

# Innovative Exploration: Strategies of Islamic Boarding School Leaders in Addressing Radicalism through Educational Transformation

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## Abstract:

This research aims to analyze the understanding of radicalism in Islamic boarding schools and the patterns of Islamic boarding school leaders in countering radicalism. This research uses a qualitative case study type approach. The data collection techniques are observation, documentation and interviews. Data analysis uses the Milles and Huberman model: data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusions. The research results show that 1) radicalism can be understood in the aspect of a deep understanding of religion and actions in the name of shallow religion, 2) Islamic boarding schools' efforts to ward off radicalism include instilling religious values based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, the Islamic principles of *rahmatan lil'aalamin*, and enlightenment of student by combining the concept of *ijtihad fikriyah*. They also encourage attitudes of tolerance, *tasamuh*, and love of the country. In the social sector, Islamic boarding schools interact directly with the community, holding routine activities such as weekly recitations and deliberations to resolve problems. They also practice mutual understanding and respect for differences. In culture, Islamic boarding schools teach an understanding of cultural diversity and mutual respect for differences. The implication is to strengthen the perspective of Kyai and Islamic boarding school managers towards radicalism with a deep understanding and rejection of violence in the name of religion.

**Keywords:** *Radicalism; Boarding school; Socio-Cultural*

## Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang pemahaman mengenai radikalisme di pesantren dan pola pemimpin pesantren dalam menangkal radikalisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan datanya adalah observasi, dokumentasi dan wawancara. Analisis data menggunakan model Milles and Huberman yaitu pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data dan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa; 1) radikalisme dapat dipahami pada aspek pemahaman agama yang mendalam dan tindakan mengatasnamakan agama yang dangkal, 2) Upaya pesantren dalam menangkal radikalisme meliputi penanaman nilai-nilai keagamaan berdasarkan Al-Qur'an dan As-Sunnah, prinsip Islam Rahmatan Lil'aalamin, serta pencerahan mahasantri dengan menggabungkan konsep ijtihad fikriyah. Mereka juga mendorong sikap toleransi, *tasamuh*, dan cinta tanah air. Dalam bidang sosial, pesantren berinteraksi langsung dengan masyarakat, mengadakan kegiatan rutin seperti pengajian mingguan, serta musyawarah untuk menyelesaikan masalah. Mereka juga menerapkan saling memahami dan menghargai perbedaan. Dalam bidang budaya, pesantren mengajarkan pemahaman tentang keberagaman

budaya dan saling menghormati perbedaan. Implikasinya adalah menguatkan cara pandang kyai dan pengelola pondok pesantren terhadap radikalisme dengan pemahaman mendalam dan menolak kekerasan atas nama agama.

**Kata Kunci:** *Radikalisme; Pesantren; Sosial, Budaya*

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## INTRODUCTION

It is time for Islamic boarding schools to open their eyes to see the outside world. Developments outside oneself must be known and anticipated, especially when they conflict (Hajovsky et al., 2020). This requirement necessitates a symbiotic-mutualistic cooperation pattern between Islamic boarding schools and institutions capable of contributing and creating a transformative atmosphere. This pattern of cooperation necessitates minimizing the negative assumptions attached to Islamic boarding schools: isolation, alienation, exclusion, and conservative, and tends to show the status quo (Kaya, 2021).

On the other hand, the fact is that most of the perpetrators of acts of radicalism and terrorism are in the name of it. It is unavoidable that Muslims in Indonesia are alumni of madrasah or Islamic boarding school education (Machendrawaty et al., 2022). The term radical has many meanings; it can be interpreted as fundamental, essential, foundational, reformist, and open (Guenther, 2021). Radical can also be understood as an extreme, militant, partial, and harsh attitude in fighting for something. However, considering all educational institutions of this type as sources of teachings about radicalism and terrorism is a fundamental mistake considering the very diverse characteristics and development patterns of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia (Supriadi et al., 2021; Indraswati et al., 2021). Moreover, several findings show that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia are very different from similar educational institutions in other countries. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools have a strategic position to overcome societal radicalism (Tambak, 2021).

Islamic boarding schools are the original and first educational institutions in Indonesia. The success of Islamic boarding schools in uniting Islamic teachings with the way of life of Indonesian society has established this institution as a sub-culture that provides a style for Indonesia's cultural treasures (Kutsiyah, 2020; Supriyanto et al., 2022). Among the many educational institutions that exist or have existed in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions that are considered indigenous Indonesian cultural products (Roqib, 2021). Substantially, according to A'la, Islamic boarding schools are religious institutions that cannot possibly be separated from society, especially in rural communities (Humaidi et al., 2021). In this research, we tried to find an overview of Islamic boarding school education patterns in countering religious, social, and cultural radicalism. What will be outlined in this research is a description of the author's analysis of Islamic boarding school education patterns in countering radicalism.

There are several relevant previous studies to this research, including (Rusmiati et al., 2022). The results of this service activity are a preventive step to prevent the growth of religious radicalism in Islamic boarding schools. In another

similar study (Pramita & Listyaningsih, 2022), namely through the integration of Pancasila learning into religious activities, students are allowed to deepen their understanding of patriotism and national values as a whole. Other researchers (Hannan, 2022) believe that Islamic boarding school education, with its local wisdom values, is expected to distance the Madurese people from the influence of global extremism. These local wisdom values include inclusive, universal self-religious traditions and moderation principles such as justice, balance, moderation, and tolerance, which can be a strong foundation in building resistance to radical ideology.

Based on the previous research above, this study aims at two things: first, to reveal in depth the views of kyai and Islamic boarding school managers regarding radicalism. Moreover, It describes the pattern of Islamic boarding school education in countering religious and social radicalism. Hence, the novelty of this research lies in offering comprehensive insights into radicalism and elucidating the educational approaches adopted by Islamic boarding schools in combating it, encompassing religious, social, and cultural dimensions.

## RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative approach was chosen as the research method. This approach creates a research procedure that produces descriptive data in writing and behavior that can be observed from the subjects themselves (Thompson et al., 2021). Moleong describes qualitative research as scientific research that aims to understand phenomena in a natural social context by prioritizing a process of in-depth communication interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied, as explained (Purwanto et al., 2023). A qualitative approach was chosen because it can reveal in-depth data about Islamic boarding school education patterns in countering radicalism in Jember, especially at the Dirosat Islamiyah High School (STDI) Jember, Pondok Al Qodiri Jember, and Pondok Ibnu Katsir Jember.

Meanwhile, the type of research used is a case study, which is a detailed examination of a setting, a subject, a storage location (Arifin et al., 2024), or a particular event. There are 3 data collection techniques used by researchers in this research: 1). documentation. What is documented in this research is in the form of visual documentation, audio documentation, and reference documentation related to Islamic boarding school education patterns in preventing radicalism in Jember. 2) Observation, carried out systematically and deliberately, begins with observing and recording the symptoms studied by involving oneself in the researched setting. 3). Interview or interviews. The interview informants in this research were the Islamic boarding school stakeholders in Jember, starting from Islamic boarding school caregivers, administrators, and students at the Islamic boarding school (Ananda 2021). Data analysis in this research uses the *Miles and Huberman model*, namely activities in qualitative data analysis that are carried out interactively and continue continuously until completion so that the data is saturated. Data analysis activities include *reduction*, *display*, and *conclusion/drawing/verification*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Understanding Radicalism

The depiction of radicalism as the precursor to terrorism is characterized by an inclination towards absolute change, often through revolutionary and extreme methods, including violence and other means (Kazmi, 2022). From this, several practical analyses can be discerned: 1) Radicalism as the Precursor to Terrorism: This discourse underscores radicalism as an initial phase that may evolve into terrorism. It underscores the importance of proactively addressing radicalism to avert future terrorist activities (Dresser, 2021). 2) Typology of Radical Attitudes: The delineation of various typologies of radical attitudes, such as intolerance towards differing opinions and beliefs, blind fanaticism characterized by unwavering conviction in one's correctness while disregarding others' perspectives, and a revolutionary disposition marked by the use of violence to achieve objectives. This analysis aids in comprehending the spectrum of radical attitudes and behaviors that may manifest within society. 3) Security Implications: Radical attitudes and behaviors pose significant security ramifications locally and globally (Ozer, 2020). Acts of violence and extremism have the potential to undermine societal stability and security while exacerbating tensions between disparate factions. 4) Imperative for Preventive Measures: Armed with an understanding of radicalism's essence and manifestations, preventive strategies can be formulated and executed more adeptly (Ottuh, P. O., & Erhabor, 2022). These may encompass initiatives promoting tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and targeted interventions to counter radicalization effectively.

Radicalism is the embryo of the birth of terrorism (Mestika, 2023). Radicalism is an attitude that wants absolute and average change and is revolutionary by drastically overturning the existing order of values through violence and other extreme actions. Several typologies can be recognized from these radical attitudes and understandings, such as intolerance, not wanting to respect other people's opinions and beliefs, blind fanatics (constantly feeling right about themselves, assuming other people are wrong, exclusively differentiating themselves from Muslims in general) and revolutionaries (tend to use methods - violent means to achieve targets, goals, and objectives).

However, the radicalism understood by Islamic boarding school communities such as the STDI Islamic Boarding School (Dirosat Islamiyah High School), Ibnu Katsir Islamic Boarding School, and Al Qodiri Islamic Boarding School, is constructive, namely radicalism that builds religious foundations. Here, radicalism encourages its adherents to study religion more deeply. Here, radicalism has a positive meaning in religion because the term pure radicalism was born from Western terminology.

Esposito, an expert on Islam, elaborated on the term "fundamentalism" by associating it with the following three things: First, they are said to be fundamentalists if they call for a return to basic religious teachings or pure religious foundations, namely the Koran and Al -Hadith (Irham & Lubis, 2021); Second, the understanding and perception of fundamentalism is strongly influenced by American Protestant groups, namely a 20th-century Protestant movement which emphasizes a literal interpretation of the Bible which is fundamental to the life of Christian religious teachings; Third, the terms

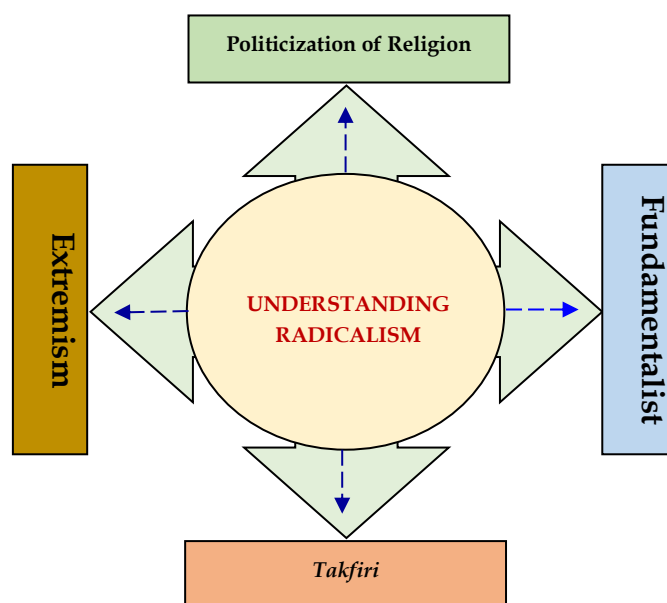
fundamentalism and anti-America. The term fundamentalism is highly charged with Christian politics and Western stereotypes and indicates a monolithic threat that does not exist. The term "Islamic fundamentalism", he prefers to use the term "Islamic revivalism" or "Islamic activism," which, according to him, is not one-sided and has roots in Islamic tradition.

Islamic boarding schools see that the use of these terms is grafted onto Islam, which has a movement typology similar to Protestant Christian politics (Kendhammer & Ousmanou, 2023). Therefore, more academically or religiously is needed that radical Islam or Islamic radicalism refers to the barakah of Islam, which this religion calls for peace.

The use of the term fundamentalism aims to explain the existence of acts of religious extremism in Islam, not fundamentalist Islam. Therefore, it cannot be equated or identified with the teachings of the Islamic religion because Islamic teachings do not refer to acts of crime, radicalism, or extremism using anarchic methods, such as bombing and suicide.

So, Islam does not recognize the words religious radicalism and other radicalism (Atsani & Nasri, 2021). The concept of radicalism understood by some Islamic boarding school communities is radicalism that encourages religious adherents to continue studying the teachings of their religion to its roots (kaffah) (Endrizal & Suharti, 2023). On the other hand, radicalism, as understood by Islamic boarding schools, namely Pondok STDI (Dirosat Islamiyah College), PondokPesantren Ibnu Katsir, and Pondok Al Qodiri, is destructive radicalism that leads to acts of violence in the name of religion.

So they seem to be from that religion that teaches violence, even though it is not. This cannot happen in social life. Everyone must be in harmony and respect each other. Therefore, radicalism must be understood comprehensively so the parties involved are not harmed. The term used will be a detrimental stereotype. Therefore, radicalism must be understood textually and contextually so that people do not carelessly use this term, which brings much harm.



**Figure 1. Understanding Radicalism**



## The Patterns of Islamic Boarding School Leaders in Countering Radicalism

Education is the most essential thing in human life and one of the long-term investment efforts in human civilization (Uralovich et al., 2023). Therefore, the existence of education is at the heart of the process of human formation, which has the potential to give birth to generations and maintain the continuity of a nation (Ahdar et al., 2020). In Indonesia, education is regulated by law. According to Article 1 paragraph (1) of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious and spiritual strength, self-control, and personality. , intelligence, noble morals, and skills necessary for himself, society, nation, and state.

The connection between religious radicalism and the world of education leads to a structured effort to prepare and internalize the ideology of interest, considering that one of the successes of social change must be supported by education. In principle, education is an effort to prepare generations and individuals who are ready and have the capital of understanding and ideology adapted to the goals of education itself.

In the end, radicalization affects education as a field of developing religious understanding and capital of knowledge. Even though from the beginning of its establishment, Islamic boarding schools declared themselves to be a vehicle for *tafaquhfiddin*. Moreover, these Islamic boarding schools adhere to the ideology of Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah, whose educational pattern uses patterns. The pattern of basic principles of the AhluSunnah is known to be moderate. Thus, the educational patterns for preventing religious radicalism are as follows;

**Table 1. The Patterns of Islamic Boarding School Leaders in Countering Radicalism**

No.	Educational Institutions	Religious Aspects	Social Aspects	Cultural Aspects
1	Dirasat Islamiyah High School (STDI)	Understanding Radicalism is integrated with subjects such as Mu'amalah, worship and Aqidah	Carrying out activities with the community, such as public recitations at maghrib, social service, mass circumcisions or sharing ta'jil, attending the dead	Habituation to local religious culture
2	Ibn Kathir Islamic Boarding School	Providing enlightenment to students by combining the concept of ittijahfikkriyah, cultivating a <i>washatiyah</i> attitude based on <i>the Al-Quran</i> and Sunnah , an attitude of Tasamuh and love for the Republic of Indonesia and teaching the views of the 4 schools of thought	GEMMA (Movement to Love and Honor the Koran) which is specifically for people from youth to seniors, Majlis Dhuha, Majlis Quran Program, Majlis ASIK (Sholawat Ibnu Katsir), KLQ (Al Quran Holiday Quarantine)	Use of cultural identity
3	Al Qodiri Islamic	The study of the book of fiqh uses the tawasuth pattern and formal	Attend kifayah events in the surrounding community. Holding	Upholding national culture.

boarding school	activities such as learning in Islamic boarding schools and non-formal institutions which are carried out through majlis Ta'lim.	the Manaqib event which has long been known as ManaqibSyeah Abdul Qodir Al-Jailani
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### *Religious Aspects*

The pattern of Islamic boarding school education in countering radicalism from the religious aspect carried out in the three Islamic boarding schools is cultivating a washatiah attitude based on the Al-Quran and Sunnah and reinterpreting the concept of jihad. This is the opinion of Ustadz Imam Mudzakkir, Lc, as the Al Aqidah matadirosah teacher at the Ibnu Katsir Islamic boarding school, and also the opinion of Mr. Dr. Muhammad Arifin Badri, MA, as chairman of STDI. A moderate attitude or way of thinking is practiced in attitudes toward several jurisprudential views from the opinions of the 4 Madzhab imams. In this way, the students know about the epistemological side of the priests and how the followers of this school of thought should behave in understanding their different views. Second, instilling an attitude of Tasamuh and love for the Republic of Indonesia.

Third, an understanding of radicalism is integrated with the subjects of Mu'amalah, worship, and Aqidah. As implemented at Dirosat Islamiyah High School (STDI), students are offered Aqidah courses in the first semester, generally, and in particular, the Aqidah, which also discusses Islam as rahmatanlil 'salami.

Fourth, the pattern of learning religious teachings using the washatiah pattern, through studying the book of fiqh using the tawasuth pattern, where many show moderate attitudes in understanding viewpoints in conflicting opinions in fiqh.

Fifth, the prevention of radicalism is carried out through formal activities such as learning at Islamic boarding schools and non-formal institutions through Majlis Ta'lim. This is based on the activities held by the Ibnu Katsir Islamic Boarding School, namely that the Koran is held with the community every month at the Islamic boarding school. One example is the Majlis Quran, which is held every month in the third week.

### *Social Aspects*

Radicalism in the social aspect needs to be stemmed by being open and building harmonious relationships between Islamic boarding schools and society. There are several things that the lodge does to ward off radicalism in social aspects. Firstly, involving *santri* and the community in one mass activity; secondly, several social and religious programs, including weekly, monthly, and annual programs; thirdly, the *santri* community service program.

There are several things that the lodge does to ward off radicalism in social aspects. At STDI, students/*mahasantri* hold activities with the community so that they are always close to the community, for example, public recitations at *Maghrib*, social services, mass circumcisions or sharing *ta'jil*, attending *kifayahan* if someone

dies, attending *walimatulUrs*, carrying out social services, mass circumcisions, competitions for TPA/TPQ children and students.

Not only at STDI but also at Ibnu Katsir Islamic boarding school, the Islamic boarding school education pattern is also carried out in countering radicalism in the social aspect; many religious social programs involve the community, for example, a program called GEMMA (Moving Loving and Honoring the Koran) which is specifically for the community starting from elementary school. Teenagers to seniors, other programs such as Majlis Dhuha, Majlis Quran Program, Majlis ASIK (Sholawat Ibnu Katsir), and another program, KLQ (Quran Holiday Quarantine), which is organized by ILC (Ibnu Katsir Learning Center). The activities above all involve the community. This religious, social activity is a social-*da'wah* effort that facilitates people studying religion and learning many things.

Like STDI and Pondok Ibnu Katsir, Al Qodiri Islamic boarding school also significantly prevents radicalism. For example, Islamic boarding schools instruct students to attend *kifayah* events in the surrounding community. Holding the Manaqib event, which has long been known as ManaqibSyeh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani. Even Islamic boarding schools are open to the community's needs and help each other. There is a symbiotic, mutualistic relationship between Islamic boarding schools and society.

### ***Cultural Aspects***

Cultural radicalism is understanding religious doctrine textually and imposing its ideology, thereby reducing local culture. Religious radicalism is closely related to fundamentalism, namely an understanding that seeks to return to what is believed to be the basics or principles (foundations), namely the doctrine of understanding their religion.

It can be strengthened by getting used to local religious culture, using cultural identity, and upholding national culture to counteract all this. The culture that developed in Indonesian society is a religious culture that has existed for generations and has even become an inseparable part of people's lives.

Familiarization with religious culture, use of cultural identity, and upholding National culture as a forum for preserving culture, protecting and developing it, which is none other than a means of worship as well as maintaining social harmony (Halim & Pahrudin, 2020; Akbar et al., 2022). Islamic boarding school education patterns in countering radicalism in cultural aspects include familiarizing with local religious culture, such as commemorating the Prophet's birthday, Dibaan, and reading praises before prayer. Apart from that, there are adjustments to National culture, such as wearing a cap, skullcap, or headgear and displaying state symbols. Use of cultural identity and uphold national culture. Thus, the three patterns of Islamic boarding school education in preventing radicalism can offer a comprehensive perspective by addressing religious, social, and cultural aspects while upholding the core values of Islamic boarding schools.



## CONCLUSION

Pesantren's efforts to ward off radicalism involve a multi-dimensional approach. They instil religious values based on the Al-Qur'an and Sunnah and the Islamic principles of *rahmatan lil'aalamin*. They also apply enlightenment to students by combining the concept of *ijtihad fikriyah*. Islamic boarding schools also encourage attitudes of tolerance, *tasamuh*, and love of the country among students. In the social sector, Islamic boarding schools interact directly with the community, holding routine activities such as weekly recitations and deliberations to solve problems.

They also carry the spirit of mutual understanding and respect for differences, both in the realm of religion and culture. Islamic boarding schools explain and encourage understanding of cultural diversity and teach the importance of respecting these differences. Thus, Islamic boarding schools are not just religious institutions but also social and cultural institutions that play an essential role in preventing radicalism with a holistic approach.

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