

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.

The Threat of Radicalism at Schools

Key Findings

1. Radical ideology gradually infiltrates educational institutions through literatures and extracurricular activities at schools
Although textbooks of Islamic Religious Education has promote tolerance, yet the interpretation of teachers still has tendency to be bias even obviously intolerance
2. Students show openness to the curriculum of Islamic Religious Education that contains perspectives of other religions
3. Critical thinking and tolerance of students can be shaped through students activities and interfaith discussion forums
4. Religious perspective of teachers used to disregard the contents within textbooks
5. Social media and internet has become alternative sources for students to gain religious knowledge out of classrooms

Background

Recently, radical ideologies have gradually infiltrated and flourish within formal educational institutions. Student Council (OSIS) activities, Islamic study club (Rohis), and other extracurricular activities are not free of the menace of radicalism perspectives. It is actually distressing to see how schools tend to ignore the supervisory roles of teachers to all activities existed at schools. To resolve this issue, further firm actions from school stakeholders are urgently required.

The National Survey of "Religiosity at Schools and Universities in Indonesia" (PPIM, 2017) reveals that radicalism grows at schools, the survey also asserts the urgency for policy makers and school management authorities to reinforce values of plurality. The concept of intolerance embedded among students due to its accessibility to literatures or student activities. In some cases, the infiltration of radical networks and ideology at schools is made possible by the fact that the management authorities of schools. This cannot be separated from the lack of monitoring initiatives to the content of subject matters being taught in extracurricular

activities or popular literatures among students.

Tolerance in the Academic Platform

One cause of the embedded values of intolerance among students is the accessibility of schools by freely allowing any outsiders to enter and interact with students. This fenceless nature of schools shows lack of surveillance aspect to infiltration particles from outside schools. Furthermore, schools themselves are often responsible for unwittingly inviting guest lecturers in some student activities who have such potential ideology to radicalism and intolerance.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) textbooks frequently become the entry gate of radical ideologies to operate in to schools. Many of its contents encourage students to act intolerant towards other religious groups. Moreover, teachers generally tend to approve the teaching materials in those textbooks without further considerations.



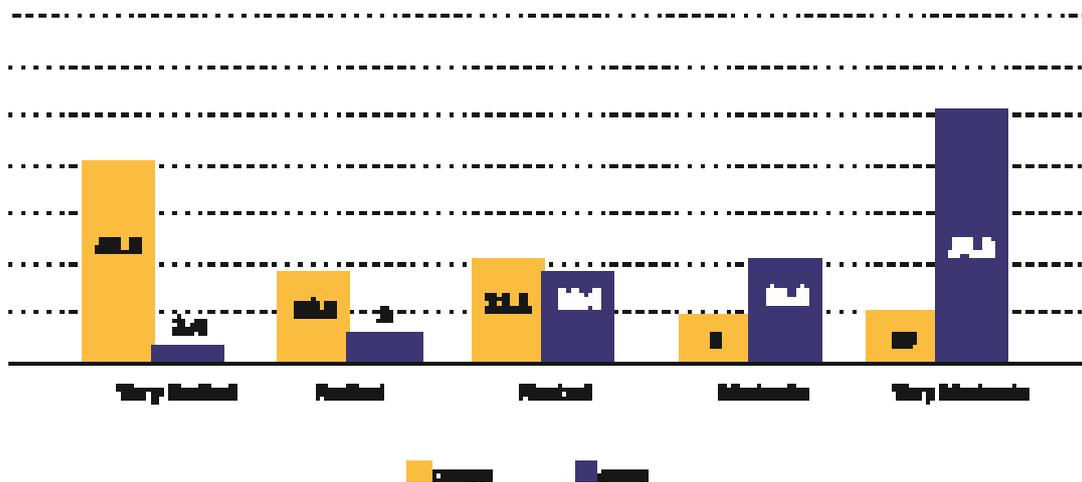
Investigating Radical Opinion at Schools

Efforts to counter the spread of radicalism and intolerance at schools can be done by the teachers. Teachers have significant role in sowing values of diversity, tolerance, as well as reducing prejudice towards other religious groups.

Radical opinion is a radical belief/ideology internalized into an individual, while radical action is the violent and intolerant behavior manifested in the form of physical actions.

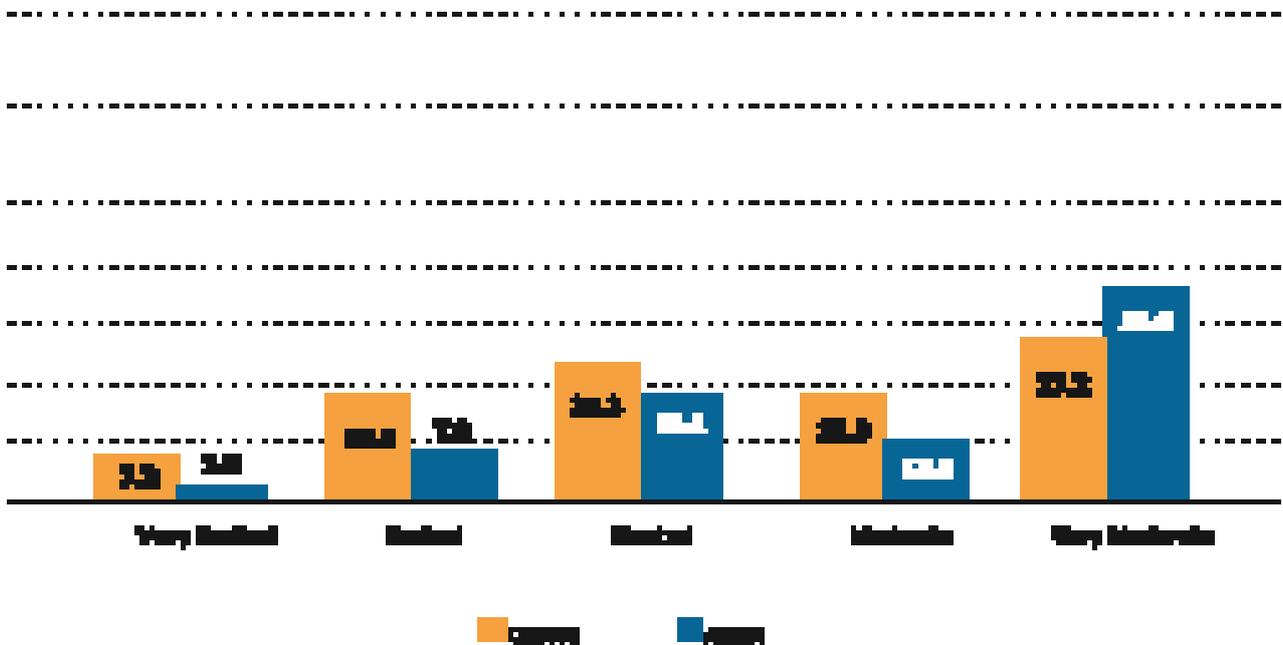
To counter the inrush of intolerance and radicalism, the values of peaceful, universal, and loving in Islam must be internalized to youngsters. This process should be accompanied by how far intolerance and radicalism is visible among students and teachers. A national survey to observe the behavior of youth in social media conducted by PPIM (2017) finds the image of radical opinions and actions among students in schools as follows:

Percentages of Radical Opinions and Actions Among Students



Meanwhile, the data on radicalism (opinions and actions) among teachers is no less alarming. The data is generally inverse; teachers tend to have moderate opinions, yet more radical in their actions. The data is as follows:

Percentages of Radical Opinions and Actions among Islamic Religious Education Teachers



Teachers in Islamic Religious Education subjects are generally moderate, however they possess a tendency for intolerant actions. This tendency towards radical action can adversely impact the programs and methods of teaching Islam to students. However, there is an exception: although the teachers are generally moderate, this trend does not apply to those adhering to Ahmadiyah and Shiite. The opinions and actions of teachers that are adherent to Ahmadiyah and Shiite teachings tend to be radical. Overall, the application of tolerance by Islamic Religious subject teachers are limited.

Teacher Perception towards Islamic Religious Education

54.70%

Teachers who strongly disagree in advising students to be tolerant and treat Shiite adherents well

53.60%

Teachers who strongly disagree in advising students to be tolerant and treat Ahmadiyah adherents well

Most teachers do not agree with the notion of Islamic Religious Education accommodating values of tolerance for Shiites and Ahmadiyah.

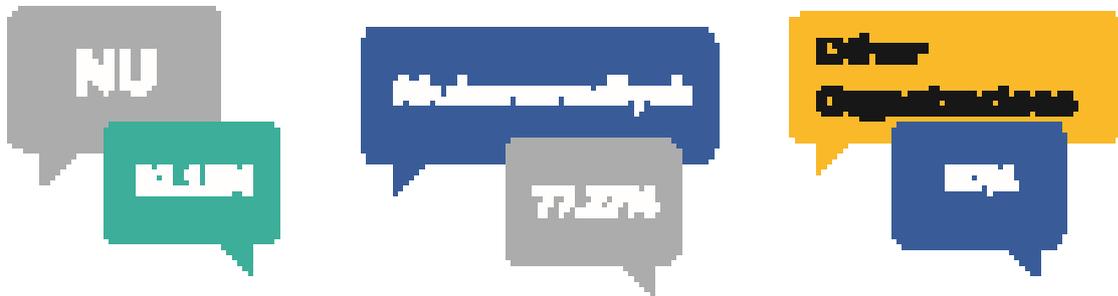
Additional Sources of Islamic Religious Education/ Religious Issue Consultation Outside School



The accessibility of the internet becomes a chance of student exposure to external sources in searching for Islamic knowledge.

Minimum Number of Religious Organizations Close to Students

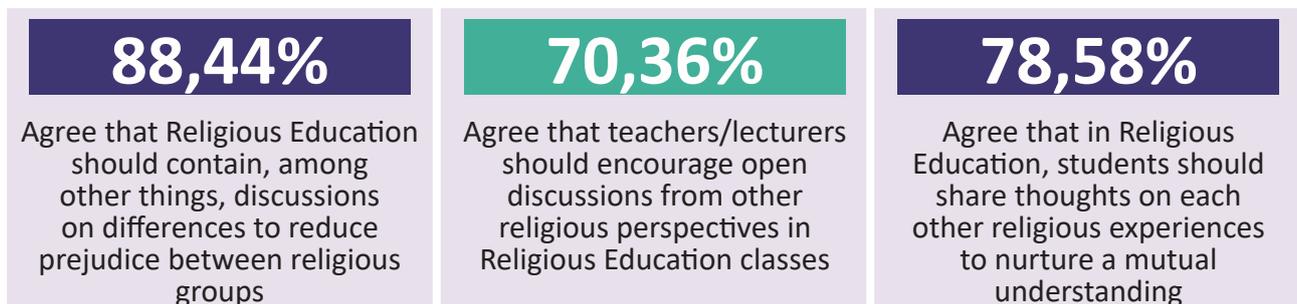
The following is a percentage of students unaffiliated to religious social organizations:



This shows a lack of Islamic religious organizations involvement in students' daily activities.

Students Opinion on Islamic Religious Education which Contain Discussion about Other Faiths

Behind the threat of radical groups and ideas infiltration at schools, there is still evidence of hope from students who desire a more open discussion on religion.



Most students show openness in learning Islamic Religious Education that contains perspectives from other religions.

Necessary Steps

To contain the issue of radicalism at schools, several steps must be taken. Schools (the principal, teachers, and students) must cooperate in countering radicalism which affect their institutions. No party should ignore the issue at hand. Principals, as the ones with highest authority in schools, must fulfill their role as best as possible. They must supervise the teachers and students—what activities they participate in—as well as the people who visit school grounds. Teachers must also take the same action. They should not, instead of resolving the issue of radicalism, invite those with radical ideologies. Meanwhile, students must also be introduced to programs of diversity without looking at religious racial backgrounds.

The findings of our research can be summarized as follows:

1. School-level Challenges

- a. Prevent the penetration of radical ideologies into the school environment by controlling extracurricular activities, religious textbooks, as well as student activities outside school.
- b. Cooperate with moderate Islamic organizations and groups such as NU and Muhammadiyah.
- c. Conduct diversity themed programs, such as interfaith camps, on a regular basis.

2. Regional Challenges

- a. Compile data of schools with histories of radical infiltration.
- b. Conduct activities that facilitate diversity for students on the regional scale.

3. National Challenges

- a. Compile a database of schools indicated or proven to have issues of radicalism.
- b. Conduct activities that facilitate diversity on the national scale.
- c. Promote the establishment of a standardized approval committee for textbooks, especially in religious subject.

Recommendation

To respond the spread of intolerance values at schools, we recommend the government to take firm actions as following:

1. Target the textbook-writing sector of ministries

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture who possess the authority in Indonesia's textbook production. To establish a textbook validation committee to ensure that Islamic Religious Education textbooks are free of radical and intolerant content.

2. Improve the competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers

Teachers must improve their capacities in providing adequate references for students.

3. Apply a cross-sectoral approach

Resolving the issue of radicalism and intolerance in Islamic Religious Education textbooks requires effective policies and actions framework cross-sectoral cooperation. This cannot be done without strong and comprehensive cooperation with many stakeholders.

4. Conduct more student activities that promote pluralism

Student activities, such as camping trips, should be carried out regularly to tighten student relations.

5. Enhance the role of moderate Islamic organizations

Moderate Islamic youth organizations should be encouraged to spread values of tolerance to students.

About PPIM UIN Jakarta

The Center for the Study of Islam and Society (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat, PPIM) is an autonomous research institution situated in the UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. Currently, PPIM is a university-based strategic studies institution in Indonesia experienced in religious studies and social issues with an extensive list of publications and a wide-reaching network, whether local or international.

About the National Survey on Religiosity at Schools and Universities in Indonesia

PPIM UIN has conducted a research titled “Religiosity at 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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