

# Policy Brief Series

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Policy Brief series ini dibuat sebagai bagian dari proyek CONVEY Indonesia yang diselenggarakan oleh PPIM UIN Jakarta dan UNDP Indonesia, berkolaborasi langsung dengan lembaga riset.

CONVEY Indonesia dimaksudkan untuk membangun perdamaian di Indonesia dan mencegah ekstremisme bernuansa kekerasan dan radikalisme melalui serangkaian riset-survei, advokasi kebijakan, dan interaksi publik yang berbasis pada potensi Pendidikan agama. Proyek CONVEY Indonesia menyentuh isu-isu toleransi, kebhinnekaan, dan nir-kekerasan di kalangan generasi muda.

## SEEDING HOPE, HARVESTING FAITH: MAINSTREAMING MODERATE RELIGIOSITY AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### A. INTRODUCTION

The challenges of trans-national Islam and religious extremism has influenced many aspects of Indonesian life. Various studies have been conducted to explore the extent to which the communities being influenced by Islamism. In the educational sector, a research conducted by PPIM (2018) revealed that teachers at almost all levels, from Kindergarten to Secondary, were exposed to intolerance and radicalism. In addition, another investigation by CISForm (2019) at 19 Islamic Higher Education Institutions affirmed that the level of Islamism among university students studying Islamic education was significantly high.

The above data leads the Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation (CISForm) Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga to assume that the influence of Islamism has penetrated at the level of early childhood education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini/ PAUD), especially Kindergarten (Taman Kanak-kanak/TK and Raudhatul Athfal/RA). It is for that reason that we have conducted a survey on the religious perceptions and learning process at TK/RA in three cities, namely: Yogyakarta (Kotamadya Yogyakarta, Sleman and Bantul), greater Solo areas or Solo Raya (Kotamadya, Surakarta, Sukoharjo, Karanganyar, and Boyolali), and Salatiga (all sub districts in Salatiga city and some other districts of Semarang). This was followed by a module writing and a training on capacity building for TK/RA teachers as an attempt at reducing their levels of extremism and radicalism. The online survey was conducted between 15 to 31 December 2020. It was based on Bassam Tibi's (2012)

theory of Islamism, which outlined six criteria, namely: 1) Islamic purification, 2) formalization of Islamic Shari'a, 3) anti-democracy, 4) anti-other religion, 5) anti-Western and 6) application of violence. Not least importance, we have added some questions related to gender sensitivity as a cross-cutting theme.

Out of some 3,000 PAUD female teachers whom we have randomly contacted from the three cities, 631 of them agreed to participate in online survey: 218 from Yogyakarta, 262 from Solo Raya, and 151 from Salatiga. These early childhood education institutions are mainly (615) private, with a very few (16) of them being public. The private institutions are affiliated with various Islamic organizations including Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah/'Aisyiyah, Al-Irsyad, Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an, as well as Tarbawi, Salafy, and non-religious communities.

## B. PAUD TEACHERS AND ISLAMISM

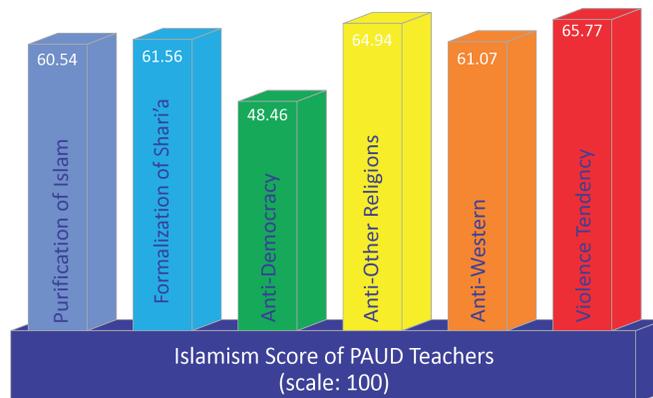


Figure 1. The Islamism Score of PAUD Teachers

Based on the above-mentioned Bassam Tibi's six criteria, our survey reveals that their levels of Islamic purification and formalization of Islamic Shari'a are relatively moderate. However, in certain aspects, they are quite high. For example, 25,99% of them have a reservation to open a conventional bank account due to the issue of interest (*riba'*). This could probably be linked to the anti-*riba'* and ex-bank movements that are quite popular in the recent years in Indonesia. In addition, 58,16% of them endorse a long style head cover for children. Furthermore, on the aspect of anti-democracy, the survey reveals that their level of anti-nationalism is quite high as shown by the following responses: (1) Pancasila is not compatible with Islam (6,66%), (2) the government is *thoghut* and therefore not to be obeyed (5,55%), (3) flag-raising ceremony would

damage our faith (5,07%), and (4) every Muslim is responsible to ensure that the khilafah system is adopted because others are perceived as kafir (un-Islamic) (19,33%). In terms of their relationships with the religious other, the following survey data shows their level of Islamism: even though the percentage of the teachers who teach students to not interact with non-Muslims is small (7,61%), there are 56,1% who adhere to the view that conveying greetings to non-Muslims on their holy days means affirming their belief. In addition, there are 62,7% who forbid their students to convey holy days greetings to non-Muslims.

The teacher's perceptions on the West/foreign display a significant level of Islamism. There are 36,13% who believe that all Western countries are against Islam. In addition, 32,33% who suggest to boycott Western products, and 49,76% who argue that Chinese immigrants to Indonesia might incite the revival of communism and Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Our survey also affirms a high level of perception on the use of violence. There are 77,34% who state that they support Islamic mass organizations to raid against places deemed as immoral, and 11,41% who agree that equipping children with guns during the PAUD parade could enhance their enthusiasm for jihad.

In line with other findings, our survey reveals that on the one hand the teachers are highly gender sensitive because 91.6% of them state that women should have the same opportunity as that of men to become leaders. However, on the other hand, 33,12% of them argue that when they have male and female students in a class, the leader should be a male student. (See Table 5). This is an important finding because where gender equity and gender justice is not present, the values of tolerance would not develop.

### C. RELIGIOUS LEARNING AND NATIONALISM

There are differences in curriculum between general Kindergarten under the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) and Islamic-based Kindergarten under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). In the general Kindergarten, Islamic education is placed under the subject of Islamic Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI). Whereas Islamic-based Kindergarten offers more subjects related to Islam and therefore its curriculum is more similar to RA, with an emphasis to the integration of science and religion.

These differences are reflected in the religious milieu of the schools. In the general Kindergarten religious subjects are delivered within the

frame of nationalism, especially when there are non-Muslim students in the class. It is for this reason that religious tolerance within such school develops quite well. The celebration of religious holy days, for example, become the medium to introduce different religions. However, there is an increasing emphasis on PAI at the general Kindergarten based on demands from the parents. There is an increasing trend for parents to send their children to Islamic-based Kindergarten due to the belief that the children will have a better knowledge and practices of Islamic teachings, in addition to being smart. For this reason, in some general Kindergarten PAI is given a greater portion, in addition to the wearing of Muslim dress and memorizing Qur'anic verses at school. This has led to the demand of PAI teachers with related backgrounds. In reality, however, some non-specialist PAI teachers are forced to teach the subject due to the lack of such teachers at the schools.

| Indicators of Anti-Other-Religions Behavior   | Agree  | Disagree |
|---|--------|----------|
| Teaching kindergarten students not to make friends of different religions                           | 7,61%  | 92,39%   |
| Congratulating the feast of the followers of other religions is the same as agreeing to their faith | 56,10% | 43,90%   |
| Prohibiting students congratulate feast to another religion (eg Merry Christmas)                    | 62,76% | 37,24%   |

Figure 2. Indicators of Islamisme on the Relations with other Religions

In Raudhatul Athfal, Islamic subjects are central. Whereas in Islamic-based Kindergarten, especially TK Islam Terpadu (Islamic Integrated Kindergarten), the curriculum integrates science and Islamic teachings, even though Islamic teaching materials and approaches are also inserted within secular subjects. The teaching on nationalism at Islamic-based Kindergarten and RA is conducted through various means, including: (1) Introducing Pancasila and memorizing it as well as conducting flag-raising ceremony; (2) Introducing Pancasila, but not memorizing it, and conducting flag-raising ceremony, with or without honoring the flag; (3) Do not introduce Pancasila but Islamic values instead, arguing that Islamic values are in line with Pancasila. Quite often they do not conduct flag-raising ceremony.

In regards to the curriculum, the majority (99,21%) of PAUD teachers have learned and claimed to understand the government curriculum.

However, 7,77% believe that the teaching and learning process at TK/RA should not follow the government curriculum. In addition, 11,25% of them argue that the government curriculum is insufficient to be implemented as guidance for religious education at TK/RA, and 14,42% state that the reference on tolerance in the curriculum is not in line with Islamic belief.

From our survey we also found that teacher's personal views significantly influence their teaching method and the content of teaching (See Table 7). This means that student's religious understanding is greatly influenced by their teachers. This is supported by the number of teachers who shared their stories during FGD and interviews on how students reminded their parents at home on the obligation to wear Muslim dress as prescribed by their school teachers. This point reminds us on the importance on giving a progressive understanding of Islam to the teachers, especially in relation to moderate religiosity and religious tolerance.

Based on the survey findings and FGD for the teachers, we compose a training module, which has received some feedbacks from various stakeholders, including Sub Directorate of PAUD, Directorate of PAI Kemenag, Directorate of GTK PAUD Kemendikbud, Local education authorities (Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten/Kota), Provincial and District Offices of Kemenag (within which our research is conducted), Associations of TK and RA teachers (IGABA, IGRA, IGTKI), Communication Forum of PAI teachers at TK (national, province, and districts levels), as well as Academics (Study programs of PIAUD at IAIN/UIIN). The module consists of seven important values, namely: (1) Returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah; (2) Creating religious atmosphere at school; (3) Seeding the kernel of Indonesian nation; (4) Islam as the religion of mercy; (5) Embracing the other; (6) Reviving religious values at early childhood education. After the module was completed, we try it out on a training for female teachers of TK/RA on capacity building and implementation of religious values, which was held on 12 and 13 February 2021 at the three cities mentioned above. The training involved 100 female teachers who have previously participated at our survey and FGD. The training, which applied andragogical method, was enthusiastically welcome by the participants.

During the training we conducted a pre-test and a post-test. Both tests affirmed that the training was significantly effective in enriching the perspective of the participants toward a more inclusive and moderate understanding of Islam. A significant positive change was witnessed on their views on religion and nationalism.

## C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Our survey shows that that teacher's religious and nationalistic views significantly influence their teaching method and the content of teaching. For this reason, there needs to be trainings and workshops aiming at broadening their religious perspective and nationalism. When needed, it could be a compulsory training activity attended by PAUD teachers, including PAI teachers and others who teach general subjects because at Islamic-based Kindergarten, general subjects are also integrated with Islamic teachings.
- 2) Trainings on moderate religiosity for TK/RA teachers using andragogical method, which at the same time strengthening wasathiyah Islam and nationalism stated in point 1 above could be conducted by involving moderate Islamic mass organizations and Islamic higher educational institutions (STAIN, IAIN, UIN). While acknowledging that trainings are not the sole means in enhancing moderate religiosity, we argue that with the right training materials these have been proven to be effective.
- 3) There needs to be an intensive socialization of the government curriculum for TK/RA using acceptable approaches, because as stated above our data has shown that even though the majority (99,21%) of PAUD teachers have learned the government curriculum, there are 7,77% of them who believe that the teaching and learning process at TK/RA should not follow the government curriculum, that the government curriculum is insufficient to be implemented as guidance for religious education at TK/RA (11,25%), and that the reference on tolerance in the curriculum is not in line with Islamic belief (14,42%). In addition to intensive dissemination and trainings through Kemendikbud and Kemenag, there needs to be a curriculum implementation that could be monitored and an official mechanism which could be connected to school accreditation system as well as teacher's certification process.
- 4) There needs to be a specific regulation issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which underlines the embedding of nationalist values at PAUD. This could at least be done through revising the existing Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic Indonesia, Number 146/2014 about "Curriculum 2013 for Early Childhood Education/PAUD," article 5, verse 1 by inserting "nationalist values" within the PAUD curriculum. Alternatively, this could also be conducted through the revision of the existing Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic

Indonesia, Number 18/2018 on “Provision of services for PAUD,” article 11 by inserting control over curriculum on nationalism as part of the national and local government responsibilities.

- 5) In relations to nationalism and Pancasila, the government needs to be more explicitly obliging PAUD students of an introduction of Pancasila, memorizing its principles, values, and conducting flag-raising ceremonies for once a week minimum, in addition to memorizing songs that could enhance nationalism.
- 6) The inclusion of Sirah Nabawiyah (The history of the Prophet) and the history of Islam in Indonesia into curriculum in order to learn from the prophet's and the National heroes' good deeds. This should give an underline on the narratives which reflect social ethics, humanity, harmony, cooperation, tolerance, and not on the narration of wars.
- 7) Even though in general the teachers' gender sensitivity seems to be quite high, quite often that understanding was influenced by practical reasons. Their view that there is no need to separate boys and girls in class, for example, was often caused by the insufficiency of the total number of the new intake students. However, to build a strong perspective on gender equity and gender justice, which will very much influence their concept of tolerance, there needs to be comprehensive trainings on gender equity and justice that are based on Islamic foundation texts, the Qur'an and Sunnah. This could be conducted in collaborations with various centers for gender and children rights at Islamic higher education institutions.
- 8) Our research also finds that teachers often do not have sufficient teaching materials on inclusive interpretations of religion, and materials on nationalism that are attractive for PAUD students. Therefore, there needs to be teaching materials, including videos, and methods of teachings that could be easily disseminated through social media.
- 9) Some local education authorities (Dinas Pendidikan) could require PAUD teachers and students, including Islamic-based Kindergarten to wear traditional dresses on certain days in the week. This could be duplicated in RA under Kemenag and be implemented nationally. Schools could be a room to accommodate this request by, for example, combining the traditional dress with head covers to comply with the school's uniform.



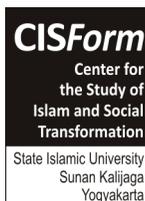
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