Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia – **CONVEY Indonesia**

Policy Brief Series

Issue 1 | Vol. 1 | 2018

Countering Radicalism On The Internet

Key Findings

1. The majority of Islamic websites that are popular among the internet users are unaffiliated Islamic websites (unaffiliated with any Islamic mass organization).
2. The developing Islamic websites in Indonesia can be classified into 3 categories: (1) mainstream; (2) contemporary; and (3) unaffiliated.
3. Some of unaffiliated Islamic organization websites support radicalism.
4. Characteristics of websites that spread radical contents:
   - Most of them use pseudonym or group name.
   - Figures who are often used as references do not come from mainstream Islamic organizations.

Background

Currently, internet has become a very effective tool in spreading values of radicalism and extremism (Rand Corporation, 2014). Through "Islamic" and popular packaging, the radicalism and extremism contents can easily reach internet users. Internet can be a tool for freedom of expression, on the other hand, it can be a predicament since there are a lot of false news (hoax) and hate speech, especially the ones that encourage violent behaviours (PSBPS, 2017)

By the end of 2017, Ministry of Communication and Informatics has blocked 27,000 websites deemed to have spread radical and pornographic contents (Kemkominfo, 2017). However, websites or social media blocking by the government could be a counterproductive measure. This measure could be perceived as a government's effort to hinder the society in accessing information. The government, academia, and practitioners need to discuss together to solve this issue (PSBPS, 2017).

Recognizing the Ideas of Radicalism and Extremism on the Internet

Radicalism	Extremism
A view of an individual or a group which aims to change the existing government structure	A view or a belief that supports and imposes ideas that are considered deviant by most people. Violence is usually used to impose this view.

There are some indicators that can be used to understand radicalism and extremism attitude:

- Self identification
  How an individual represents themselves, for example by identifying certain figure as their role model and have a militant attitude toward their group
- "Us versus them" mentality
  Individual perceives groups who differ from their group as an "opposition". Individual verbally expresses their resistance toward the government system.

- Social interaction
  Radical attitudes can be seen from the way an individual interacts with people around them. The attitudes could be isolating themselves from others, imposing their beliefs on other groups, to trigerring violence.
- Association
  Radical individual associates themselves with extremist groups, symbols and certain clothing attributes, language use (for example, use greetings in Arabic), and identity on internet.

Ideas of radicalism and extremism on the internet that are currently popular can be recognized from some of these key phrases:
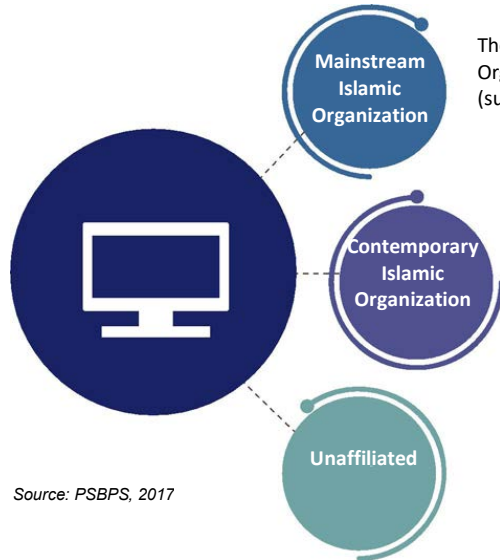
- "Establishing Caliphate", "Sharia NKRI" that imply opposition to the current government system in Indonesia.
- "Kill Ahok", "Kill pastor", "Indonesia rejects Shia", "Destroy PKI", "Radical Buddhist Terrorist" that imply hate speech as well as encourage violence and intolerance.

Examples of Radical Messages on the Internet
Source: PSBPS, 2017

Dissemination of Radicalism Ideas on Websites

There are three main categories of Islamic websites based on their affiliation with Islamic organization. The three categories are mainstream Islamic organization, contemporary Islamic organization and unaffiliated (PSBPS, 2017).

Mainstream Islamic Organization

Contemporary Islamic Organization

Unaffiliated

Source: PSBPS, 2017

The following websites are the example of Mainstream Islamic Organization websites: NU Online (nu.or.id) and Muhammadiyah (suaramuhammadiyah.id)
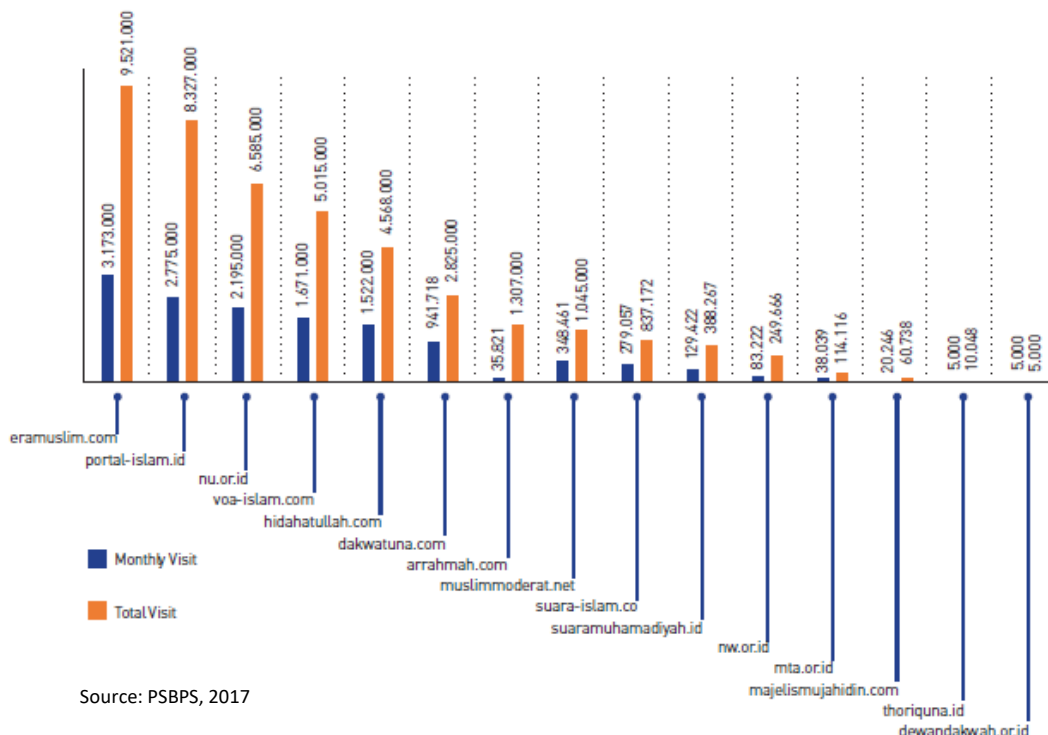
The following websites are the example of Contemporary Islamic Organization websites:
Forum Umat Islam – Islamic People Forum (suara-islam.com), Hidayatullah (hidayatullah.com), Majelis Mujahidin – Mujahidin Assembly (majelismujahidin.com), Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia – Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Board (dewandakwah.or.id), Majelis Tafsir – Al-Quran Interpretation Assembly (mta.or.id).

The following websites are the example of unaffiliated websites:
Portal Islam – Islam Portal (portal-islam.id), Era Muslim – Muslim Era (eramuslim.com), VOA-Islam (voa-islam.com), Muslim Moderat – Moderate Muslim (muslimmoderat.net), Arrahmah (arrahmah.com), Thariquna (thoriquna.id), dan Dakwatuna (dakwatuna.com)

How Popular are the Websites that Share Radical Contents?

The popularity of Islamic websites among internet users is determined based on the number of visits and site rank (through Alexa and SimilarWeb). Site rank is determined based on the amount of traffic the websites get. The following chart shows the website's rank based on the number of visitors' traffic on the website:

Monthly Visit
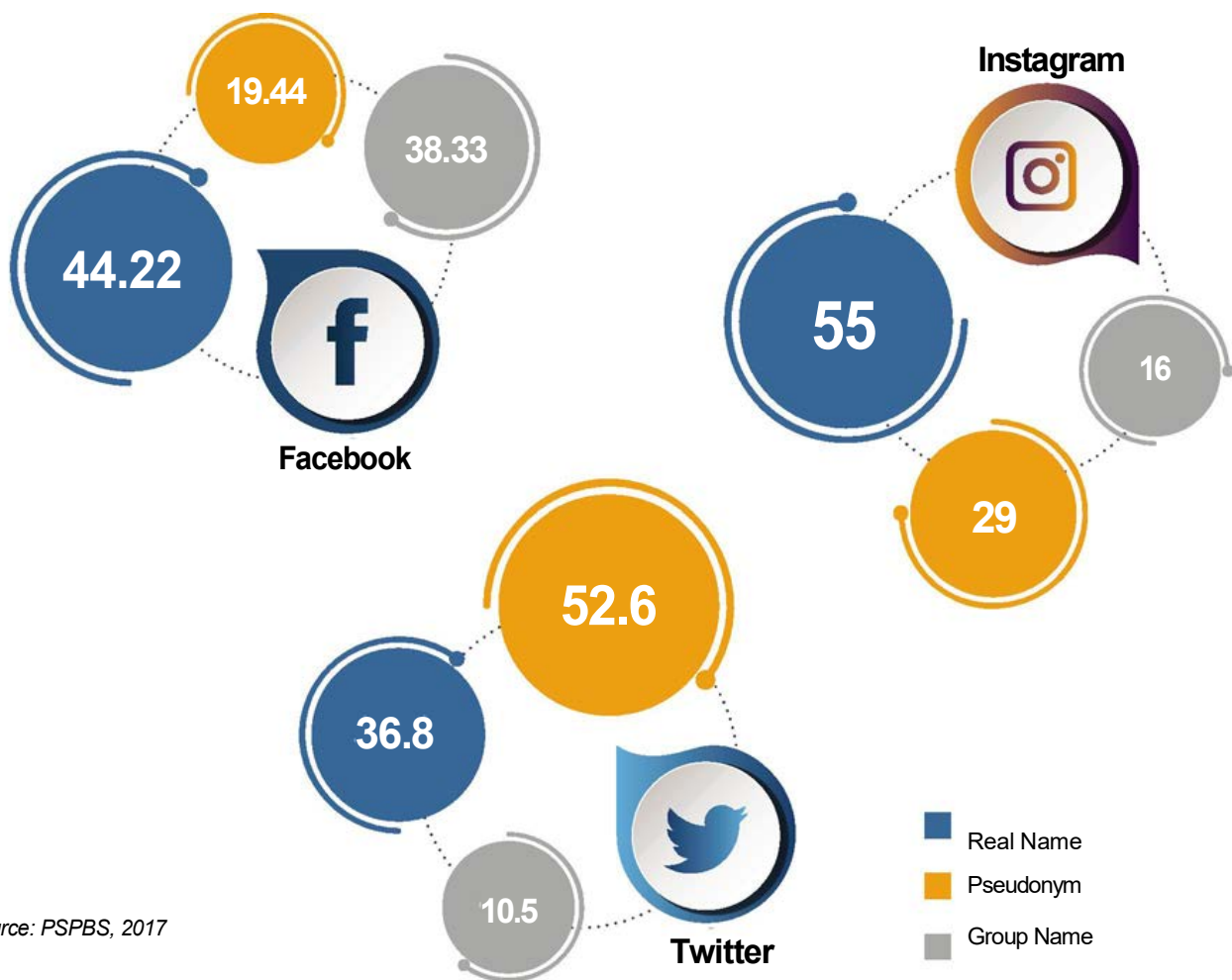Total Visit

Source: PSBPS, 2017

Among the fourteen websites, websites that shares rejection of radicalism ideas and routinely deliver peaceful messages are mainstream Islamic organization websites which are nu.or.id and suaramuhammadiyah.id. NU website is among the top three most-visited popular websites. Meanwhile, another mainstream organization website such as Muhammadiyah is less popular with the total visits of less than one million clicks during July-October 2017 (PSPBS, 2017).

On the other hand, some of unaffiliated websites produce narration that support radicalism and hate speech, such as Portal Islam, Era Muslim, and VOA-Islam. Era Muslim as an unaffiliated website that often produce radical contents is the most visited website during July-October. Total visits of Era Muslim during that period exceeded 9,000,000 clicks (PSBPS, 2017). The same thing happened for Portal Islam and VOA-Islam where the total visits were between 5,000,000 to 8,500,000 clicks.

Websites that have radical contents or messages present the contents in a popular way, such as through articles on lifestyle and youth (PSBPS, 2017)

The Dissemination of Radicalism on Social Media

There are 3 types of account on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter which are accounts that use real names, pseudonyms, and group names.
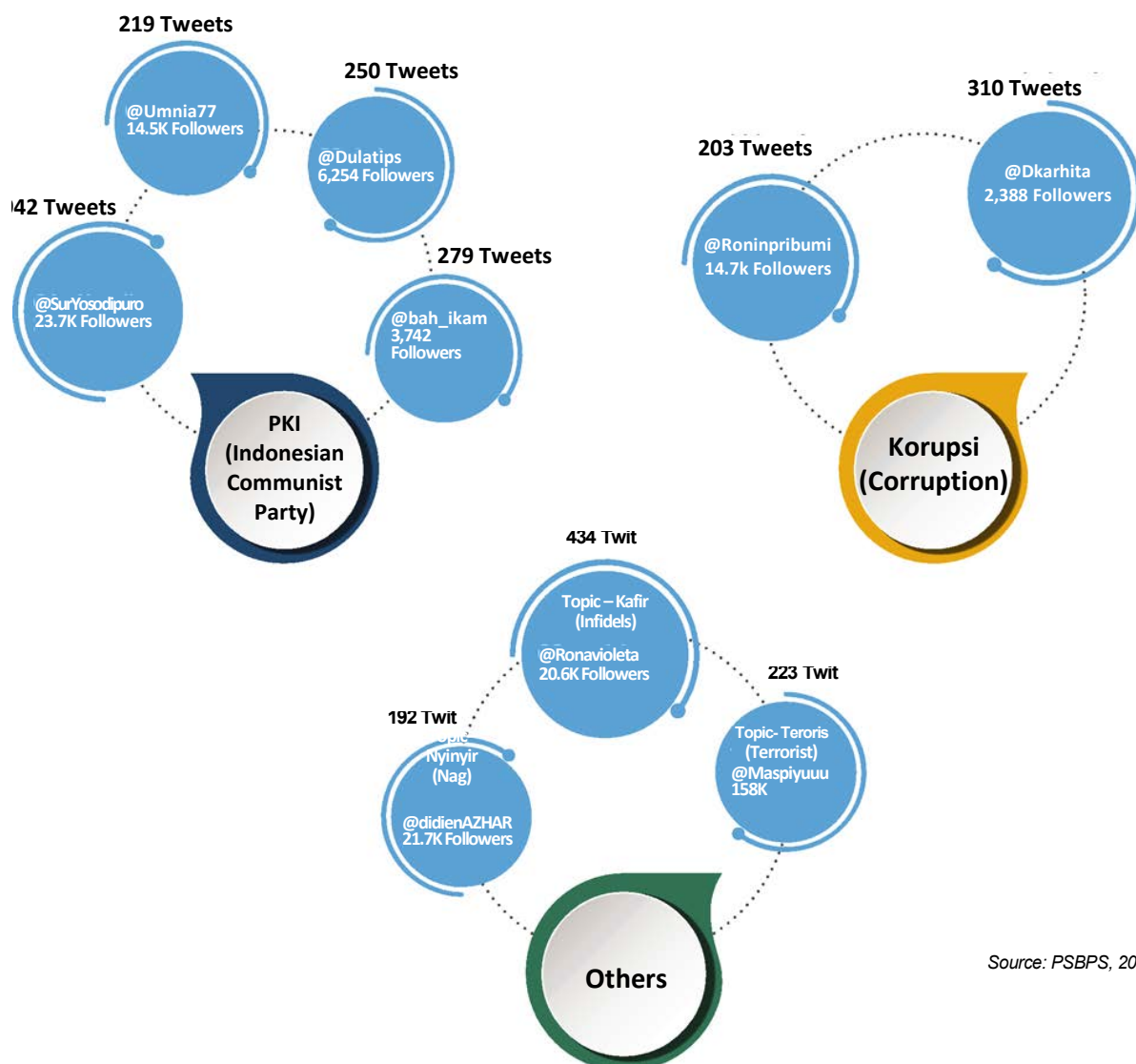
19.44

38.33

44.22

Facebook

Instagram

55

16

29

52.6

36.8

10.5

Twitter

■ Real Name
■ Pseudonym
■ Group Name

Source: PSPBS, 2017

Some examples of individual Facebook accounts that are related to the dissemination of radicalism are Irdiana Wahyuni, Fahmi Yahya Nuryanto, and Stefanus Robby Cahyadi G. Meanwhile, some examples of pseudoynm account are Kaum Kecebong, Mak Lambe Turah, and Tria Minoru.

As for incognito accounts that use the name of certain community are Ahmadiyah Menjawab Fitnah, Aliansi PNS Anti Korupsi, Pemuda Pancasila, Cyber Pancasila and Indonesia Menolak Syiah. The most-followed Facebook page is Jonru Ginting with a total followers of 1,496,064 and 100 juta like para pendukung setia Ahok (100 million likes of loyal Ahok supporters) with total followers of 1,283,376.

Meanwhile, on Twitter the number of tweets (contents) and the most popular tweets of an account can be seen. The following chart shows popular accounts that spread radical contents:

Source: PSBPS, 2017

On Instagram, accounts with real identity that spread radical contents among others are @saraandriyani, @andria.fp, @sakina_ina, dan @ikeradhaana.

As for pseudonym accounts, the examples are @pakmadon, @conan_edogawa007, @cebong_otak_korengan, and @ cokelat_semut. Meanwhile, accounts that use community or group name among others are @ forumberitaviral, @mediarakyat_, @rakyatbersuara11, and @generasi54.

Responding Radicalism through Peaceful Messages

Among many contents of radicalism and intolerance on websites and social media, we can still find peaceful messages and unity on mainstream Islamic organization websites.

Invitation to maintain NKRI (The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) and accept Pancasila as the state foundation.

Invitation to maintain diversity and interfaith

"Pancasila is *"Darul Ahdi wa Syahadah"* Muhammadiyah will keep maintaining NKRI. Pancasila as a foundation in living as a nation and state**"**

Suara Muhammadiyah Online

"So that intolerance is eradicated. So that all religious people keep cultivating interfaith brotherhood and tolerance in Indonesia**"**

NU Online

"So that the regional election of DKI Jakarta shall not be used for false news dissemination in order to discredit the opponent of each party without verification of truth that causes disturbance everywhere**"**

NU Online

"One of the best methods to handle conflict is to use peaceful approach instead of using violence and military. Handling radical movement must be done wisely. Muhammadiyah always strives to prevent terrorism**"**

Suara Muhammadiyah Online

Invitation to refrain from activities that cause disturbance in society

Rejection to power, radical, and terrorism approach

Summarized from various mainstream Islamic organization websites

Recommendation

It is important for the Ministry of Education and Culture to take following actions:
- Media literacy, especially on social media at school level for teachers and students, including lessons on how to cross-check hoax news, spread positive contents on social media, and promote critically filter and produce contents.
- Create alternative narratives by producing and campaigning peaceful contents that target school-age children.

It is important for the Mainstream Islamic organizations (Muhammadiyah and NU) and other Islamic organizations to take following actions:
- Produce and promote Islamic contents with peaceful messages and values of tolerance in a more popular form of presentation.
- Encourage and enhance the capacity of young generation in mainstream Islamic organizations in producing and campaigning peaceful contents.

It is important for the Ministry of Communication and Informatics National Cyber and Code Agency to take following action:
- Create a more transparent radical websites filtering mechanism by involving components of society.

About Centre for the Studies of Culture and Social Change of UMS

Centre for the Studies of Culture and Social Change (PSBPS) of Muhammadiyah Surakarta University (UMS) is an institution with interests in issues concerning culture, especially cultural diversity and social change, in the form of education, study/research, as well as action. Programmes of PSBPS are based on the fundamental Islamic values and universal humanity values with emphasize on the relevance and contextualization of those values with modern demand and providing direction on social change.

About "Radicalism on Websites and Social Media" Research

Centre for the Studies of Culture and Social Change of Muhammadiyah Surakarta University conducted a research under CONVEY project, collaborated with PPIM UIN Jakarta and UNDP Indonesia with the title: Radicalism on Websites and Social Media.
This research identified three categories of Islamic teaching websites consisting of mainstream Islamic organizations, contemporary Islamic organizations and independent and unaffiliated Islamic organizations in terms of responding ideas of radicalism and extremism. Observations on these websites were conducted from January 2016 to October 2017.
In addition, this research also investigated the messages on the top three most popular social media: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Radical social media users that were surveyed were 437 accounts (180 Facebook accounts, 200 Instagram accounts, and 57 Twitter accounts).