Malaysia and Indonesia of Women in Strengthening the Family for Prevention of Violent Extremism Through Tolerance and Peace Values

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Abstract: This research endeavors to examine the integral role of women in preventing violent extremism within the Lamongan district and Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia, utilizing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Through collaborative engagement with the community, women actively participate in identifying issues, developing interventions, and collectively shaping strategies to counteract extremist ideologies. The PAR methodology ensures a bottom-up perspective, allowing women to take an active role in problem-solving and decision-making processes. The study reveals that women, particularly in Lamongan and Kuala Lumpur, are central in challenging and countering extremist narratives within their families, fostering empowerment and ownership in the process. Beyond households, women extend their influence to the broader public, imparting essential lessons on religious tolerance and the imperative of fostering peaceful coexistence. Based on these findings, it is recommended that future initiatives embrace participatory approaches, recognizing and leveraging the unique role of women in countering violent extremism, while supporting ongoing PAR initiatives to empower women and foster more harmonious and tolerant societies.

Introduction

There are many exclusive Islamic thoughts that find it difficult to accept fellow Muslims because there are still many different views. They not only do not accept groups that are different from their views, but they also consider it even necessary to fight against anyone who is not the same as their group. Some of these Muslim groups still frequently use violence in the name of religion. They always use religion as legitimacy to commit violence and even kill other people. Although this group has been disbanded and is not allowed to exist in two countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia. But its existence is still visible from the activities of its followers.

This can happen because this intolerant group has metamorphosed in various lines of life in society. They incarnate in a structured way with various forms of activities that carry out hidden activities wrapped in activities that invite goodness. They teach at home and in educational institutions that violence is normal. They try to confuse people's understanding so that others don't notice and get used to it. In Indonesia to be precise in Lamongan Regency, and also in Malaysia to be precise in the Selangor Region there are areas that have the potential to be exposed to violent extremism, many workers from Indonesia have family ties with combatants in Indonesia who need to strengthen their understanding and change their mindset so that they do not carry out activities that involve violent extremism, but on the contrary it is hoped that the understanding of religious tolerance will be stronger to jointly maintain peace in social life.

Women have made a major contribution to the issue of preventing violent extremism and mainstreaming religious moderation. Therefore, involving women in efforts to prevent violent extremism is a necessity. Women have long been noted to have contributed to efforts to improve the social condition of society, especially their people, namely women. History records how women in Indonesia organized and acted. Almost all religious community organizations have special organs for women. Along with the development of women's organizations, it can be seen that the movement initiated by women has developed since the colonial era (colonialism). Pereman has been a vocal actor in the middle of the political arena as well as playing the role of mother and being a good wife. These two roles combine in a practice that women play political roles to be good mothers for the Indonesian nation. Besides that, she is also a good mother when carrying out her role as a wife at home to help her partner (husband).

Theoretically and empirically, the role of women in the issue of extremism can be traced to, among others, studies that have been conducted. For example, Moh Rasyid's research with the theme of Women in Radicalism Networks vis a vis Global Terrorism.1 His research discusses the role of women within the framework of a global radical

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¹ Moh Rasyid, "Perempuan dalam Jaringan Radikalisme vis a vis Terorisme Global" Muwazah, Jurnal Kajian Gender, Vol. 10 No. 2, 2018.

network that uses Islam as the basis of its struggle. Furthermore, Syaifuddin and Belida's research focused on the Peace Pioneer Women's Group movement formed by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) to counteract radicalism starting on a small scale within the family sphere, in which case women's involvement was carried out by managing activities with adjusting the local wisdom of the local community (the research location is in Bengkulu).2 Likewise in Luh Riniti Rahayu's research on the Potential Role of Women in Realizing Religious Moderation in Indonesia. The characteristics of women are considered to make women able to easily adapt, consider alternatives, and have the ability to detect events around them.3

From the context above, it shows that women have a big role in efforts to prevent acts of extremism. However, the involvement of women in efforts to prevent radicalism has not received much attention, especially in combatant families, which are currently still stereotyped as bad news. Stereotypes are the giving of certain characteristics to a person based on a subjective category just because he or she comes from another group. Stereotypes are assumptions made by someone in a certain cultural group against members of other cultural groups.4 Stereotypes given to individuals or groups can be positive or negative. Stereotypes that appear can change when the intensity of interaction between group members increases. Through this interaction, negative stereotypes can change because they are not proven true and an adaptation process occurs to understand the cultural values of other groups.

This article intended to describe the role of women in their families in preventing violent extremism in communities of the district of Lamongan and Kuala Lumpur, Selangor Malaysia. Based on community engagement, the article also described how women can raise awareness of the mindset of their families and educate the public on how to understand religious tolerance and the importance of peace in the world.

Method

This empowerment activity used the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. The PAR method is an approach that is often used to increase the participation of subjects involved in an activity. In this approach, activities do not only come from the facilitator but also from the subject. All activities carried out directly by the subject have an important role in solving the problems faced by the subject. In this empowerment activity, women in Indonesia and Malaysia are invited to be actively involved in activities

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2 Syaifuddin and Ovi Olivia Belida, "Strategi Komunikasi Kelompok Perempuan Pelopor Perdamaian dalam Menghadapi Isu Radikalisme", Jurnal Bisnis dan Komunikasi KALBI Socio, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2019
3 Luh Riniti Rahayu and Putu Surya Wedra Lesmana, "Potensi Peran Perempuan dalam Mewujudkan Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia", PUSTAKA, Vol. XX. No. 1, 2020.
4 Samovar, A. L., Porter, E. R., & McDaniel, E. R. (2010). *Komunikasi Lintas Budaya*. Jakarta: Salemba humanika

so that they are no longer involved in violent extremist activities.

The PAR method cycle starts with identifying problems that arise in the mentoring environment. After identifying the problem, the next activity is action planning, which is prepared in a participatory manner with all helpful stakeholders. The next step is action activities to overcome the problems that arise. The final step is evaluation-reflection. The process of empowering women is carried out by involving Indonesian and Malaysian stakeholders starting from the process, and action, to evaluation. This activity cycle is (a) Observation (problem identification) (b) reflection, (c) action, (d) evaluation, and reflection.

Discussion

In the course of religious history in Indonesia, religious intolerance began to increase drastically since the reform era. Of the many minority groups that were targeted for violence, the Ahmadiyya group was the most prominent victim, with around 65% of the incidents being aimed at its members, property, and symbols, especially in West Java. Violence against the Shia group, another well-known target, was confined to a small group, Sampang, in Madura, East Java, although it resulted in devastating physical damage and the displacement of 165 community members.

At the national level, the role of the conservative religious elite, especially the clerics who dominate the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Ministry of Religion, has played an important role in escalating hostilities between mainstream Muslims and minority groups. Their position signals to the majority of Muslim groups throughout the archipelago that power and a sense of religious solidarity are threatened due to the development and infiltration of un-Islamic and anti-Islamic elements in Indonesian society.

The influence of radicals at the local level largely depends on their relationship with traditional religious elites, who tend to dominate the powerful MUI to shape religious policies and other religious institutions set up by the Ministry of Religion to facilitate "inter-religious harmony" since 2005, most importantly Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB).

Meanwhile in other areas such as Cirebon, traditional religious elites dominate the top-ranking offices of the MUI and FKUB to affirm their commitment to "moderate Islam" and Pancasila, Indonesia's multi-religious national ideology, while vigorously protecting religious minorities in their region. In Malaysia, nationalist and radical Islamic groups such as Perkasa and ISMA have expanded and been aggressive since 2008 in mobilizing Muslim-Malay groups against minority religions.

They stated that "the primacy of Islam and Muslim groups is threatened" and that they are ready to "shed blood" to defend the honor of Muslim-Malay groups. Non-Muslim

places of worship, facilities, infrastructure, and symbols are usually the main targets in court cases, and occasionally mob and media attacks when violence escalates. Recently, three Christian priests went missing. It is thought that they were kidnapped because of their alleged da'wah activities among Malaysian Muslim groups.

One of the cases that can best explain religious intolerance is the court case and decision regarding the use of the Arabic word "Allah" by non-Muslim groups, which resulted in open hostilities inflammatory responses, and protests among Muslim groups and elites in particular.

Malay radical Islamic organizations, such as Perkasa, are usually accused of being primarily responsible for violence and incitement against religious and ethnic minorities. It is also often thought that these radical groups are merely proxies for UMNO elites to aid their political interests in instilling and maintaining political support in their traditional Muslim-Malay constituency. From the point of view of UMNO elites, the political utility of this radical ethno-nationalist and Islamist group continues to grow as support for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) erodes especially as their prominence continues to decline in non-Muslim urban constituencies. UMNO politicians, as elected national leaders, especially prime ministers, cannot openly attack non-Muslim communities to maintain their legitimacy and dominance in multi-ethnic political coalitions and governments. In addition, radical groups do not have such electoral political limitations.

Against this backdrop, the unprecedented unilateral and incendiary actions of Malay religious and traditional elites and their tacit support of these claims and mobilizations by radical Malay Islamic groups have played a significant role in giving rise to hostility towards the Muslim-Malay community towards non-Muslims, especially Christians and also, liberal groups.

For traditional Malay and Islamic elites, such as sultans, muftis (experts in religious law), and other state and federal officials, such a strong and unprecedented pro-democracy movement known as Bersih since 2007, despite the strengthening of the political power of the opposition groups in the elections in 2008 and 2013, threatens the institutional and ideological basis for their inherent strength and power within the predominantly Malay-Muslim-dominated regime and state. As the anti-regime coalition – comprised of civil and political society – grew stronger and more aggressive over their demands for "pluralism" and "equal rights" for all Malaysian citizens regardless of their religious and ethnic identity, Malay and religious elites traditionalists are increasingly defending their special rights and privileges – and constitutional primacy based on religion and majority identity. In fact, among Malay and Islamic elites there is a growing perception that the main Malay-Muslim-based parties, UMNO and PAS (Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party, Partai Islam Pan-Malaysia) have accommodated non-Malay interests too much for their electoral interests. , thus contributing to the well-known calls of radical

nationalist and Islamist groups and their claims that "the rights of Muslims and Malaysians are being threatened".

It should be emphasized that prominent Malay-Muslim elites, such as former prime minister Mahathir and former chief judge, joined fringe radical groups such as Perkasa as patrons to give these groups guarantees and legitimacy that they lacked within Muslim circles. Moreover, several hostile statements, speeches, sermons, and decisions made by traditional religious elites helped to legitimize claims and hostile actions committed by radical groups in the streets, media, and courts, resulting in strained inter-religious relations. decreased religious tolerance.

To prevent extremism we must promote religious moderation. Extremism itself is rooted in a mistake in understanding a thought that comes from something good, of course, the way to treat this is to provide deep religious intake. Doctors for deradicalization are needed from religious leaders who are trusted and have high knowledge to win the hearts of combatants or their sympathizers so that they can repent from these unlawful acts5

Religious moderation must be understood as a balanced religious attitude between the practice of one's religion (exclusive) and respect for the religious practices of other people of different religions (inclusive). This imbalance or middle way in religious practice will undoubtedly prevent us from excessively extreme, fanatical, and revolutionary attitudes toward religion. As previously hinted at, religious moderation is a solution to the presence of two extreme poles in religion, the ultraconservative or extreme right on the one hand, and the liberal or extreme left on the other.

Religious moderation is the key to creating tolerance and harmony, at the local, national, and global levels. The choice of moderation by rejecting extremism and liberalism in religion is the key to balance, maintaining civilization and creating peace. In this way, every religious community can treat others with respect, accept differences, and live together in peace and harmony. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, religious moderation may not be an option, but a necessity.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2015) explains that the principle of balance (balance) and justice (fairness) in the concept of moderation (wasathiyah) means that in religion, one should not be extreme in his views, but must always find common ground. For Kamali, wasathiyah is an important aspect of Islam that is often forgotten by its followers, in fact wasathiyah is the essence of Islamic teachings.6

Moderation is not only taught by Islam, but also by other religions. In addition, moderation is a virtue that encourages the creation of social harmony and balance in

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5 Susilo dan Dalimunthe, 2018.

6 Mohammad Hashim Kamali, 2015. The Middle Path of Mode- ration in Islam, the Qur'anic Principle of Wasathiyah. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

personal, family, and community life for wider human relations. These two values, fair and balanced, will be easier to shape if someone has three main characteristics namely: wisdom, purity, and courage. In other words, morality in religion, always choosing the middle way, will be more easily realized if someone has sufficient religious knowledge so that they can be wise, resist temptation so that they can be sincere without burden, and are not selfish with their interpretation of the truth so that you dare to admit it. interpretation of other people's truths, and dare to express their views based on knowledge.

Providing education to them to return to Allah which emphasizes: 1) monotheism or the oneness of God; 2) belief in things unseen (Unseen); 3) moderation in everything; 4) encouraging good deeds (eg Zuhud, Tazkiah, and the like); and, 5) avoiding evil by rewarding its followers with heaven on the day of judgment as promised by Allah.[7]

Conclusion

From the activities that have been carried out, it can be concluded that, first, in the prevention efforts carried out by women from the families of ex-combatants in Indonesia and Malaysia, it is necessary to strengthen the understanding of tolerance and moderation, bearing in mind that there are still many of these women who perceive the issue of violent extremism as commonplace and not worrying. Therefore the act of mentoring by way of reinforcement is carried out to change mindsets and independent thinking about their religious understanding, namely moderate religious understanding. Of course, women in the family of ex-combatants still receive an unfavorable stigma from the community. The community should provide psychological support so they can blend in with the community by involving them in several events or activities in the community. Second, there is still a need for training and assistance to women from the families of ex-combatants in instilling a moderate and peace-loving religious understanding. From the training and mentoring that has been carried out, of course, it will not be maximized without a continuous process through activities in the community in each area.

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[7] Aslam dan Bakar, 2019.

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