

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

Policy Brief Series

Issue 6 | Vol. 1 | 2018

This Policy Brief series is published as part of the 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 touches on the issues of tolerance, diversity, and non-violence among youth.

Indonesian Young Muslims: A Portrait of Diversity

Key Findings

1. Indonesian young muslims generally have moderate attitude and behavior. Until recently, inclination towards conservatism is found to grow more strongly. This has, in itself, become a particular challenge as intolerant attitudes and behavior are emerging, along with a growing support towards radicalism and extremism among young muslims.
2. Such conservatism tendency applies to the whole range of spectrum of ideology of Muslim youth organizations, from intra-school and intra-university organizations such as OSIS and BEM, faith-based intra-school and intra-university organizations such as ROHIS and LDK, faith-based youth extra-organizations such as HMI, IMM, PMI, and KAMMI, to nationalist organizations such as GMNI, Pemuda Pancasila, Pemuda Pancamarga and KNPI, whom have all showed such tendency.
3. The breadth and complexity of the various problems faced by young Muslims, including the learning processes and experiences of diversity that are influenced by socio-political context, lead them to a conservative tendency in religious life, especially among those who are still studying in school and early years of college.
4. The future direction and style of diversity among young Muslims will be determined by how the state, especially government and other stakeholders, is able to manage and guide them to the values of nationalism, nonviolence, and respect to differences.

Background

In the past two decades, religious discourse that leads to violent extremism and radicalism in Indonesia had spread rapidly. Educational and religious institutions are also infiltrated by radical groups. Young people in this regard are also vulnerable to extremism and radicalism.

A great sense of curiosity and the growing number of alternative channels of access to information have enabled young Muslims to receive a wide variety of religious knowledge, not only from their families and formal educational institutions. Because of technological advancement, it is also easier for them to access lectures from digital-friendly *ustads* (religious clerics). In addition, youth organizations also become

an alternative channel in providing religious knowledge. The rapid flow of information and references on religious knowledge from these new channels, if not balanced by a sense of criticalness, can be a factor that triggers a conservative and radical tendency.

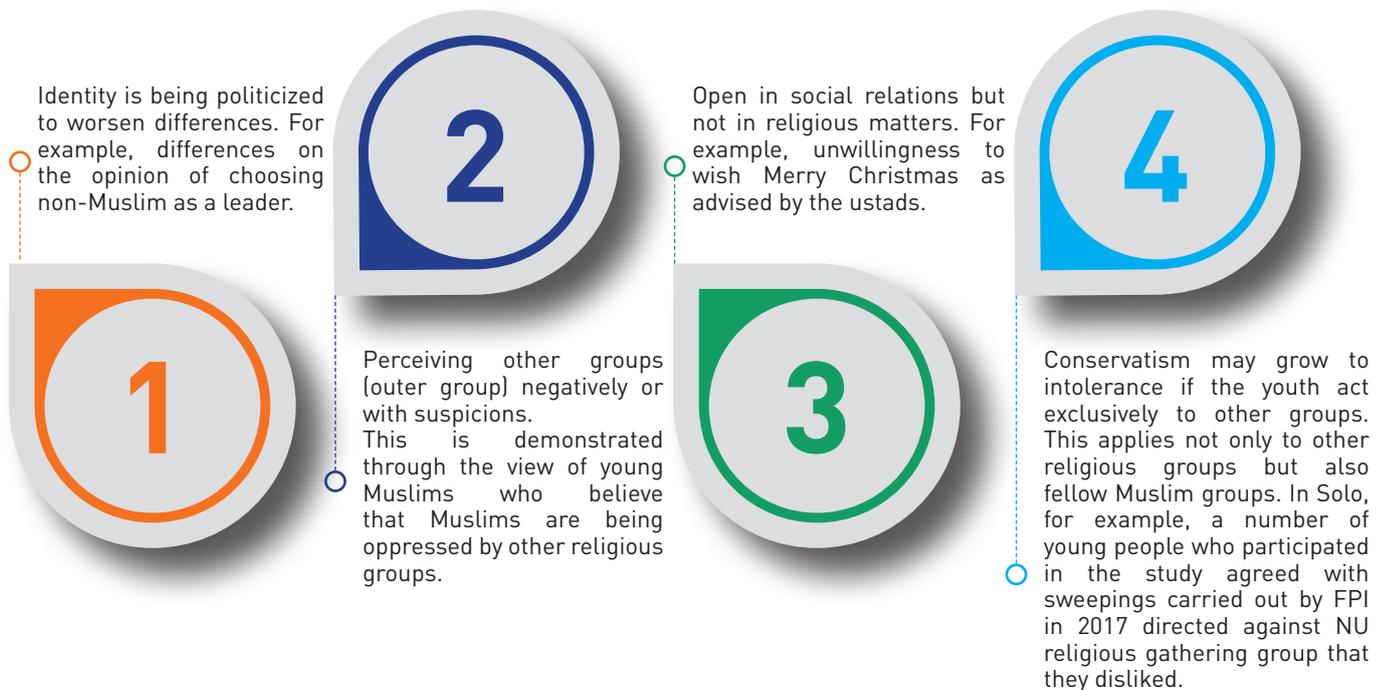
Youth Radicalism and Conservatism Potentials

When introduced to radical, extreme, and intolerant ideas, young people experience a conflict of identity pertaining to their religious views and attitudes. This means that they have the inclination to more than one school of thought. Here is an example of a cross-identity of young Muslims:

One of the example is a young muslim in Yogyakarta who is active in two NU organizations, namely IPNU and PMII. S/he feels that s/he was raised in two traditions; Muhammadiyah and NU. For her/him, "NU and Muhammadiyah are the same, only the area of movement is different." S/he went to Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, a university with very good accreditation. In Muhammadiyah campus, s/he learned a lot about Muhammadiyah. While studying, s/he lives in Pondok Pesantren Krapyak, a NU-based boarding facility. S/he claims that s/he made a lot of friends and have a lot of interaction with moderate Muslim figures. S/he claims to be a supporter of the ideas and the struggle of Habib Rizieq Shihab, despite her disagreement with his model of actions. Other than admiring Habib Rizieq, s/he also admires Aa Gym, Gus Dur, and Gus Mus (CSRC, 2018).

What Is Conservatism and How Does It Appear?

The followings are the characteristics of conservatism as identified from young muslim groups (CSRC, 2018):



The origin of conservatism tendency among young Muslim can be traced back to, among others, their educational institutions. Here are the findings on the symptoms of the emergence of conservatism tendency:

1 Nonfaith-based private schools are more susceptible to conservatism compared to faith-based private-schools. This is because the Islamic schools under organizations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Tawallib, and Matlaul Anwar would definitely follow the views of ideology of their parent organization. Whereas the situation in nonfaith-based schools would depend on how the schools select/screen their teachers.

2

Faith-based organizations in universities have more intense dynamics compared to schools as there is no stringent control from the faculty members, the campus management, and the family. The students' critical ability would be the only filter for them to screen the conservative and radical ideas of the organization.

3 The inclination of university student activists towards conservatism and radicalism is rather determined by the parent organization, such as Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI), Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII), Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia (KAMMI), Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM), and Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia (GMNI).

3

Getting to Know Youth Extra Organizations

In responding to the issues of tolerance and diversity, there are two types of views among youth extra organizations (CSRC, 2018):

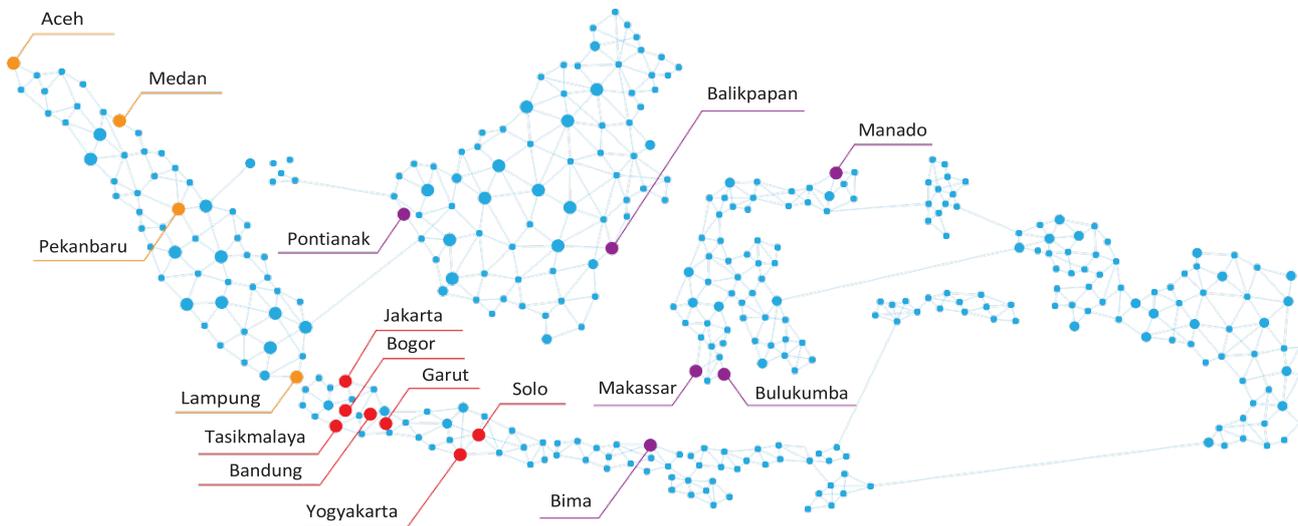
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The view that emphasizes on communal tolerance. Communal tolerance holds the view that the principles in Quran and al-Hadist must be understood literally without considering the context behind the origin of a verse or a hadith. This view is mostly supported by youth propagation activists such as ROHIS, Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK), and other groups of dakwah (propagation/proselytization) outside schools and universities.

The view that emphasizes civic tolerance. Civic tolerance is a view based on the values of democracy intended to create the concept of open and contextual Islam. This view is mostly supported by activists of more established Islamic movement organizations such as Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI), Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII), Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM), and other progressive organizations from outside university. Civic tolerance is also supported by nationalist youth organizations such as Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia (GMNI), Pemuda Pancasila (PP), and Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia (KNPI). Pemuda Pancasila (PP), and Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia (KNPI).

2

The Spectrum of Islamic Ideology among Indonesian Youth



Variations of Islamic Ideology among Young Indonesians (CSRC, 2018)

SUMATERA

- Youth movement varies a lot, some become observers of religious issues while others do not.
- There are ideas of politicized intolerance, for example that non-Muslim leaders should not be elected as there are potentials that they would intimidate Muslim in the future.
- Agree with Pancasila ideology, yet fighting for Islamic state, *khilafah* (caliphate), and the enforcement of Islamic laws.

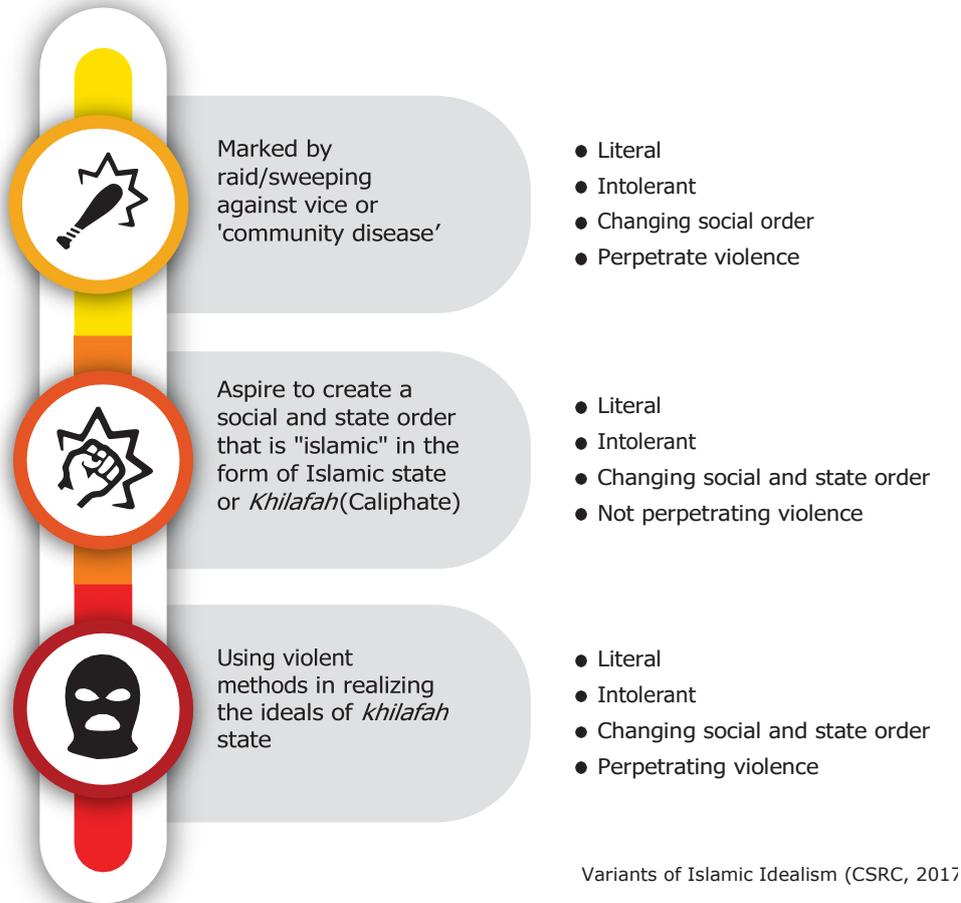
JAWA

- Rejections of non-Muslim leaders.
- Vocal about the ideas that view Muslims being politically and socially oppressed
- Family's culture and social basis affect the young persons' religious ideology, but friends have stronger influence.

KALIMANTAN, SULAWESI, NTB

- There are contestations between national and transnational Islam that capture the attention of the young Muslims.
- Islamic activism movement in Manado, North Sulawesi, is much less quieter compared to other regions.
- There are youth movements that tend to lead to extremist movements but they are far from public outreach in South Sulawesi and NTB.

The symptoms of conservatism among youth are marked by three types of activities as follows:



The Importance of Strengthening Dialogue



Illustration 1
A young person developing a literal tradition



Illustration 2 A young person developing a dialogical tradition

Young persons who adopt literal views would tend to rely only on religious knowledge they obtained from their mentors and avoid dialogues. This literal view puts forward a one-way search only from primary and secondary sources without engaging in dialogues or transfer of knowledge.

Recommendation

It is important for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education to:

- 1** Curb the influence of conservative, hard-line, and radical Islamic movement and activism in formal educational institutions through reading materials and the role of teachers and lecturers without being caught up in counter-productive policies, such as ban, freezing, and so on.
- 2** Increase the frequencies and expand the scope of encounters among young Muslim from various background, especially those from different ethnicity and race. For example, to organize camps attended by people from different faiths and ethnicity, and so on. This kind of meetings would enable young Muslim to interact with other groups in a more respectful and open manner.
- 3** Introduce the discourse of civic values for conservative groups such as ROHIS and LDK through formal curriculum in schools and universities.

It is important for the internal decision makers in schools and universities to:

- 1** Aware of the ROHIS and LDK programs such as liqa and other programs, as not allow such program runs without intervention from the authority at schools and universities concerning the civic values discourse.

It is important for the moderate Islamic organizations to:

- 1** Expose and introduce different interpretations in Islam to the conservative groups, by using a more popular methods.
- 2** Support moderate youth groups to participate more actively in broader areas of Islamic propagation, such as ROHIS and LDK.

About the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture

The Center for the Study of Religion and Culture (CRSC) is a research and development institute of Islamic studies in UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. CSRC focuses on developing an Islamic perspective rooted in Islamic tradition, modernity, and being true-Indonesian, as well as on actualizing the Islamic teachings, values, and ethics in the life of Muslim communities positively, so that they can increase their roles constructively in their socio-cultural life.

CSRC programs consist of: The Study of Islamic Philanthropy for Social Justice; Intercultural Dialogue, Religion (Pluralism), and Democracy; Study on Peace and Conflict Resolution; Religion and Human Rights.

About “Research on Muslim Youths: Attitudes and Behaviors on Violence and Extremism”

CSRC UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta with the support of PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) develops the Research on Muslim Youths: Attitudes and Behaviors on Violence and Extremism. The program was carried out between August 2017 – January 2018.

In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used as research instrument, leading to the development of both the National and Local (by region) Research Reports.



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