that is agnostic, intolerant, and wanting-to-win-alone cannot be justified by religious ethics. However, when exclusivity relates to a product's quality, excellence, superiority, or doctrine supported

by fair evidence and arguments, every human being seeks an exclusive religion in the sense of excellence, according to their taste and belief.

There is a modern political worldview that adopts an exclusive approach to life and ignores the pluralistic approach, which is both true and faithful. However, this attitude poses difficulties. First, it poses a danger of intolerance, arrogance, and disrespect for others. Second, it has intrinsic weaknesses because it assumes a concept of truth that is entirely logical and a non-critical attitude arising from naivety (Hikmawati et al., 2022).

Despite the weaknesses of exclusivism, a commitment and firm stance in upholding and maintaining the truth of religion can usually be seen as positive. Therefore, it is not often criticized or seen as negative. This attitude tends to be related to the lack of knowledge and understanding of religion or the influence of the social and cultural environment in which one lives. According to Fahmi et al. (2019), exclusivism is a negative (bad) attitude that often affects Muslims in Indonesia, especially Islamic boarding school students.

Several previous studies identified a gap in study on radicalism among non-resident students. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the influence of religious attitudes on radicalism among non-resident students. The term "student in Islamic boarding schools" is classified into resident and non-resident (Dhofier, 1985). Resident students come from distant areas and reside within boarding school communities. Typically, the longest residing resident students in the pesantren usually form a separate group that manages the daily affairs of the boarding school and is responsible for teaching young students about basic and intermediate religious texts.

Meanwhile, non-resident students come from nearby areas, do not reside in the school premises, and commute from their homes. Usually, the difference between large and small boarding schools can be seen from the composition of these students. Their presence is an evidence that boarding schools serve as a learning space for the general public, where people can freely go to study without formalities and administration.

According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2020, there were 28,194 Islamic boarding schools with 5 million resident students. Meanwhile, the combination of resident and non-resident students, Quranic education centers, as well as madrasahs can reach up to 18 million people, with 1.5 million teachers (Hidayatullah, 2020). This indicates that at least 13 million students are classified as non-residents. This number could have a significant negative impact on the nation when exposed to radicalism. Therefore, it is crucial to uncover how and why some of the non-resident students are exposed to radical ideologies.

This serves as a warning sign for Indonesia's future. Therefore, this study is important, considering the role of the younger generation in the country's future. Their education will determine their future positions in the private, public, and political sectors. According to Nursalikah (2018), there were between 80-107 million people in the age group of 15 to 23 years old in 2018, which is the age group of young people pursuing their education. Moreover, students in this age group are enrolled in various educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools.

The presence of non-resident students in boarding schools in Indonesia, specifically in West Java, is significant. In 2021, the number of Islamic boarding schools in this region reached 8,728 across 27 regencies/cities (Open Data Jabar, 2021). Cirebon, one of the cities in West Java, is also known as the city of *santri* (Islamic school students). The number of boarding schools in this regency is recorded at 726, ranking fourth highest after Tasikmalaya (1,344), Bogor (1,093), and Garut (1,055) regencies (Open Data Jabar, 2021).

Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon are important evidence of the significance of

religious education for the younger generation in the region. Cirebon is known for being a harmonious region, far from religious radicalism cases (Suhanah, 2014). This can be attributed to the data and facts on radicalism in Cirebon which are very difficult to find, as well as the problem with its definition. As previously described, exclusivism can be referred to as radicalism since it is based on ideology. Modern radicalism is based on two characteristics, namely radicalism in ideas and movements (Setia & Rahman, 2021). Ideological radicalism is a part of exclusive religious attitudes or closing oneself off from differing opinions and truth. The *Hizbut Tahrir* movement often practices this type because their movement is based on the *Khilafah* ideology. On the other hand, radicalism in movements, which encompasses Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), often leads to violent behavior (Qodir, 2014).

Radicalism based on ideology or exclusive attitudes, has been increasingly prevalent in Indonesia, particularly due to the extensive use of social media. Many cases of hate speech and easy accusations of disbelief from one individual against another are caused by religious differences (Muthohirin, 2015). It is assumed that attitude and radicalism have a significant influence relationship. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is that religious attitudes, particularly exclusivist ones, have a positive and significant influence on radical behavior among non-resident students of Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon, West Java. This study aims to determine the relationship between religious attitudes and radical behavior among Islamic boarding school students.

Attitude is generally referred to as a belief that is decoded into actions toward an expected object. Experts in Social Psychology define attitude as a positive or negative evaluation of a reaction to an object, which can be a person, situation, or other aspect. It enables people to predict and change societal behavior (Kuntarto, 2019). Attitude is a brief evaluation of everything based on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral information (Rismawati et al., 2021). One model of attitude conceptualizes it as a combination of affective, cognitive, and conative, as well as a positive or negative assessment of a specific object expressed with a certain intensity (Haryanto, 2022).

Generally, behavior is the totality of a person's understanding and activities, including internal factors, such as attention, perception, motivation, fantasy, suggestion, and observation, as well as external factors, such as the physical, social, economic, cultural, and political environment (Suhartini et al., 2019). A person's values and attitudes can influence their behavior. This study used Ajzen's theory (in Frisancho & Delgado, 2018), which provides the stages of attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention to examine this relationship. This theory is an extension of the theory of reasoned action, which aims to predict behavior from attitudes and explain the interrelated processes. According to Ajzen's (In Frisancho & Delgado, 2018) on the motivation and opportunity as determinants model, the relationship between explicit and implicit attitudes can influence how individual process information, leading to behavioral changes (Sanjaya et al., 2021). In terms of behavior, this study focused on how internal and external factors can influence the occurrence of radical behavior.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative correlational approach. The participants were non-resident students aged 12-20 years old who had studied in Islamic boarding schools for at least one year. The sample comprised 100 individuals from 10 schools in Cirebon Regency, selected through random cluster sampling, a method based on area or region. The sample size was determined to be at least 10% of the total population, which was 990 individuals.

The instrument used to measure religious attitudes included belief, feeling, individual conviction, and tolerance components. This

attitude instrument was modified from Ajzen's theory (in Frisancho & Delgado, 2018). For instance, one of the statements included was "Eradicating vice is part of a Muslim's attitude" (conviction aspect). The instrument consisted of 8 items with corrected item-total correlation values ranging from .375 to .665 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of .836. On the other hand, the instrument used to measure radical behavior included components, such as individual and group decision-making as well as individual and group actions, which were modified from Cohen (2007). An example of the statements included was "Participating in destroying gambling places is justified according to religion" (decision-making aspect). The instrument consisted of 5 items with corrected item-total correlation values ranging from .372 to .747 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of .808. Both instruments used a Likert scale with 5 response categories, namely Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Unsure (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

During the data analysis stage, classical assumption tests, such as normality tests were conducted first. Subsequently, Pearson correlation analysis, simple linear regression, and coefficient of determination analysis were performed. Data mining was also conducted through observation and in-depth interviews to strengthen the discussion. Observations were made on religious practices and activities. Behavioral observations were reinforced with direct interviews and assessments, as a form of confirmation, to determine the tendency of religious attitudes of students. Moreover, in-depth interviews were conducted with both the *ustadz* and students.

Results and Discussion

In this study, a normality test was carried out on the residual value because a good regression model should have a normally distributed residual value. The One-Sample Kolomogorov-Smirnov test yielded a Sig value of .927 (>.05), indicating that the residual value was normally distributed.

In the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient analysis, a value of .566 was obtained with a significance of .000, showing a positive moderate-level relationship between religious attitudes and radical behavior among Islamic school students. This positive relationship indicates that strong religious attitude factor tends to increase radical behavior among these students.

The next step was to conduct a simple linear regression analysis to predict the dependent variable through the independent variables that were predicted individually. Table 1 shows that the regression coefficient is positive with a significance value of .000 (< .05). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, meaning, there is a positive and significant influence of religious attitudes on radical behavior among students in the Cirebon Islamic Boarding School. The regression equation is $\hat{Y} = 30.833 + .395X$, where the constant value of 30.833 indicates that when there is no increase in the religious attitude variable (religious attitude variable remains), radical behavior is worth 30.833. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient value of .395 indicates that any increase caused by the sign (+)1 religious attitude variable will increase radical behavior by .395. The + sign indicates a unidirectional relationship, where an increase in the religious attitude variable (X) will increase radical behavior variable. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the amount of contribution, input or influence of religious attitudes on students' radical behavior was 32% (RSquare .320), while other factors influenced 68%.

These results confirm the relationship between religious attitudes and radical behavior among non-resident students in Cirebon. This is because radical behavior tends to come from the influence of the students' environmental conditions, including the peer, Islamic boarding school, and the family environments that are less appropriate to the sociological and psychological conditions of the students (Qodir, 2013).

Table 1
Linear Regression Analysis of Radical Behavior

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig
(Constant)	30.833	3.517		8.678	.000
Religious Attitude	.395	.070	.566	5.662	.000

From a sociological aspect, the environment is a contributing factor to the existence of intolerant attitudes. Meanwhile, regarding psychological conditions, students tends to struggle in controlling themselves and weaken their mental defenses, making it difficult to block intense information and external exposure (Kuntarto, 2019).

The efforts of Islamic school students to carry out mental defense in minimizing the occurrence of radical behavior require their spiritual intelligence. This intelligence is useful in counteracting various understandings that students encounter (Mubarak, 2013), and can be in the form of efforts to understand religious values logically or relate them to environmental conditions (Supratno et al., 2019).

A religious attitude is factor that can promote an individual to act in accordance with the size or level of compliance and obedience to religious teachings or doctrines. These teachings are usually imparted by the Qur'an teacher (*ustadz*), therefore, *ustadz* contributes to the behavior of Islamic school students (Malik et al., 2016). The attitude and example of the *ustadz* are important in shaping the behavior and character of students. Religious attitude can be formed based on the consistency between the beliefs of the students in religion as part of their cognitive (appreciation and understanding of religious doctrines and teachings), affective, and conative (behavior toward religion) components.

Religious attitudes can become an inseparable or an integral part of students' personalities in displaying their speech and thoughts (Supratno et al., 2019). Their faith is manifested when they are interested in conveying or expressing happiness. Therefore, it can be assumed that the higher the religious quality of students, the less likely they will engage in radical acts. Students with lower quality of religious attitudes have a greater possibility of committing radical acts.

Based on interviews with Islamic school students, their religious attitudes are shaped by the views and teachings of the *ustadz*. Therefore, their knowledge is inseparable from the knowledge conveyed. They also acknowledge that the delivery of the religious views by *ustadz* becomes their commitment and determination. Students' determination and commitment are part of the attitude that shapes their behavior and character.

Based on observations in the field, the religious attitudes of students are divided into several parts. They are also related to the origin of the Islamic boarding school. Meliani et al. (2022) suggested two typologies of Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon, namely *salaf* (traditional) and *Khalaf* (modern).

This study showed that students from Salafi Isic boarding school exhibited a more obedient character toward their *ustadz*. Students follow *ustadz's* guidance in carrying out their worship and social activities. The principle of *sam'an wa tha'atan* (listening and obeying) is deeply inherent among *Salafi* Islamic school students. According to one of students, the influence of *ustadz* is very significant in the Salafi Islamic boarding school model. *Salafi* students also have limited literacy, therefore, they exclude themselves from reading references that are contradictory to their ideology. The doctrine constructed by *ustadz* has a strong impact on their attitude.

Meanwhile, *Khalafi* Islamic boarding school model has different characteristics of students. According to the interview, *Khalafi* Islamic boarding school students tend to have a high level of independence, and are capable

of determining their attitudes and behavior without being dominated by the direction of *ustadz*. An equality model is built between students and ustad, allowing them to discuss and refute discussion material without any *ewuh pakewuh* (pressing rules). The reading references obtained by Islamic school students are much more than the *Salafi* students. *Khalafi* students are actually more open to references from anywhere and have broader access. The role of *ustadz* in determining students' attitudes and behavior is more limited. Moreover, the doctrine has been greatly reduced because students can determine the direction of their behavior.

As for the semi-modern Islamic boarding school model, students tend to be more moderate. The level of fanaticism and intolerance is low, and students typically have standard compliance with the rules and regulations applied. However, they are no longer fully dependent on the *ustad,* they are also not too free in determining the direction of their behavior. These students usually have a good model of moderation as well as the attitude of prioritizing the positive values developed by Islamic boarding schools. The doctrine in semi-modern Islamic school is moderate, as they are neither too strong or too weak. Although students are usually more rational in determining their attitudes and behavior, they still respect the local virtues applied in Islamic boarding schools.

The social environment of Islamic school students contributes to shaping their attitudes to behave radically or not. Radical behavior addressed in this study is exclusivism, an attitude that deliberately rejects differences regarding the existence of truth in other people's religions or opinions (Syukur, 2017). This study showed that the social environment of non-resident students influenced their closed attitude. This environment includes family, reading materials, and the general public. The existence of an exclusive attitude is quite normal for these students because their lives are mostly spent outside the Islamic boarding school. This means the school environment does not contribute to their exclusive attitude. A non-resident student may associate with other environments, such as discussion groups that teach fanatical and radical religious doctrines. They may also have a family background that practices religious values fanatically, leading to a closed personality that is not open to the truth of other groups.

In addition, there are other larger social environments, such as the wider community. This includes the schools and surrounding communities where non-resident students interact daily, as well as social media. Schools can be a field for spreading exclusive ideas, as shown by various studies that highlight the spread of radicalist doctrines in Indonesian schools (Agung & Zakso, 2019; Botma, 2020; Kholik, 2017). Social media also plays a significant role in radicalism efforts. World radical organizations, such as ISIS and Hizbut Tahrir, now conduct recruitment and movements on social media, and their influence has already affected many young people in Indonesia (Setia, 2020).

These results are consistent with Malik et al. (2016), where aspects of radical behavior are closely related to attitudes transmitted by other parties, such as *ustadz* and students. Unlike in Malik et al., where peers' views dominate the influence of attitudes on behavior, this study specifically focus on *ustadz* and other Islamic school students.

The limitation of this study is that it did not make comparisons between resident and non-resident students, therefore, it did not cover a wide range of objects. Future studies are expected to further explore the two models of students.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion related to religious attitudes toward radical behavior, it can be concluded that religious attitudes significantly influence radical behavior of non-resident students. This can be attributed to radical behavior originating from the social environment and personal conditions of students who lack strong self-

control and good defense. These social and environmental conditions include the family, school, discussion groups, and the surrounding community. Meanwhile, self-control and mental defense are based on the spiritual intelligence of Islamic school students. The results showed that religious attitudes had a significant effect of 32% on radical behavior in non-resident students in Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon.

Some suggestions can be offered to address the issue of radical behavior among non-resident students in Islamic boarding schools. Firstly, parents should provide character/moral education to their children from childhood. This is to enhance their understanding, attitude, as well as polite, courteous, wise, and mature behavior in solving their problems when they reach adolescence (becoming Islamic school students). Secondly, schools should provide more intensive character education to promote high personality and tolerance among students. Thirdly, the government needs to make policies and programs that encourage the formation of a quality community with good personality and tolerance toward others to prevent radical behavior. Fourthly, the Islamic boarding school environment should counteract radicalism by incorporating ideas, such as religious moderation and nationalism in all students, including non-resident students.

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