

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

Policy Brief Series

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This Policy Brief series is published as part of CONVEY Indonesia project organized by PPIM UIN Jakarta and UNDP Indonesia.

CONVEY Indonesia aims to build peace in Indonesia and to prevent violent extremism and radicalism through a series of research-survey, policy advocacy, and public interaction based on the potential of religious education. CONVEY Indonesia project covers on the issues of tolerance, diversity, and non-violence among youth.

Religious Education for Millennials in Higher Education

Key Findings

1. There are three sources of religious studies that are usually accessed by students: religious education course, internet, and religious organization.
2. The proportion of contents of Islamic religious course still not ideal to provide teaching values of tolerance toward people of other religions/beliefs.
3. There is only few or even no time for lecturers to internalize lessons of tolerance in Islamic religious education.
4. Students who are not connected to the internet have more moderate opinion compared to the ones who are connected to the internet .
5. Support for caliphate and imposition of Islamic law is still high among the lecturers as well as students.

Background

The purpose of religious education in Indonesia is not only to develop devout people, but also to embed civic values in their personalities. That goal was expressed by Sukarno on 1 June 1945 "faith in God that grows in Indonesia must be faith in God as culturally, that is without religion selfishness, is civilized, respectful, and virtuous" (Feith & Castle, 1988). In order to achieve that, religious education in higher education must be a tool to build those civic values.

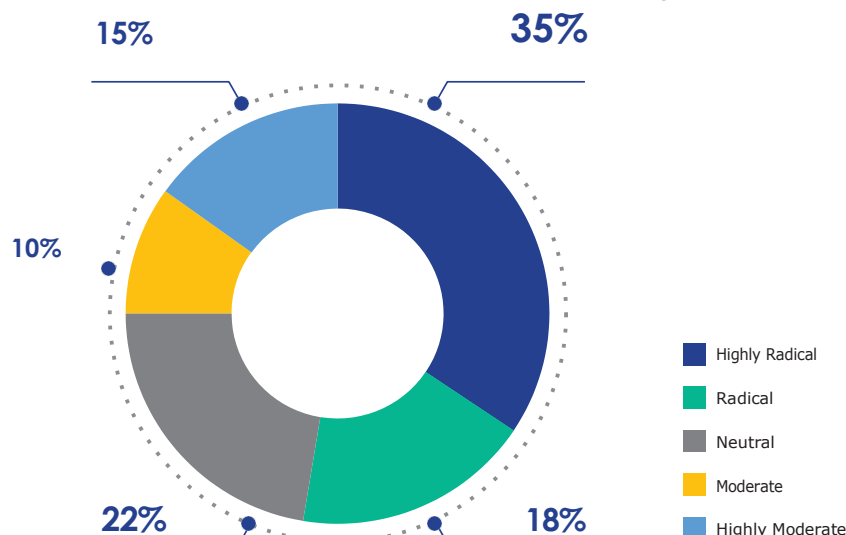
In this case, religious education lecturers have an important role in conveying those values. Yet unfortunately, they also have tendency to convey ideas of intolerance (PPIM, 2017). Since there is

very narrow chance for dialogue in class, students seek other sources to study religion including internet as well as religious students group.

Students' Perspective and Radicalism Potential

Radicalism potential can be seen through students' perspective on the issues that are related with, among others, freedom of religion, relationship between religion and state, choosing a leader, and denomination difference.

Based on that perspective, radicalism potential of students in higher education is as follows:



Source: PPIM UIN, 2017

In general, students who have highly radical/radical perspective have similar outlook in responding the following issues:

1. Different perspective in choosing a leader

Students who have radical perspective agree that leadership under religious expert is the best.

2. Different perspective toward groups of different denomination

Students who have radical perspective agree if the government bans or dissolve groups/organizations that are considered deviant.

3. Different perspective on freedom of religion

Students who have radical perspective acknowledge the freedom of religion in Indonesia, but in majority-minority perspective. This can be seen from their agreement if the government limits the activities of other religions.

4. Different perspective on the relationship between religion and state

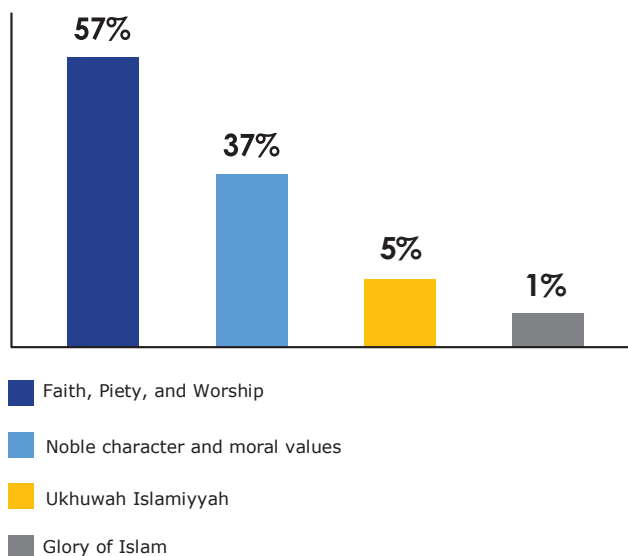
Students who have radical perspective agree that the imposition of Islamic law in Indonesia must be supported. Other than that, they agree that every government policy must be based on Islamic law and consider Pancasila and 1945 Constitution as creation of infidel and *taghut*.

Reference of Informations and Radicalism Potential

Sources of informations and references in studying Islam is one of the factors that shape students' perspective. There are at least three main sources of informations for students in studying Islam: Islamic religious courses, internet, and religious students group (PPIM, 2017).

As a formal academic reference for students, Islamic religious education course teaches a few lessons on values of tolerance toward groups of different denominations/religions (PPIM, 2017). This can be seen from the materials of Islamic religious course below:

Most Accepted Religious Education Materials



Source: PPIM UIN, 2017

As from the lecturers' point of view, the lecturers tend to agree if religious education course also teaches the values of tolerance toward other denominations/religions group. Only some of Islamic religious education lecturers (28.10% of 58 lecturers) who disagree on teaching values of tolerance toward groups of other denominations. Other than that, 48.7% of lecturers agree if Islamic religious education course also includes materials concerning other religions.

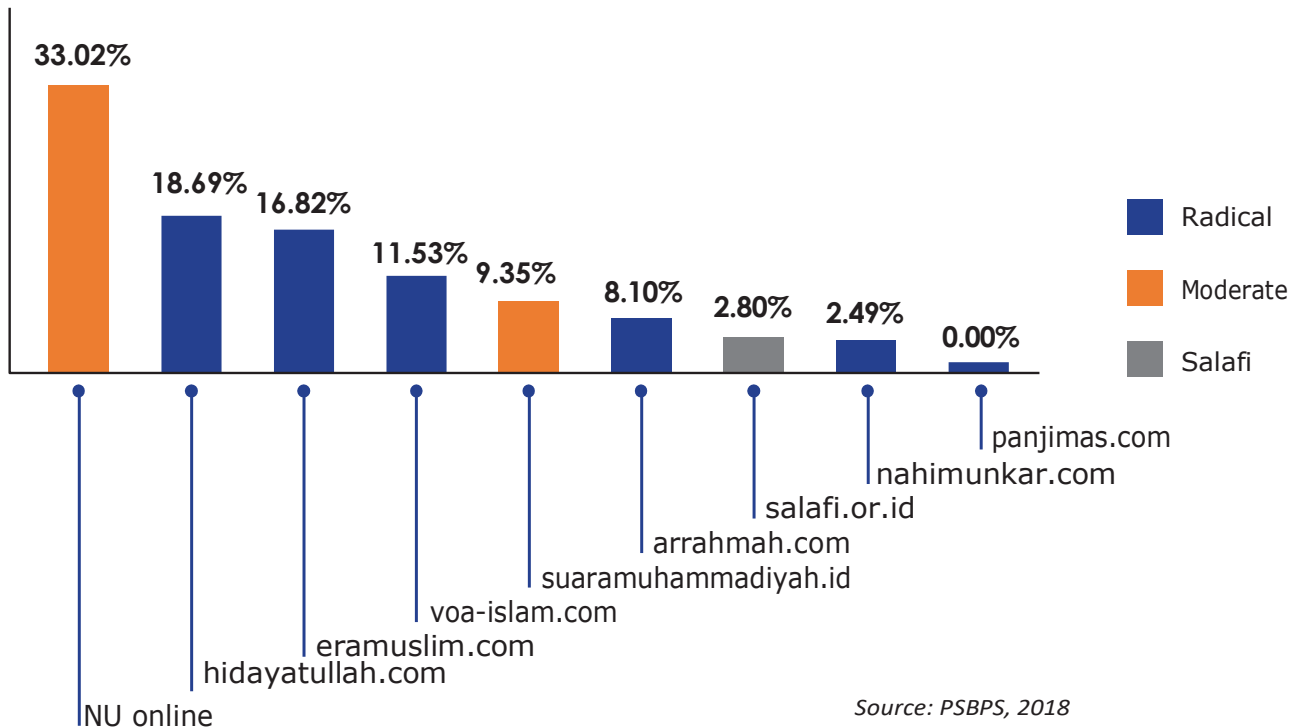
Since religious education course is considered to not open an ideal dialogue process, students

seek for alternative sources. Internet and religious students organization are primary sources

to fulfill their curiosity. Unfortunately, ideas of radicalism have the potential to develop faster on both.

Reference Source for Religious Studies on the Internet

Websites that are Often Accessed by Students



Even though the number of students who access moderate Islamic website (NU online) is still more dominant, the method of presenting contents in a more popular way likely done by websites such as Era Muslim and VoA-Islam has the potential to attract internet users, including students. Meanwhile, behind the popular package, there are messages of radicalism and intolerance (PSBPS, 2018).

Learning Organizational Skills or Spreading the Seeds of Radicalism?

Another reference that also shapes students' perspective is the participation in student organization. Unfortunately, student organization such as Student Executive Board as well as religious

students organization can potentially become a medium for the dissemination and growth of intolerance values. (PPIM, 2017)

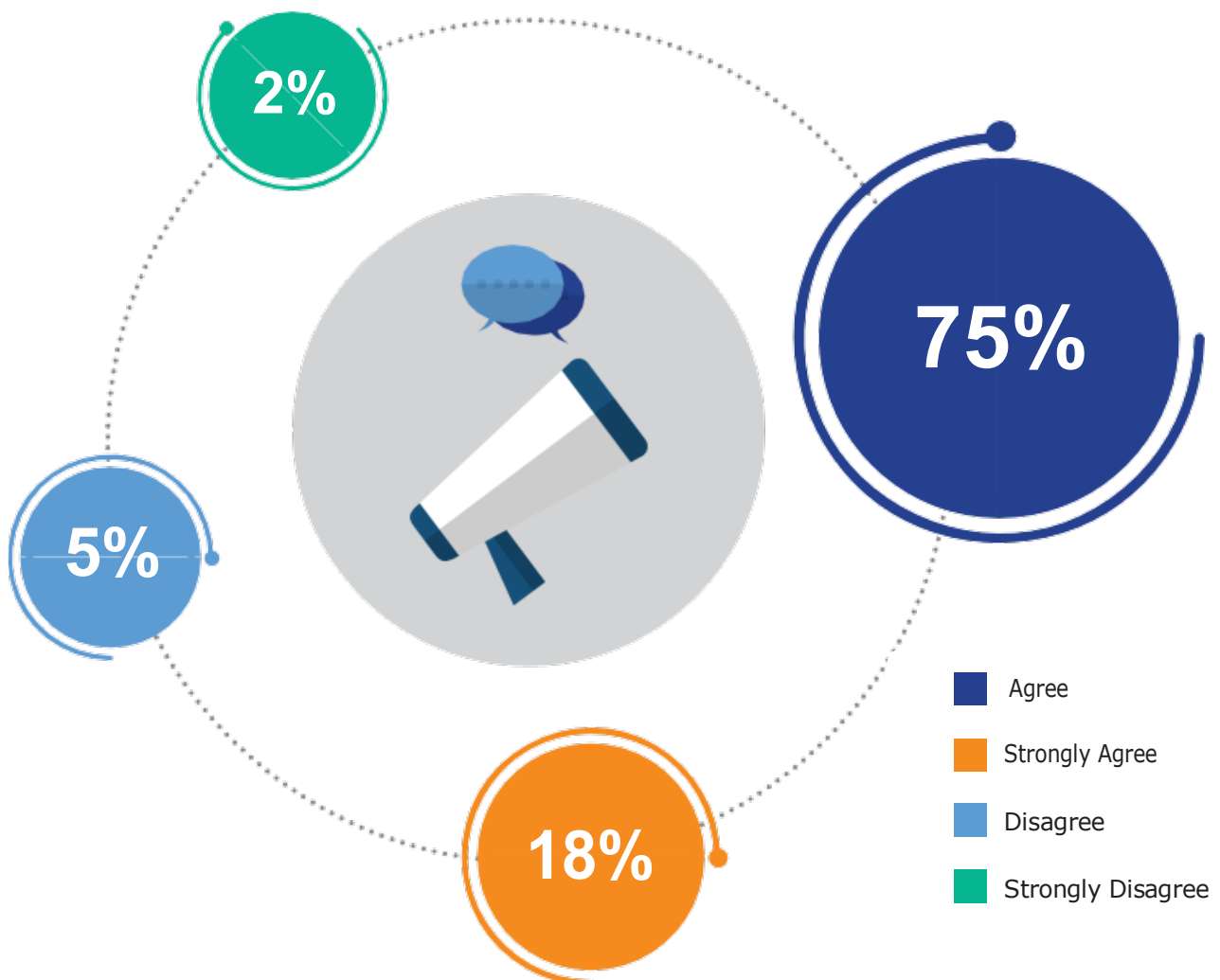
Intolerance perspective toward groups of other religions arises from, among others, the tendency to choose organization's leader based on his/her religion. Data (PPIM, 2017) showed that the number of students who think that the organization's leader must be a Muslim was higher (59%) than the ones who think otherwise.

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, is one of the radical groups that wants the imposition of Islamic law in Indonesia. In some higher education institutions in Pekanbaru, the ideology of HTI becomes a very strong foundation. In fact, in the Faculty of Economy of Riau Islamic University, the deans, lecturers and some of the students are affiliated with HTI (CSRC, 2017).

Countering Radicalism through Interfaith Dialogue

Nurturing values of tolerance through interfaith dialogue is important in midst of the rise of radicalism on campus. Islamic Religious Education subject has a great potential in nurturing values of tolerance, for example through the introduction of other religions in class. Findings of PPIM research (2017) showed that students agree and support if Islamic Religious Education also includes component of other religions.

Students' Opinion on Other Religions' Teaching Material



Source: PPIM UIN, 2017

The materials that are considered to be important for inclusion are including the appreciation of local culture, discussion of problems/issues with the perspective of various religions and beliefs, and the discussion of differences in order to reduce prejudice between religious groups.

Recommendation

It is important for the Ministry of Reserach, Technology, and Higher Education to:

- Increase the proportion/materials on tolerance and interfaith dialogues in Islamic religious education curriculum.
- Design IRE model in higher education as a dialogue process that can serve as the primary source for students to study religion.
- Enhance the capacity of lecturers in teaching tolerance and diversity through a special comprehensive training program.

It is important for internal policy-making to:

- Assert the spirit of diversity in various policies in higher education.
- Design and organize dialogues of diversity and interfaith dialogues between student organizations and lecturers.

About PPIM UIN Jakarta

Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) is an autonomous research institution within Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta. Currently, PPIM is a university-based strategic research institution that is experienced in religion and social issues fields with publications and wide networks, both within the country as well as abroad.

About National Survey on Religiosity in Schools and Universities in Indonesia

PPIM UIN Jakarta has conducted a research titled “Religiosity in Schools and Universities in Indonesia”. This research was conducted in 34 provinces in Indonesia with one city/district chosen as the location at random. The total sample of this research is 2.181 people, consisting of 1.522 primary school students, 337 university students, as well as 264 teachers and 58 lecturers of Islamic Religious Education.



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