Preventing Radicalism by Family and Civil Society Organizations in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of women’s organizations in preventing family-based radicalism. The research was conducted on two civil society women activist groups, namely Fatayat NU and Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK), who had concerns about empowering women through strengthening family resilience. Qualitative data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. The results showed that the role of these activists in preventing radicalism can be categorized into two categories. Prevention of radicalism for families who have not been exposed to radicalism is done by strengthening family resilience through economic, health, education, socio-religious activities, and an increased understanding of radicalism, i.e. by detecting and avoiding radical ideologies. For high-risk families or those who have been exposed to radicalism, these civil society organizations provide intensive assistance through social based strengthening and trauma healing. Assistance to children of former terrorists is carried out by these organizations to ensure the fulfilment of children’s rights as guaranteed by law. These organizations also collaborate with the government and NGOs to increase effectiveness in preventing family-based radicalism. The paper concludes that the role of women, families and communities is strategic in creating a harmonious family atmosphere and preventing family members from being exposed to radicalism.

Keywords: Civil society organization, family, ideology, radicalism

INTRODUCTION

There are at least ten (10) terms used by scholars to refer to ideological phenomena...
and expressions of ideology, flow or group that seek to change social, cultural and political order through physical as well as cultural-symbolic violence. The diversity of the term is due to its complexity when used to designate the ideology and expression of a particular group. The terms in question: militant Islam (Schward, 1999), anti-liberal Islam (Hefner, 2001), scriptural Islam (Liddle, 1999), Islamic revivalism (Esposito, 1992), political Islam or Islamic activism (Roy, 1998), Islamic fundamentalism (Al-Jabiri, 1996), and radicalism (Kallen, 1972), connote violent extremism carried out against other groups both physically and symbolically, at both the discourse level and the religious ideology, as well as the discursive expression of violence.

Radicalism is a religious social phenomenon that cannot be explained by a monolithic perspective. Simply put, the concept of radicalism in this paper means the political orientation of those with strong ideological beliefs who strive to replace the existing systems and values (Jamhari & Jahroni, 2004). According to Kallen (1972), the phenomenon of radicalisation has three characteristics: 1) as a response in the form of evaluation, rejection or opposition to ongoing conditions, whether of assumptions, values or even religious or state institutions; 2) as an attempt to replace the existing order with another systematized and constructed order through one’s own world view; and 3) as a strong belief in the ideological truths one offers. A potential emotional stance may emerge from radicalism often leading to violence and terrorism (Zada, 2002).

The bombing incidents in Surabaya in May 2018, which involved families, offer interesting phenomena to be investigated. The recruitment of family members in the practice of radicalism and terrorism is quite rampant and effective. The strong bond of love among family members expedites their recruitment into radicalism and terrorism, without the need to consider political, ideological, social or other aspects. Strong inner bonds between family members easily allow family patriarch to spread radical ideologies to his wife and children (“Ada ikatan”, 2018). Thus, the spread of radical teachings infiltrate easily into various networks and layers of society even in the most unexpected places and families. The suicide bombings that involved three families shocked us all for several reasons: 1) the assumption that the world of terrorism is a male dominated one; 2) that the family has lost its protective function over its members because the head of such a household invites all his/her family members to commit suicide bombings; and 3) a mother who is deemed to provide a sense of security, protection and comfort for her children is involved in these bombings.

There are two approaches to understand the symptoms of radicalism, namely objectivism and subjectivism (Jainuri, 2003). From an objectivist perspective, radicalism arises because religious texts give legitimacy to and advocate such actions. Religious texts teach that Islam calls for jihad against the Gentiles. Jihad in the radical sense means to declare war against those who fight against Islam and
the Muslims. The Bali bombings (Samudra, 2004) are seen from the perspective of *jihad* or retaliation for the treatment of Muslims by the West (especially America and its allies). Therefore, combating civilian colonizers is also considered as a just and fair act (Samudra, 2004). The subjectivist perspective places the individual as an active subject who defines his or her life with the outside world, hence the symptoms of radicalism are not only understood to be the teaching of religious texts, but also an observation of how the ‘external world’ becomes an entity that influences a person to internalize his/her religious teachings. Thus, radicalism can also be caused by social, economic, and political factors.

The individual subjective actions of the radical Islamist activists may be concrete actions directed against those who are constructed as enemies, as well as in the form of insightful and very subjective actions, in the form of knowledge, understanding, and perception of the enemies (Maliki, 2003). Among the definitions of the enemy for radical groups, is one based on a literal understanding of the command of fighting infidels, as mentioned in the following verses of the *Qur’an* (9: 5, 29 and 25: 52), and the *hadith* of the Prophet who ordered the fight against humans so they believe in Allah and His Messenger (*hadith* narrated by Bukhari, 2578-2579) (Samudra, 2004; Shobirin, 2016). The misinterpretation of these two verses and the Prophet’s *hadith* by radical groups convinces them that infidels must be fought and must convert to Islam. The infidels are given only two choices – either converting to Islam or die. Radicalists argue that according to a *Qur’anic* verse (9: 5) the killing of infidels by a Muslim is justified. They conclude that this verse is called the verse of the sword (*ayat al-saif*), and all verses that are contrary to this verse are to be removed (*mansukh*) (Shobirin, 2016).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Some important research on whether families have an influence on radicalisation and/or prevention of radicalism has been carried out. In their study, Davies et al. (2015) found that on the one hand family had the potential to influence its members to be radical, and on the other hand, was able to prevent and/or release them from radicalism. In this context, even families are seen as key players in helping radicals to abandon ideology and violent behaviour. In the UK, a study, focused on advocacy of an intervention scheme aimed at supporting individuals identified as being at risk of exposure to violent radicalism, concludes that less harmonious families have a potential role in supporting radical ideology or behaviour. In this context, Baker (2012) stated that the second and third generation of young black people at risk of exposure to radicalism might seek identity and might be alienated from their parents and wider family circles. Therefore, radicalisation can be connected with the desire to feel part of a particular group. Wiktorowicz (2005) stated that individuals who experienced ‘cognitive gap’ in the form of psychological crises in the family might have a tendency to seek
new ways to understand and connect with the world, which allowed them to adopt radical ideology. He listed a number of crises that could trigger cognition through emotional distress, with deaths in the family being referred to as one of the recurring triggers. This research is strengthened by the findings of Mazer (2010) who explored the radicalisation of North African immigrants in the UK. Their repression and oppression further created prolonged suffering that led to chronic anxiety over their fate. Prolonged trauma and anxiety about the fate of one’s family (in addition to other factors) can be the basis for the process of radicalisation. Along with psychological factors, socialization can also be a key mechanism in which families can be seen as part of institutions and processes that support radicalisation. This may happen when the family members themselves have radical views, which influence their children (van San et al., 2013). According to research by Bigo et al. (as cited in Davies et al., 2015), family and friendship networks can play an important role in recruiting young people to engage in radicalism, which in some cases can lead to terrorism.

The direct and indirect influence of disharmonious families on their children predisposes them towards becoming radicalised. In a large collection of post 11/9 literature on terrorism and extremism, families are seen to play a psychological role in the radicalisation of identity and trauma, and deradicalisation in relation to support and persuasion. According to Baker (2012), second and third generation young blacks are at risk of exposure to radicalisation due to identity search, alienation from parents and wider family circle. Gravitating toward radicalisation can be connected with the desire to feel part of a group that gives identity and recognizes the identity of the youth. Baker’s findings are reinforced by data from some violent actors who experienced unstable family structures, thus supporting the process of radicalisation. Baker (2011) cited the case of Zacarias Moussaoui, one of the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack who went to trial in March 2006. Baker highlighted the jury’s decision that he should not be given the death penalty because he had had an unstable childhood, with little emotional and financial support from a temperamental father- family elements that later exposed Moussaoui to radicalisation and involved him in acts of terrorism. Moussaoui had never been exposed to his cultural heritage nor had religious teachings at home. In such conditions, as a young man he was exposed to radicalism and influenced by extremist rhetoric at his most vulnerable stage (Baker, 2011).

The study conducted by Wali (2013) on Hizbut Tahrir (HT) found that the emergence of radicalism in the family was not solely the monopoly of a disharmonious family. Conversely, harmonious families can also produce radical children. The family was seen as one of the factors in understanding why British Muslim youths joined this religious-political movement. The study described the family class structure that influenced their children to join HT.
Surprisingly, these children tend to come from a middle-class backgrounds, and from stable and loving families.

Azwar (2018) reported that there was resistance to radicalism between tarekat and local culture in West Sumatra. The strong blend of tarekat teachings within Minangkabau culture is not conducive to the emergence of radical ideology or conflicts because the locals, in their wisdom, cultivate and accentuate inclusivity. Research conducted by Sumbulah (2017) showed that deradicalisation for Indonesian students could be done through curricula and programmes designed to build students’ awareness about the dangers of radicalism and how to avoid radical ideologies. The study conducted by Sumpter (2017) detailed the functions of the leading sector of deradicalisation in Indonesia, Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT) which worked closely with civil society organizations and NGOs. The top down approach chosen by the BNPT in the deradicalisation process proved less successful, because cooperation with civil society organizations and NGOs could not be consolidated and coordinated comprehensively. Deradicalisation in this country also lacks an active and participatory involvement of women’s organizations that are concerned with preventing family-based radicalism.

Studies have been done to show how family members directly or indirectly influence their children or family by radicalizing their ideology. But hardly has any research been done on how these ideologies can be prevented at family institutional level to stop these suicide bombings and terrorism. The family unit has to be resilient enough to prevent these radical ideologies from spreading within the family.

METHOD

This qualitative research has been carried out to track the efforts of activists in the civil society women’s organizations, namely Fatayat NU and PKK. Fatayat NU is one of the largest women’s organizations in Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama being the largest mainstream organization in Indonesia that preaches moderation and tolerance. Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) is a community organization that empowers women to actively participate in Indonesia’s development, through 10 basic programmes designed to strengthen family resilience. Research focuses on understanding activists’ efforts to prevent radicalism through strengthening family resilience, and helping families at high risk of being exposed to radicalism. This empirical research data was collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentation. Data were analysed through the evaluative criteria recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, conclusions, and verification. The consistency of findings and efforts to avoid research bias was done by member check and triangulation.
DISCUSSION

Preventing Radicalism through Strengthening Family Resilience

This study found that through the various PKK activities carried out at the grassroots level, namely the neighbourhood association or Rukun Tetangga (RT/RW), they had been able to identify how radical groups targeted rural and urban families. In order to curb this growing unhealthy trend, the PKK organised various courses, among others, parenting programmes under Childhood Family Development/Bina Keluarga Balita (BKB), Youth Family Development/Bina Keluarga Remaja (BKR), Early Childhood Education Post (Pos PAUD), Integrated Service Post (Posyandu), religious lectures, weekly or monthly regular meetings, and programmes specifically for women, such as hijab tutorials, facial makeup, and studied tips on how to be a *shalihah* wife. Finally, these meetings also addressed issues of polygamy and the rewards of paradise for women, family planning (KB), rules of law and legislation pertaining to secularism and liberalism, such as the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (UU-PKDRT), Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah islamiyah*), and international issues such as the Rohingya crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflicts. All these efforts were undertaken to counter and prevent the spread of family based radicalisation.

PKK socializes and disseminates the dangers of radicalism that now threaten children, youth and women, through various sustainable programmes and activities. Some of these programmes were conducted by Working Group I (Pokja I) and Working Group II (Pokja II). Pokja I strengthens the ideology and practice of Pancasila through activities such as religious lectures, seminars and workshops targeting women, youth and school going children. Pokja II has made efforts to teach tolerance values and multiculturalism to women, through training programmes pertaining to parenting and Early Childhood Education. The introduction and induction of multiculturalism in Early Childhood Education at PAUD Post is done through the provision of knowledge and experience, attitudes, customs, traditions and festivals of other ethnicities, their religion and places of worship, and the introduction of a national identity and local wisdom. In addition, the introduction of values of tolerance and multiculturalism in early childhood by BKB and Post PAUD cadres is done by providing simple basic knowledge and skills commensurate with the level of early childhood development.

Women are an important group for developing tolerance and peace. Women have been involved in conflict reconciliation efforts even before the inception of the republic. Apart from their role as mothers, women activists were also actively involved with men in fighting for the independence of the Republic of Indonesia (Jamhari, 2013). Because women are so important in building family resilience, several programmes and activities have been designed for women by the civil society women’s organizations like *Fatayat NU* and PKK.

The process of deradicalisation in Indonesia is done by targeting individual
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actors, and it involves family and community members to change radical thinking. However, most of these approaches have not included women in their counter-terrorism efforts because they are least concerned about the important role of women in the family unit, especially in shaping the character of children from an early age, so that they grow into a generation of mindful and responsible adults. The situation in vulnerable and disharmonious families can influence the radicalisation of children, but family support can also play a role in deradicalisation (Sikkens et al., 2017). Therefore strengthening family resilience can prevent the entry of radical ideology into the family.

Women also offer multiple perspectives for problem solving. Therefore, women’s role in effecting counter terrorism should be enhanced, especially in deradicalisation projects. The following national strategies are needed to engage women in counter terrorism: 1) consolidating the ideas and efforts of women’s organizations and movements that have been involved in counter-terrorism issues; 2) involving community-based women, as counter-terrorism agents by creating strategies for community development programmes; and 3) creating early detection and warning systems among various communities and groups (organizations) of women by raising their awareness through media and other campaigns (Wulan, 2015).

Active family involvement in preventing radicalism in children or members of their families is important for several reasons: first, family plays the most important role; therefore, the family will be able to detect potential radicalisation in a child. Second, families are first and foremost, learning environments in which children interact; meaning that this is where an educational process begins. So in the family, parents play an important role as educators to their children. Third, the family is the most important environment because the child spends most of his/her time with the family. So the primary education of children starts with the family. Fourth, in the family, the parents are instrumental in the formation of good personalities of their children. They are the first to provide a good and solid foundation of values and norms that go towards honing and moulding a holistic child. Fifth, the family protects and shields children from radical ideologies, as well as other negative environments. This can be done through democratic parenting, where children are given the freedom to express their ideas and opinions. The role of parents can be stimulating or can act as a deterrent to radicalism in the family, given its key position in moulding their children from an early age.

Children’s education should not be solely left to the school without parental supervision. By actively focusing on their school activities, parents can surely prevent the onset of radicalism early on. By providing knowledge and understanding, parents can instil an ideology of nationalism in the family, which can deter the growth of radicalism. This is important because these Islamic radicals only believe in an Islamic
Brotherhood where the world should be governed by a *khilafah* (caliphate). Whether a child grows into a moderate, considerate, or radical and intolerant person, will be determined and influenced by the education gained from the people around him (parents/family, teachers, society and community at large). The terrorists who bequeath their radical ideologies to their children do so because they feel the need to educate, influence and mould their children to behave and think as they do. Young children do not yet have strong cognitive defense mechanisms and tend to be receptive to whatever fodder they are fed, including radical indoctrination. Therefore, breaking the chain of terrorism by releasing children from the bondage of radical ideology from their parents is extremely important.

**Advocacy for Family and Children Who Have Been Exposed to Radicalism**

Fatayat NU has a superior programme “Maslahah Family” which is intended to improve the lives of women, whether individuals, families, communities or organizations nationwide. Fatayat’s collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT) in order to prevent the development of radicalism and promote harmony is one of the organization’s major tasks. Fatayat’s increasing awareness, insight and understanding of women empowers them with adequate knowledge about the threats and dangers of radicalism in families and society (Tanggulangi radikalisme, 2017). Fatayat NU provides assistance to families who are at high risk of radicalism. High-risk families are referred to as ISIS deportation families that are scattered throughout Indonesia, especially in East Java. For those at high risk of being exposed to radicalism, *Fatayat NU* seeks to: first, ensure that children do not get additional exposure to radical ideology which is done by alienating and/or separating children from their parents. Children who are exposed to radicalism by their parents are potentially affected because they are indoctrinated with their parents’ ideologies and there are cases to prove this. Genealogy of terrorism, as seen in the case of convicted terrorist Syaiful Anam who was sentenced to 18 years in jail for the bombing of Poso in 2005, involved a child or children. Haft Saiful Rasul, who left Islamic boarding school for Syria, was reportedly killed there in 2015 after becoming an ISIS combatant. According to his father, he was determined to be martyred in Syria. Umar Jundulhaq, son of the Bali bomber, Imam Samudra who was executed in October 2007, also followed his father’s footsteps and was killed in October 2015 in Syria, after joining ISIS (Amindoni, 2017). The children of these terrorists were exposed and thus vulnerable to follow the footsteps of their fathers who would have glorified combatants as heroes. As it can be concluded, families provide a direct influence on the radicalisation that occurs in children (Sikkens et al., 2017). Therefore, to safeguard the future of children, they must be kept away from the radical influence of their parents.
Second, *Fatayat NU* also seeks to give attention to children of former ISIS combatants by deporting them to their extended families, especially their grandparents who do not profess to a radical ideology. Children born to combatants and ISIS fighters have the potential to grow and develop a likeness to their parents’ radical endeavours. To avoid the widespread radical ideology that seems to be snaring children, it would be best to separate these children from their parents.

Third, *Fatayat NU* also ensures the fulfilment of rights of children of former terrorists involved in suicide bombings in Surabaya, in accordance with applicable laws. Among attempts to break the links of radicalism, Ali Fauzi, the former terrorist and brother to one of the trio of Bali bombers, Amrozi, Ali Gufron, and Ali Imran, help ex-terrorists and their children who have been exposed to radicalism. Through the Foundation of *Lingkar Perdamaian* in Lamongan, East Java, Fauzi assists in the deradicalisation and education of around 70 former terrorists and their children. This foundation teaches that Islam is a religion that upholds tolerance, respect, and love for fellow humans. Turning radical ideologies into non-radical ones is not an easy task, but working with strategies to deradicalise these children while in their early stages of development will be easier than when they have long been exposed to acts of radicalism.

Fourth, *Fatayat NU* enhances cooperation with local governments, ministries and NGOs in preventing and handling radicalism. Among these NGOs are Civil Society against Violent Extremism (C-SAVE), whose mission is to build and develop a national network of civil society organizations to promote effective synergies and strategies in preventing radicalism and violence. The advocacy for children of former terrorists carried out by *Fatayat NU* aimed to ensure that these children received basic protection and rights. There are 14 articles on children’s rights, namely personal, civil, social, cultural and religious freedom rights (Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights). The basic rights of each child must be fulfilled and guaranteed by the state.

Families are viewed by many as a potential unit for breeding radical terrorism. Blood ties, emotional closeness and intensity of relationships are major factors that contribute to the successful planting of this ideology into the people closest to them. Therefore, the first step that must be taken is to cut the spread of terrorism-radicalism within the family. The bigger and more radical the spread, the more it would warrant serious attention from all segments of society, namely community leaders, religious leaders, the government, and the family members, especially parents. The high number of cases of young people exposed to radicalism is due to lack of family attention, so they seek an identity outside of the family and community circle. They then look for a place or community that receives and encourages them with open arms. In this context, radical groups use this ploy to attract and provide an experience...
that keeps them intrigued and cared for at the same time. As a result, children can be easily influenced by radical influences because the main attraction holds promise of an improved way of life.

Among the important steps a family can take to prevent radicalism is to maximize the educational, religious, protective and compassionate functions of its members. Parents are required to have adequate knowledge about the dangers of radicalism and the ways to prevent it, so that their families are not affected by a radical ideology. The number of cases of young people falling prey to radicalism because of lack of love and attention from their family is overwhelming. As a result of this lack, these children tend to look for new identities outside the family circle. They will look for individuals or communities that are willing to embrace their ideals and aspirations. In this context, expert radical groups maximize on the child’s vulnerability by providing experiences that make children feel valued and cared for. As a result, the child is easily influenced by radical ideologies that promise to improve lives.

Indeed, individuals and families are the main supporters of the programme on awareness of the dangers of radicalism. Individuals can observe family members, relatives, friends, or neighbours who are suspected of being influenced by radicalism. Families can report their suspicions to RT/RW groups, or local community leaders. In addition, families can also play an active role in efforts to reduce and/or prevent radicalism, given their close ties and interaction. The family must be the first to take firm action in breaking the chain of infiltration into radicalism. Fostering a good family also means fostering a good quality of life.

In preventing terrorism, the family is the closest network because it can readily observe the radical slant that exists in children. Families have special significance in terms of traditions that are distinctive and different from each other. Through this unique tradition, families can detect and prevent efforts to infiltrate radicalism. Many people believe that mothers have considerable influence on family life, especially in the lives of their children. A mother is long believed to have the unique ability to recognize any anomalies in her child’s behaviour and habits. A mother will react instinctively to certain peculiarities in her child. Looking at the afore-mentioned facts, a mother should be able to play a key role in preventing radicalism from festering in her family. Most importantly, mothers need to have sufficient knowledge and confidence in influencing and guiding their children away from radicalism.

Countering radicalism in their own backyard is one of the greatest challenges faced by parents today, hence strong cooperation and partnership between husband and wife is required. Parental cooperation in educating children on the evils of radicalisation will be more effective in countering this issue. Parents must control what is learned and absorbed by children in order to ensure that they are not exposed to radical propaganda. In short, the
harmonious relationship of parents through the principle of family partnership is the main capital in preventing family-based radicalism.

CONCLUSION

The participation of family and activists from women’s civil society organizations is key to inclusive community engagement to counter radicalism. Women as individuals and women’s organizations have a strategic role in preventing radicalism in family or community. In the family, parents educate, communicate and positively influence the attitude and behaviour of children from an early age and adolescence through adulthood. The strengthening of family resilience through economic empowerment, enhancement of national identity, and the planting of multicultural values through various activities is also a means through which civil society women’s organizations can prevent family-based radicalism. The national strategy is carried out by activists through the consolidation of ideas and implementation of programmes from central to local level, through the empowerment of women in a comprehensive and simultaneous manner. Smart campaigns through print and electronic media are optimized through anti-radicalism programmes, strengthening family structures, assisting women in preventing socio-religious or gender based violence. Women, as mothers as well as community mobilizers, have a significant role in creating a harmonious family atmosphere, which is not easily exposed to radicalism. This research finding can be used as a model and best practice methodology in preventing family-based radicalism. This study highlights that preventing radicalism cannot always be solved by a legal and security approach. Increased family resilience, intensive involvement and increased awareness of civil society organizations have great potential to prevent the development of radicalism in the family unit.

REFERENCES


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