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## Fiqh Tolerance in a Contemporary Context: The Response of State Islamic Religious University Students to Religious Extremism

**Abstract:** This study examines the application of fiqh tolerance in State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) within the context of contemporary challenges. The research focuses on student responses to religious extremism in Indonesia, which has become increasingly relevant in the era of digital media and globalization. This field study uses data collection methods, including interviews and documentation. Three key findings emerged from this study. First, most students firmly reject religious extremism, although a minority still supports it due to misinformation and the influence of narratives spread through digital media. Second, extremist recruitment strategies in PTKIN are carried out through religious activities, social media, and the dissemination of extremist ideologies through various channels, such as books, journals, and financial support, which have become more sophisticated using information technology. Third, preventive measures involve strengthening academic and non-academic understanding, including integrating religious moderation values into the curriculum, conducting seminars and training, and empowering student organizations to build resilience against extremism within the PTKIN environment. The academic contribution of this study lies in aligning fiqh tolerance with contemporary challenges, particularly in dealing with digital-based extremism, which has become more complex. This research offers a new perspective by integrating religious and social approaches to raise collective awareness among students at PTKIN. Furthermore, the findings enrich academic discourse by providing concrete recommendations for strengthening curricula based on religious moderation and developing adaptive preventive strategies in response to social and technological changes. This makes the study theoretically and practically relevant in creating a more inclusive and resilient higher education environment.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Context, Fiqh Tolerance, Understanding Religious Extremism.

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of religious extremism that has become increasingly prevalent recently has become a serious concern,<sup>1</sup> especially in the context of higher education, including in State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> PTKIN has a central role in shaping students' religious understanding that is deep but also moderate and inclusive.<sup>3</sup> However, although the religious education environment should be a forum for developing tolerant thinking, religious extremism can still be found among some students.<sup>4</sup> This shows the importance of adequately understanding religious teachings, especially in responding to radical ideas that can threaten social peace and harmony between religious communities.

The development of extremism in Indonesia, especially among the younger generation, has been in the spotlight of many parties lately, especially after various studies and surveys presented astonishing data related to the increasing understanding of extremists and radicals among young people.<sup>5</sup> Bengkulu occupies the top position Among the areas with a reasonably high potential for extremism and radicalism. This is based on the results of a survey conducted by BNPT and the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forum (FKPT) in collaboration with The Nusa Institute, Daulat Bangsa, and the Center for Research and Development of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in 2017. This survey shows five regions with the highest potential for extremism and radicalism and have low deterrence, reaching a figure above 50 per cent. Bengkulu 58.58

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<sup>1</sup> M. Koca, "Juxtaposing violent extremism and critical radicalism in Europe: the role of reflexive awareness in pursuit of religious purity and cultural essence," *Politics, Religion and Ideology* 24, no. 3 (2023): 352-76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2023.2277466>.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammad Nasrullah, Siti Asiyah, and Umdatul Baroroh, "Dakwah Anti Ekstremisme Melalui Media Instagram (Analisis Konten Di Instagram Infonesia)," *Mu'ashir: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 2, no. 1 (31 Mei 2024): 493-516, <https://doi.org/10.35878/muashir.v2i1.1185>.

<sup>3</sup> D. Mahmut, "Anti-religious Education or Preventing Religious Extremism?—An Examination of the Re-education Camps in the Uyghur Region of China," dalam *Reimagining the Landscape of Religious Education: Challenges and Opportunities*, 2023, 125-145, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20133-2\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20133-2_8).

<sup>4</sup> Abdallah, "State, religious education, and prevention of violent extremism in Southeast Asia," *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 2 (2019): 407-415, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v26i2.12204>.

<sup>5</sup> Widhiya Ninsiana, "Deradicalizing Religious Extremism Linguistically: An Intertextual Approach to Islamic Extremists' View on the Qur'anic Interpretation," *Akademika : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 2 (6 Oktober 2020): 277-294, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v25i2.2053>.

percent, Gorontalo 58.48 percent, South Sulawesi 58.42 percent, Lampung 58.38 percent, and North Kalimantan 58.30 percent. According to Nasaruddin Umar, the figure above 50 per cent is a warning for the Indonesian nation and should not be taken lightly.<sup>6</sup>

The above concerns are reinforced by the results of research that have explained how severe symptoms of massive extremism in universities are, especially those targeting students. A relevant survey was also conducted by INFID-Gusdurian Indonesia-NU Online Network in 6 cities in Indonesia in 2016 and published in 2016 on the Perception and Attitude of the Young Generation towards Radicalism and Violent Extremism towards 1200 respondents presenting interesting data related to the phenomenon of extremism. 72% of respondents stated that they are increasingly obedient in practising religion, which is not only manifested by the implementation of worship but also the willingness to be part of a Jihad group (17.8%), become a Palestinian fighter (13%), fight disobedience (20%), be active in Islamic organizations (26.8%), help others who are hit by disasters (71.2%), and use religious symbols (39.9%).<sup>7</sup> In 2018, the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) said that there was 39 per cent of students in 15 provinces were exposed to extremist and radical ideas. Although the 15 provinces are not mentioned by BIN, if correlated with the results of the BNPT findings above, it can be assumed that students of State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia are included in Bengkulu Province from the 39%. Both data are strong enough to show that the people of Bengkulu must get more attention than other regions, especially the young generation and students of Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia. This is because Islamic Religious Universities are supposed to be a forum for moderate religious and intellectual understanding. However, because the spread of religious extremism through various media is unstoppable,<sup>8</sup> PTKIN students have

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<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Adnan and Anita Amaliyah, "Radicalism VS Extremism: The Dilemma of Islam And Politics In Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial* 1, no. 1 (7 April 2021): 24-48, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jis.1.1.2021.24-48>.

<sup>7</sup> "Jaringan Gusdurian dan Infid Luncurkan Hasil Survei Tentang Intoleransi Dan Ekstremisme - Kampung Gusdurian," 24 Maret 2021, <https://gusdurian.net/2021/03/24/jaringan-gusdurian-dan-infid-luncurkan-hasil-survei-tentang-intoleransi-dan-ekstremisme/>.

<sup>8</sup> Benny Sumardiana, "Efektifitas Penanggulangan Ancaman Penyebaran Paham Ekstrem Kanan Yang Memicu Terorisme Oleh Polri DaN BNPT RI," *Law Research Review Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (31 Mei 2017): 109-28, <https://doi.org/10.15294/snh.v3i1.20927>.

great potential to be exposed to religious extremism.<sup>9</sup>

Research related to religious extremism has been carried out before, such as the research conducted by Amanah Nuris; an important finding in his research states that religious fanaticism is often the root of extremism, which develops through the influence of religious doctrine, the education system, and the media.<sup>10</sup> Agus Budiman et al. conducted the subsequent research, and their findings stated that in facing the challenge of spreading religious extremism, moderate and inclusive religious education is an important key in preventing the spread of extremism, especially among students. Strategies that can be implemented include the development of a diversity-based curriculum, teacher training to instil the values of tolerance, and collaboration between schools, parents, and the community.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Abdul Hamid, through his research, offers solutions to counter the spread of religious extremism through rehabilitation and reintegration for extremism and terrorism perpetrators. This process aims to instil an attitude of religious moderation and restore the image of Islam as a religion that carries a message of peace. Efforts to counter extremism require active support from all levels of society. The synergy of various parties will pave the way to creating a harmonious and peaceful life free from the threat of radicalism.<sup>12</sup>

Previous research on religious extremism has revealed the root causes of problems such as religious fanaticism triggered by doctrine, education systems, and the media (Amanah Nurish), the importance of moderate and inclusive religious education in preventing the spread of extremism (Agus Budiman et al.), as well as rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for extremists to promote religious moderation (Abdul Hamid). However, studies that specifically explore the responses of State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) students to religious extremism, including how their understanding

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<sup>9</sup> Saifuddin Saifuddin, "Radikalisme Islam Di Kalangan Mahasiswa (Sebuah Metamorfosa Baru)," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (14 Maret 2017): 17-32, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v11i1.605>.

<sup>10</sup> Amanah Nurish, "Dari Fanatisme Ke Ekstremisme: Ilusi, Kecemasan, Dan Tindakan Kekerasan," *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya*, 1 September 2019, 31-40, <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.829>.

<sup>11</sup> Agus Budiman, Mohammad Tajuddin Al-afghani, dan Maston Akbar Sansayto, "Menanggulangi Ekstremisme Melalui Pendidikan Agama: Strategi Untuk Mendorong Moderasi Di Sekolah," *Aksiologi : Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 18 April 2024, <https://doi.org/10.47134/aksiologi.v5i1.210>.

<sup>12</sup> Abdul Hamid, "Ekstrimisme Keagamaan: Analisis dan Implikasi," *Jurnal Studi Sosial Keagamaan Syekh Nurjati* 2, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.24235/sejati.v2i2.21>.

of the values of tolerant fiqh are applied in facing contemporary challenges, are still rare. This research fills this gap by focusing on the role of PTKIN students as agents of change in promoting religious tolerance amid the growing threat of extremism.

Based on the existing facts, the researcher feels compelled to dig deeper into the phenomenon of religious extremism that occurs in State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia. This research is considered important to understand the extent of students' understanding of religious extremism, which will be a reference in formulating effective policies to prevent the spread of this understanding in the PTKIN environment. Considering the background described, this research will focus on three main things. First, this study will explore how PTKIN students respond to the growing understanding of religious extremism. Second, it will analyze how the recruitment strategy of religious extremism can enter and develop within the PTKIN environment, considering the importance of universities in shaping the mindset and character of the younger generation. Third, this study will also examine various preventive measures that can be taken to stop the spread of extremism, with an approach that emphasizes moderate, inclusive education and deep fiqh values of tolerance.

## **METHOD**

The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive. This method was chosen because it is more appropriate to fully describe the problem of the response of Islamic University Students in Indonesia to the Understanding of Religious Extremism and discuss how to prevent the spread of Religious Extremism in more depth. The subject of this research is the Academic Community, students, lecturers, employees, and leaders/officials of universities in Indonesia. The informants in this study amounted to 500 people spread across three State Islamic Universities (UIN Fas Bengkulu, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, and UIN Mataram). In selecting informants, the researcher uses the purposive sampling technique, and the goal is that the data obtained can be aimed and developed continuously from one sample to the next.

The researcher used two techniques to collect research data in this study: Interview and documentation. The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative analysis

with an inductive thinking pattern. The inductive analysis in question is an analysis that departs from specific data and then draws general conclusions. In this qualitative research, the researcher will go through three main components: data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. This study uses the source triangulation technique to check the validity of the data. Triangulation with sources means comparing and rechecking the degree of confidence of information obtained through different times and tools in qualitative research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of Religious Extremism

Extremism is interpreted as an understanding that tends to be extreme (*harsh*).<sup>13</sup> So, if combined with the word religious, religious extremism can be interpreted as an understanding that the practice of religious teachings is too harsh. According to Marbun in the Political Dictionary, extremism is when a person goes beyond the limits of habits in defending and demanding something.<sup>14</sup> Extremism illustrates that religion has a decline in belief and belief in God Almighty. They have an extreme overconfidence in the main motives behind global local violence and terrorist attacks.<sup>15</sup>

In Sharia terminology, extreme attitude is often also called *ghuluw*, which means exaggeration in a matter or being extreme on one issue by exceeding the limits that have been shari'a. Ghuluw is a model or type of religion that causes a person to deviate from that religion. President Jokowi issued Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 7 of 2021 concerning the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Countermeasures of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism in 2020-2024. Referring to this Presidential Regulation, extremism is a belief and/or action that uses violent means or threats of extreme violence to support or commit acts of terrorism.

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<sup>13</sup> A. Murad and A. Basir, "Communication Methods in Addressing Religious Extremism: Ananalysis of the Munāṣaḥah of Wahb Ibn Munabbih," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 8 (2024): 1586-1594, <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.4840>.

<sup>14</sup> Wahyu Abdul Jafar, "Persepsi masyarakat kota Bengkulu terhadap paham islam moderat," *Samarah* 3, no. 1 (2019): 177-204, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhc.v3i1.3213>.

<sup>15</sup> Bibi Suprianto, "Ekstremisme Dan Solusi Moderasi Beragama Di Masa Pandemi Covid 19," *Jurnal Studi Agama* 6, no. 1 (28 Juni 2022): 42-55, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsa.v6i1.12965>.

From this, it can be affirmed that extremism is a robust understanding or belief in something that exceeds the limits of reasonableness and can violate the law. Extremism is a political or religious doctrine that takes action to realize its goals in various ways, such as anarchist movements and fanatics against something. A person with an attitude of religious extremism will not hesitate to oblige others to do something that God is not obliged to do. He also often behaves rudely, not at the place and time, especially if what is being debated is a matter of faith. He disbelieves others, legalizes blood and possessions, disbelieves those who commit great sins, and disbelieves those who do not accept their thoughts or do not join their group.<sup>16</sup>

### **Characteristics of Religious Extremism**

According to Yusuf al-Qordhowi, religious extremism has the following characteristics: first, hardness of heart and intolerance. Hardness of heart and intolerance are the most apparent characteristics of religious extremism. People like this will tend to impose their will on others. His words must be obeyed, while his opinion is a truth. People like this will think that their opinion is correct while the opinion of others is wrong. Second, have a hardline understanding. Being hardline means showing yourself through excessive commitment and trying to influence others to do the same. Third, imposing the will. Imposing the will means burdening others regardless of the place and time to apply the teachings of Islam in non-Islamic countries or for people who have just converted to Islam. Fourth, tyranny occurs. Treating people wrongly, approaching with violence, being rigid in persuading people to convert to Islam.<sup>17</sup> The arguments of religious extremist groups in Indonesia mostly appear in the framework of religious understanding. Several doctrines have continued to be reproduced by extreme groups since the NII period until now, namely: (1) the doctrine of hijrah, which is the understanding that the basis of the Indonesian state is Pancasila. For this group, Pancasila is not an ideology but just the basis of the state that can be transformed into another basis and ideology, namely the

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<sup>16</sup> Abdul Jalil, "Aksi Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama:," *Andragogi: Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan Dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 2 (31 Desember 2021): 220-234, <https://doi.org/10.36052/andragogi.v9i2.251>.

<sup>17</sup> Qardhawi, Yusuf, *Radical Islam: An Analysis of Radicalism in Islam and Its Solutions*, (ed.) Hamin Murtadho, (Era Intermedia: solo, 2014) p.328

foundation of Islam. The goal is the creation of *baldatun thaayyibun wa raabun ghafur* or Islamic State. (2) martyrdom or noble life. For radical groups to establish an Islamic state, it must come down to self-sacrifice or family. (3) Islam is not only a religion but the rule of Allah. This view must be applied to the entire system, the life, and the law of the earth.<sup>18</sup>

### **Forms of Religious Extremism in the Contemporary Era**

Extremism often occurs because there is an urge to put forward views or goals by forcing the will significantly or radically, without consideration and without thinking logically.<sup>19</sup> This condition is then interpreted and forced to be interpreted by all people who do not have the same understanding or view, resulting in actions that arise, such as intolerance. Extremist behaviour that occurs in society will impact the emergence of intolerance in state life. Intolerance is one of the attitudes possessed by a person who tends not to accept the views or understandings of others as a form of input or advice.<sup>20</sup> This behaviour is usually characterized by not acknowledging people's views or beliefs, not respecting people through actions and words, and thinking that their understanding is correct. Intolerance is an act of "social disease" that damages the human mind and morals, causing a person to have no attitude of respect and respect for the rights of others. Intolerance is an attitude of inability in the way of thinking, looking at, and acting that results in these intolerant groups only being able to think ahead. This attitude and view must be eliminated from the perspective mentioned above in social life; Barbara Jordan talked about intolerance, namely, the laziness of the mind to a certain degree. This laziness does not indicate laziness to work, but the laziness intended is an attitude of apathy towards the social conditions of community life. However, this group only prioritizes interests, which is more than reasonableness in people's lives. Intolerance is only the interest of individuals or groups, which is very contrary to the values of Pancasila, especially in the

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<sup>18</sup> Saifudin Asrori, "Mengikuti Panggilan Jihad; Argumentasi Radikalisme Dan Ekstremisme Di Indonesia," *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality* 4, no. 1 (10 Juli 2019), <https://doi.org/10.30984/ajip.v4i1.911>.

<sup>19</sup> N. Seitakhmetova et.al., "Counteracting Religious Extremism in Youth Environments: World Experience and Kazakhstan," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 15, no. 3 (2024): 257-288.

<sup>20</sup> S. Scott-Smith, M. Farida, and J. Droogan, "Religious Mobilisation to Terrorism and Implications for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: The Case of Abdullah Azzam," *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 37 (2023): 1-40.



second precept. The dangerous attitude of intolerance in Indonesia is religious intolerance because it cannot accept religious diversity as a fact that must be respected. Religious intolerance arises because there is no self-acceptance to want to live together in a large country. Religious intolerance is a form of attitude that can endanger the severance of fraternal bonds between fellow nation's children. Acts of Violence Indonesian society, amid diversity, must unite to reject various acts of violence and discrimination against other religious believers.<sup>21</sup> Violent behaviour is one of the attempts that refers to a scenario deliberately designed by a person who wants to cause harm that impacts the physical, emotional, and psychological of others.

In the contemporary era, the understanding of religious extremism continues to grow and develop along with the support and spread of radical groups, especially among the younger generation and students who are looking for an identity. Students who are young at heart have short-term thinking and immature thinking. So vulnerable to religious extremism.<sup>22</sup> This vulnerability is further exacerbated by misinformation related to religious extremism. After conducting in-depth research, important findings were obtained that there are still young people who are wrong in understanding the substance of religious extremism. This is as well as interview data;

*"Religious teachings teach kindness to others, so the more we extremize practising religious teachings, the better it will be."*<sup>23</sup>

*"As far as I know, the teachings of religious extremism are very hostile to the disobedience that exists in society. Adherents of religious extremism are also viral on social media when they carry out sweeping actions of disobedience."*<sup>24</sup>

This interview data is also strengthened by the survey results showing that 28% of informants have information related to religious extremism. Only 72% of informants already know and understand what religious extremism is.

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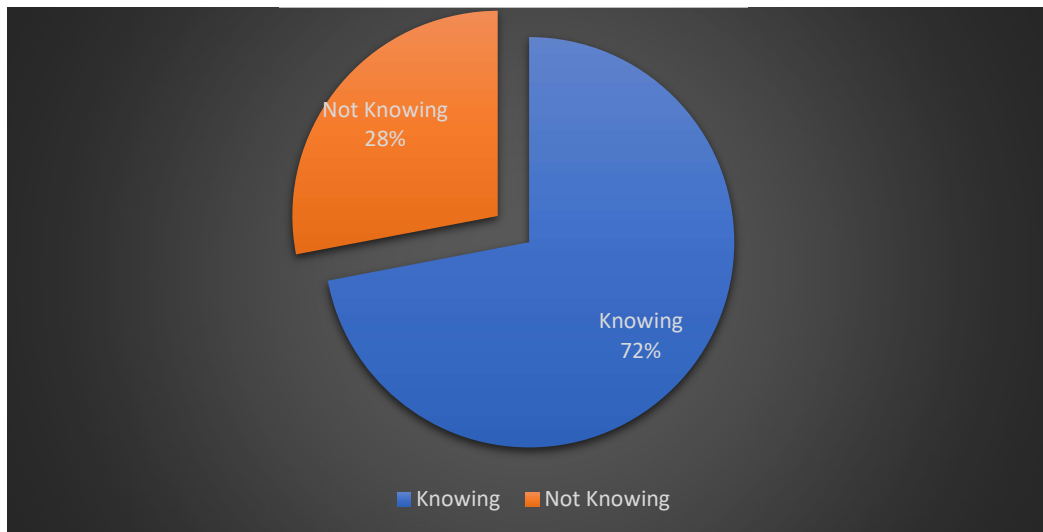
<sup>21</sup> Abdul Hamid, "Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Religion-Based Extremism-Terrorism Attitudes in a Moderation Frame," *Jurnal Studi Sosial Keagamaan Syekh Nurjati* 2, no. 2 (26 Desember 2022): 61-74, <https://doi.org/10.24235/sejati.v2i2.21>.

<sup>22</sup> Mas Agung Pribadi et.al., "Manajemen Strategi Pencegahan Radikalisme di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Kota Metro," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 02 (21 Agustus 2023), <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i02.4222>.

<sup>23</sup> Abdullah Ammar, Personal interview, 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Rezki Bora, Personal Interview, 2024.

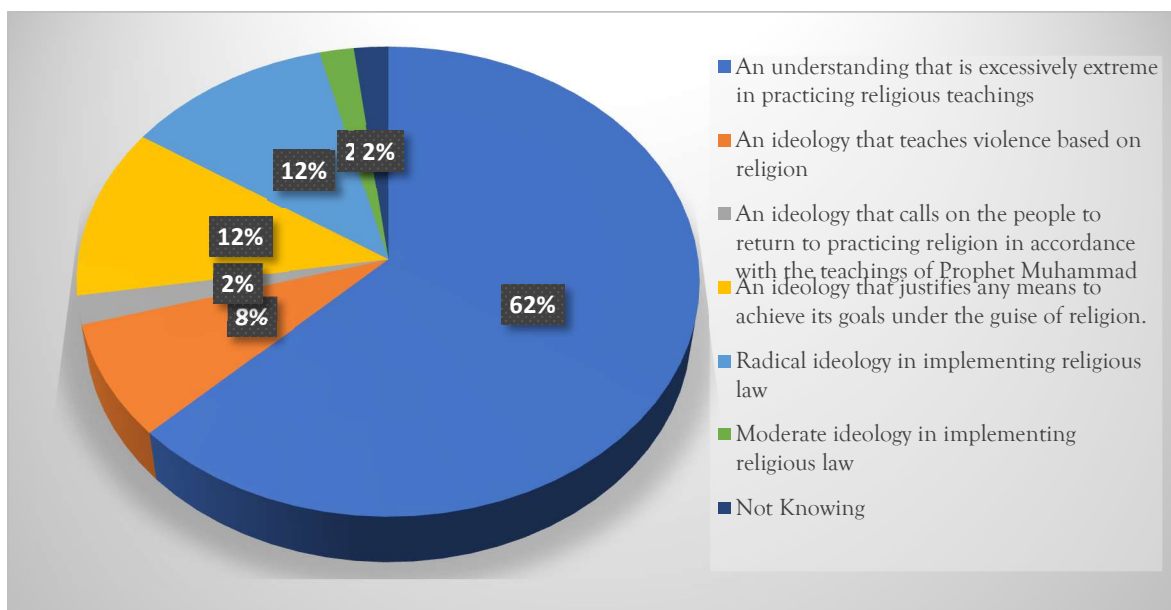
Diagram 1. The Understanding of Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

When examined more deeply, it was found that the informants had different perceptions of understanding what religious extremism meant. This data can be seen in diagram 2 below as follows;

Diagram 2. Perception of Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

### Characteristics of Religious Extremism in the Contemporary Era

In the contemporary era, adherents of religious extremism have several characteristics that can be easily identified. The characteristics inherent in the adherents of this doctrine

have a distinctive pattern that almost all adherents of this doctrine have. One of its characteristics is intolerance to other teachings or understandings. This is as well as interview data;

*"The most correct Islamic teachings are the ones I practice. Other teachings are false and must be rejected. Islam must be purified; its teachings must not be mixed with anything."<sup>25</sup>*

*"Currently, many Muslims are doing heresy and heresy in practising their religious teachings. So that the practice of bid'ah bid'ah must be rejected and straightened out."<sup>26</sup>*

*"If you do not want to follow my teachings, you will go to hell; the correct teachings are the ones I practice; the others are healthy and will go to hell."<sup>27</sup>*

This interview data is in line with the survey results, which show that adherents of religious extremism have the following characteristics: 12% of adherents of religious extremism behave intolerantly of other teachings, 16% of adherents of religious extremism behave stubbornly, 24% of adherents of religious extremism behave hardline, 20% of adherents of religious extremism behave in a coercive manner, 8% of adherents of religious extremism behave in a tyrannical manner, 4% of adherents of religious extremism behave politely, politely and kindly. As many as 12% of adherents of religious extremism stated that the teachings they adhered to were the most following Islamic law, and 4% of adherents of religious extremism did not understand what was related to religious extremism. These data can be seen in the diagram below,

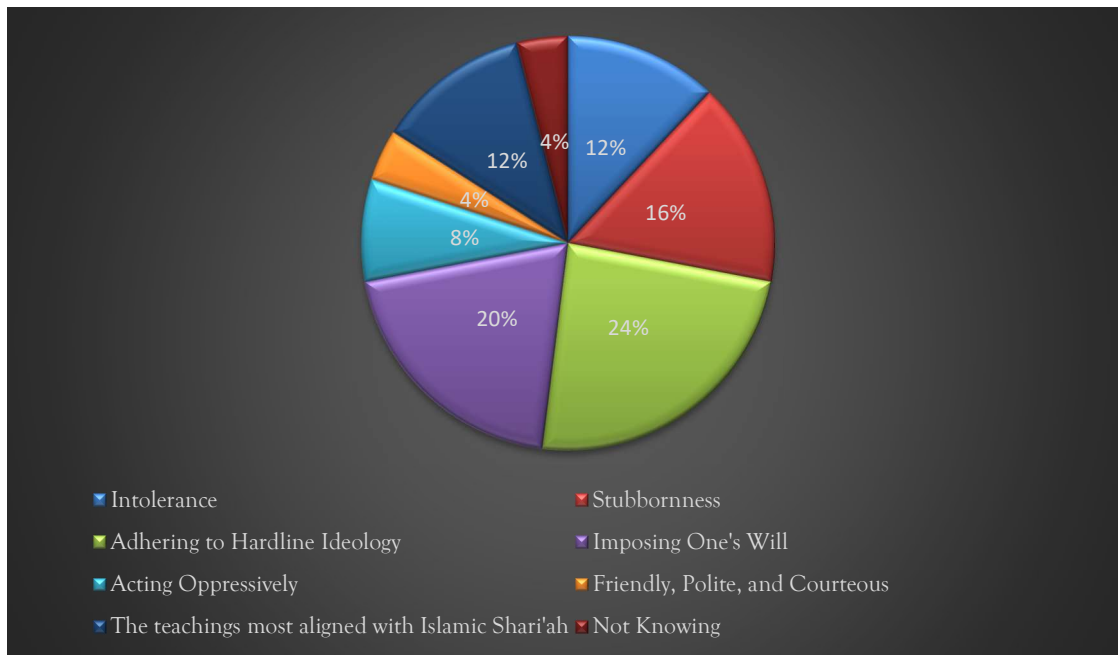
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<sup>25</sup> Wally Abdian, Personal interview, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Musafir Samad, Personal interview, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> La Ode Alun Saleh, Personal interview, 2024.

Diagram 3. Characteristics of Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

### Characteristics of Students Exposed to Religious Extremism in the Contemporary Era

In the contemporary era, young people are still an easy target for the spread of religious extremism, primarily through religious narratives. Guiding the younger generation to have cross-cultural religious literacy is one way for the younger generation to understand violence wrapped in religion.<sup>28</sup> When explored more deeply, students who are exposed to this understanding have several characteristics, as shown in the interview data below,

*"Students who are exposed to extreme understanding are difficult to talk. They always feel right for themselves and do not want to be blamed. Even though the hadith was shown as the basis for the ruling, this student still refused because the hadith was not sahih."<sup>29</sup>*

*"Students with closed personalities are very vulnerable to being exposed to religious extremism; this condition is exacerbated by the rarity of those who associate with the academic community and rarely get along with the wider community."<sup>30</sup>*

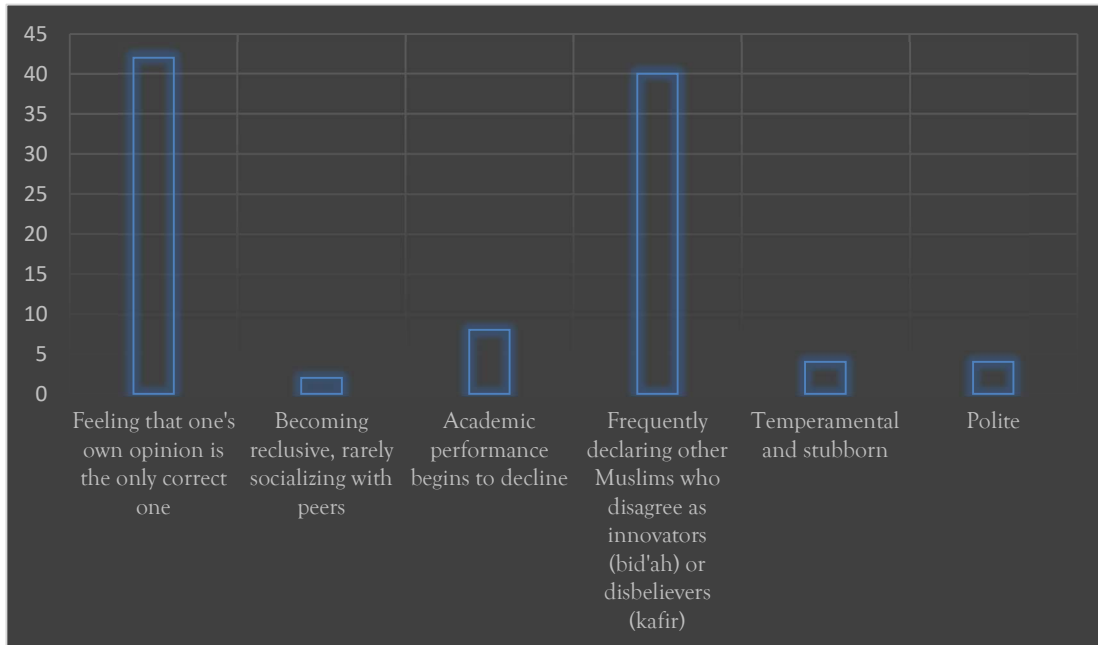
This interview data is also strengthened by a survey distributed to Islamic universities. The diagram can be seen below.

<sup>28</sup> R. Shahid, G. Anjum, and M. Aziz, "Relationship Between Passion Pathways and Religious Activism: Why the Threat to Religious Identity Predicts Peaceful Activism or Extremism?," *SAGE Open* 13, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231201246>.

<sup>29</sup> Awi Jaya Wardana, Personal Interview, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Agus alim, Personal Interview, 2024.

Diagram 4. Characteristics of Exposed Students



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that the characteristic of students who are exposed to religious extremism are students who have the attitude of feeling the most correct with the understanding or teachings they adhere to and like to heresy the practice of Islamic teachings that are not following their opinions. These students do not hesitate to disbelieve other Muslims who disagree with them. The following characteristic is a closed social pattern. Students who are exposed to religious extremism become very introverted, rarely hanging out with their friends. In addition, their academic performance has declined because they no longer focus on college lessons. A change in character and temperament also accompanies this change in social attitude. Adherents of religious extremism seem stubborn and temperamental when invited to discuss and deliberate together. The politeness that appears at the beginning of the introduction is usually just a camouflage that they use to trick other students into wanting to enter and join their teachings.

## **Analysis of the Origin of Students' Schools Exposed to Religious Extremism in the Contemporary Era**

As a movement, this extremism mainly targets young people. Haula Noor said in a popular science article published in *The Conversation* that the younger generation is particularly vulnerable to being targeted by extremist movements.<sup>31</sup> In addition, some say that this is due to the characteristics of the younger generation: addicted to the internet, low loyalty, indifferent to politics, and love to share. In addition, the younger generation is going through a period of self-discovery, so they are more vulnerable to new teachings. Therefore, this is dangerous and worrying because the young generation is the bearer of the country's future baton and the most significant contributor to Indonesia's demographic composition.<sup>32</sup>

The target of youth or students who want to be recruited by adherents of religious extremism are students who come from public schools and have not mastered the teachings of Islam in depth. This election is not without reason; students whose religious scientific background is weak will be easily lied to or politicized. This is as the data from the interviews,

*"The easy target of understanding religious extremism is religious-hungry students whose religious understanding is shallow. High and vocational school graduates are very vulnerable to this understanding because they still do not know which teachings are good or only in the name of Islamic teachings."*<sup>33</sup>

*"Students at religious universities are still vulnerable to exposure to religious extremism because when they enter religious universities, they do not have in-depth religious knowledge, especially those who are only high school graduates. Adherents of religious extremism use the innocence of these new students to insert their doctrines."*<sup>34</sup>

*"Religious spirit, if not balanced with a deep scientific foundation, will be easily directed to negative things prohibited by religious teachings. Adherents of religious extremism are unaware that they are violating religious teachings under the pretext of carrying out religious teachings."*<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Amanah Nurish, "Dari Fanatisme Ke Ekstremisme: Ilusi, Kecemasan, Dan Tindakan Kekerasan," *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya*, 1 September 2019, 31–40, <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.829>.

<sup>32</sup> A. Iskakov, T. Akimzhanov, and G. Zhunisbayeva, "Changes to the System for Preventing the Spread of Religious Extremism to Improve the Efficiency of the Penitentiary System: Experience of the Kazakhstan," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 12, no. 3 (2023): 373–386, <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2023-0085>.

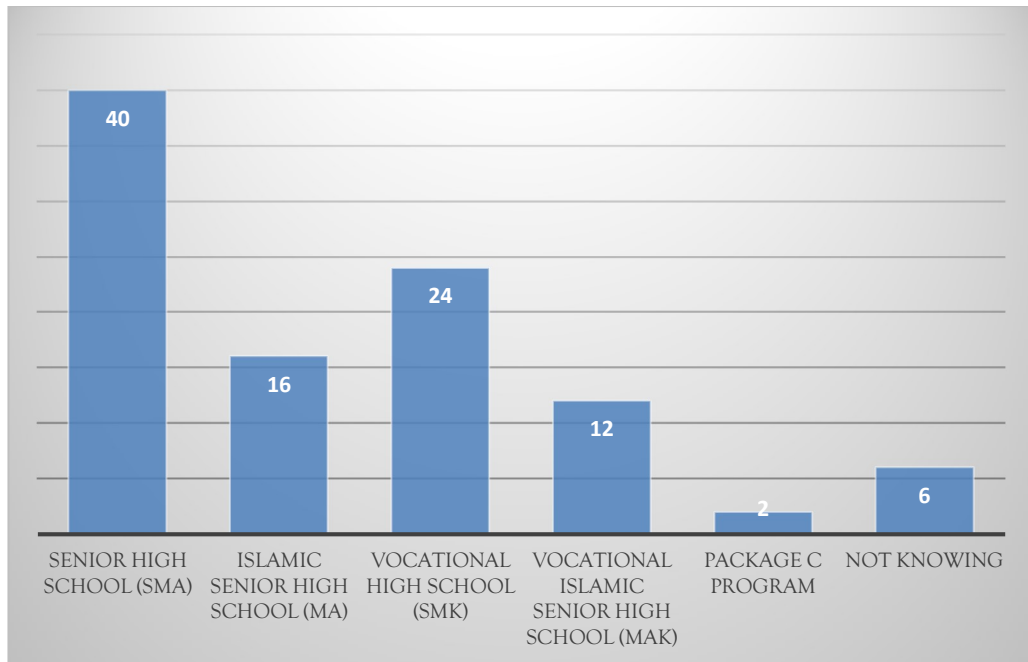
<sup>33</sup> Ismail, Personal Interview, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Fikri, Personal Interview, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Fathoni, Personal interview, 2024.

This data is corroborated by the results of a survey that shows that as many as 66% of students' backgrounds exposed to religious extremism come from public schools, with details of 40% coming from high school, 24% from vocational schools, and 2% from package C programs. This data can be seen in the diagram below,

Diagram 5. Background of Students Exposed to Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

Based on the data above, it can be seen that students who come from a religious-based school are safer and more potent in resisting religious extremism when compared to schools based on general knowledge.

### **Analysis of the Impact of Religious Extremism in the Contemporary Era**

Religious extremism has several impacts on the broader community, which does not follow the teachings or understanding of religious extremism.<sup>36</sup> The character who feels the most right is one of the triggers for social conflicts in society. Adherents of religious extremism often trigger conflicts by blaming religious tridents that have become a custom in society. This is as the data from the interviews,

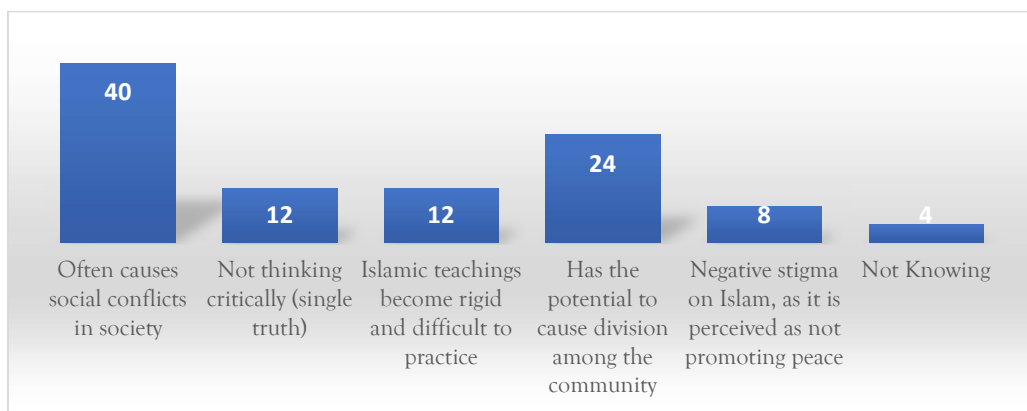
<sup>36</sup> Muhamad Tisna Nugraha, "Dampak Aksi Ekstrimisme Dan Terorisme Terhadap Collective Punishment Pada Wanita Dan Anak-Anak," *Jurnal Harkat : Media Komunikasi Gender* 12, no. 1 (12 Februari 2016): 49-55.

"Where the earth is stepped on, the sky is carried, the proverb everyone must hold. However, many adherents of extremism, when they are in society and see religious traditions, become angry and blame the tradition. This uncompromising attitude and rejection triggered the occurrence of horizontal conflicts in society."<sup>37</sup>

"Islamic sharia becomes rigid and difficult to adapt to the local community if it follows the teachings of religious extremism. As a result, da'wah activities, originally a medium for transferring religious knowledge, turned into an arena of argumentation, often leading to insults and ridicule."<sup>38</sup>

This data follows the survey results, which show several negative impacts of religious extremism.

Diagram 6. The Negative Impact of Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

Based on this survey, it is known that as many as 40% of informants stated that religious extremism often causes social conflicts in society. As many as 12% of informants stated that adherents of religious extremism often do not think critically about religious teachings. Actualization of Islamic teachings is almost not carried out at all. In addition, they often claim the truth of the truth, only their teachings are the most correct, and blame other teachings for not being in line with their thinking. As many as 12% of informants stated that adherents of religious extremism caused Islamic teachings to become rigid and difficult to practice. As many as 24% of informants stated that adherents of religious extremism have the potential to cause division among the people. As many as 8% of informants stated that adherents of religious extremism often cause a negative stigma on Islam because it seems that they do not love peace. As

<sup>37</sup> Ruslim, Personal Interview, 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Darwansya, Personal Interview, 2024.



many as 4% of informants stated that they did not know the negative impact of religious extremism.

### **PTKIN Students' Response to Religious Extremism in Indonesia in the Contemporary Era**

In the Contemporary era, the phenomenon of religious extremism is often shown by certain religious groups. News of acts of religious extremism often appears on television screens and social media. The events of religious conflicts in Poso and Ambon are clear examples of acts of violence in the name of religion. The conflict in Poso, which involved the conflict between Islam and Christianity, resulted in mass riots that resulted in many deaths, injuries, and places of worship and houses that irresponsible individuals burned in 1998-2001. This conflict has also made women, adult men, parents, teenagers, children, the elderly, and all ages from all walks of life and backgrounds, without exception, dragged and forced into the margins and vortex of prolonged, bloody, violent conflicts. Poso, which was initially peaceful and can be said to be a miniature of Indonesia, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, then turned into a place of contention and bloody social conflicts involving ethnic and religious elements.<sup>39</sup>

This act of violence in the name of religion does not only occur in Indonesia but also in other countries often occurs. For example, India, from various data, explains the high intensity of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in various regions of India in the last decade. In 2015, there were dozens of acts of violence committed by Hindu mobs against Muslim minorities due to the issue of Muslim men marrying Hindu women and killing cows. The Hindu-Muslim conflict in the same year was a mob attack on Muslims in the village of Atali in Ballabhgarh, Haryana. They attacked using bamboo sticks, iron, and swords. The conflict triggered by the seizure of a mosque land resulted in 400 Muslims losing their homes and displacement in the area.

The next Hindu-Muslim conflict occurred throughout 2022. According to Human Rights Watch data, throughout April 2022, in the state of Madhya Pradesh, dozens of houses and shops were destroyed, mostly owned by Muslims. In October

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<sup>39</sup> Igneus Alganih, "Konflik Poso (Kajian Historis Tahun 1998-2001)," *Criksetra: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah* 5, no. 2 (8 September 2017), <https://doi.org/10.36706/jc.v5i2.4814>.

2022, there was violence against 19 Muslims and the burning of houses carried out by Hindu hardliners. Hardline Hindu groups such as the RSS and the Bajrang Dal carried out violent acts by chanting anti-Muslim slogans in front of mosques.<sup>40</sup>

Conflicts between religions that occur domestically and in other countries need to be responded to, and solutions must be found so that future conflicts like this do not recur. Violence in the name of religion is certainly not justified intellectually because all religions teach kindness to their respective adherents. Islam itself, as a peace-loving religion, strongly condemns violence committed in the name of religion.

Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia are a beacon of Islamic science that spreads the teachings and messages of Islamic peace, so it is appropriate to respond to acts of religious extremism that often occur recently. Based on the survey, it was concluded that the majority of informants, as many as 64%, responded disagreeing with religious extremism; 4% strongly disagreed. Meanwhile, informants who strongly agree with religious extremism, 4% and 28% of informants stated that they did not agree with religious extremism. More details can be seen in the diagram below,

Diagram 7. Response to Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

Based on the survey that has been carried out, it is known that the total number of informants who agree with religious extremism is 32%, a large number when looking at the PTKIN Campus as a beacon of Islamic science. Therefore, researchers are interested in knowing why they agree with religious extremism. One of the reasons why there are still many supporters of religious extremism is the existence of misinformation

<sup>40</sup> Bastian-Yunariono, "Konflik Umat Hindu - Muslim Di India Era Pemerintahan Narendra Modi," *Paradigma: Jurnal Masalah Sosial, Politik, dan Kebijakan* 27, no. 2 (31 Juli 2023): 219-237, <https://doi.org/10.31315/paradigma.v27i2.9808>.

related to the true nature of religious extremism. Many people mistakenly suspect that religious extremism is a strong understanding of carrying out religious law. However, it turns out that the fact is that religious extremism makes religion a legitimation to achieve all goals by legalizing all means.

### **Recruitment Patterns of Religious Extremists in Influencing Students**

The Understanding of Religious Extremism has spread to Islamic religious universities and has become a serious problem that must be dealt with immediately; this is considering that PTKIN is the source of the spread of Islamic teachings. If the source has been contaminated with this understanding, it will be difficult to eradicate the existence of this extreme understanding in society. Universities, especially PTKIN, have the authority and responsibility to escort and assist the Muslim generation; in this case, students become a moderate Muslim generation.

At this time, universities, especially PTKIN, are faced with many challenges that can be a threat to the Muslim generation, especially students. Among them is exposure to ideas that deviate from religious values, such as liberalism and radicalism, as the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) reported in 2017, which stated that seven state universities (PTN) were exposed to extremism and radicalism.<sup>41</sup> In addition, there are 39% of students in 15 provinces show interest in extremism and radicalism, which can be categorized into three levels, namely: low, medium, and high. Although this interest is still limited to empathy, prevention must be carried out early so that this tendency does not develop into participation. The Setara Institute found an even more surprising fact. Through research conducted until April 2019, this institution found that at least 10 state universities (PTN) in Indonesia have been exposed to religious extremism and radicalism.<sup>42</sup> The 10 State Universities (PTN) include; University of Indonesia (UI), UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), UIN Sunan

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<sup>41</sup> "BIN: 7 Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Terpapar Paham Radikal," diakses 14 Juli 2024, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/11/20/23070271/bin-7-perguruan-tinggi-negeri-terpapar-paham-radikal>.

<sup>42</sup> Muhaamd Ilham Saputra, "Peran PTKIN Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Generasi Muslim Yang Moderat," *Ma'had AlJami'ah* (blog), 27 November 2022, <https://al-jamiah.radenintan.ac.id/kegiatan/kti-peran-ptkin-dalam-pembentukan-karakter-generasi-muslim-yang-moderat/>.

Gunung Djati Bandung, Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), and Gadjah Mada University (UGM). Research was also carried out at Yogyakarta State University (UNY), Brawijaya University (Unibraw), Mataram University (Unram), and Airlangga University (Unair).<sup>43</sup>

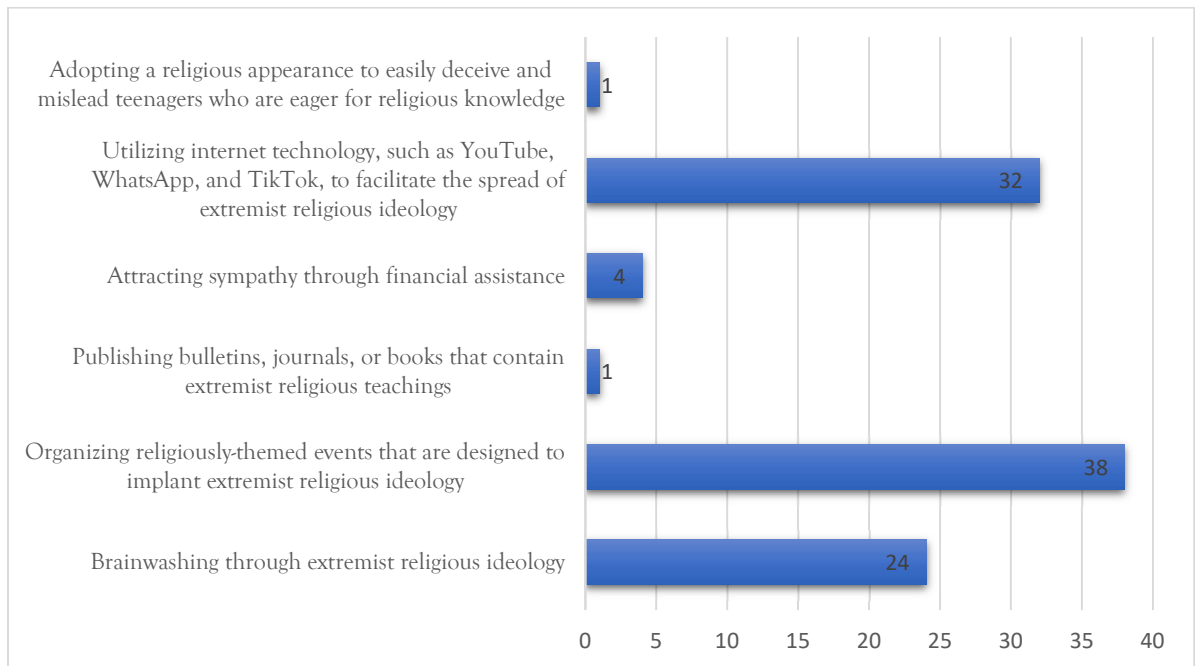
To eradicate religious extremism in Islamic religious universities, it is essential first to understand the recruitment strategies used by adherents of religious extremism. Based on the survey results, it is known that as many as 38% of informants stated that the recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism is by making events under the guise of religion whose content is packaged with the cultivation of religious extremism. As many as 32% of informants stated that the recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism is by utilizing internet technology, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and tiktok, to facilitate the spread of religious extremism. As many as 24% of informants stated that the recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism is by way of brainwashing with extreme religious ideology.

As many as 4% of informants stated that the recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism is to attract sympathy with financial assistance. As many as 1% of informants stated that the recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism is by publishing bulletins, journals, or books containing religious extremism teachings. As many as 1% of informants stated that the recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism is to appear religious in order to easily deceive and mislead teenagers who are thirsty for religious knowledge. For more details, please see the table below,

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<sup>43</sup> Asriani, *Radikalisme Pemahaman Keagamaan Pada Mahasiswa Muslim Di Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Di Provinsi Lampung*. (LP2M UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2019), <http://repository.radenintan.ac.id/12890/>.

Diagram 8. Religious extremist recruitment strategy



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

Holding religious activities whose content is packaged by instilling religious extremism is the most effective recruitment strategy carried out by adherents of religious extremism. Students who have a high enthusiasm for learning religion are easily indoctrinated with extreme teachings. Generally, these students have not been able to filter which teachings are good and which are deviant from Islamic law because most of them are graduates of public schools, not religious school graduates.

The second effective strategy is the use of internet technology, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and tiktok, to facilitate the spread of religious extremism. The use of social media platforms as an effective means of da'wah is due to the flexibility and convenience of social media platforms. Creating one da'wah content containing religious extremism's teachings and doctrines can be watched and shared thousands of times. The ease of accessing this da'wah content online allows students to open it when they have free time, wherever and whenever they want.

These two strategies, according to the researcher, are the ultimate strategy that makes religious extremism still exist and gain space until now, both public campuses and religious campuses.

## **Strategic Steps to Handle the Spread of Religious Extremism in PTKIN**

Preventing the spread of religious extremism on the PTKIN campus is very urgent because many campuses have been exposed to this understanding. This prevention effort must be carried out intensively and integrated. The first step in preventing the spread of this understanding can be started in the academic field. Countering the narrative of extremism can be done by strengthening religious understanding by inserting religious moderation values when lecturers teach courses. This method is very effective because students will get nutritional intake daily to understand religious moderation. Students will get authentic information related to the correct understanding of Islamic teachings. This is as the data from the interviews,

*"The insertion of religious moderation scores in courses effectively enlightens students. An effective doctrine is the doctrine that the mission of the prophet is to put as many people as possible into heaven, in contrast to the mission of Satan, which puts as many people as possible into hell. This doctrine made many students aware of whether they wanted to become ambassadors of the apostles or Satan. When a human being has a feeling of happiness, if another human being commits disobedience or dies in disobedience, then the human being is an ambassador of Satan."<sup>44</sup>*

Doctrines like this, if conveyed when delivering lecture materials, will gradually be imprinted in the students' subconscious so that in the future, it will form a moderate student character in practising Islamic law. Moderate here means that the practice of Islamic Sharia is not extreme to the right or extreme left but following the practice of Islam taught by the prophet. The prophet Muhammad, when he was expelled from the city of *Taif*, was not angry even though, at that time, he refused his da'wah and was even stoned by the children of the city of *Taif*. The prophet rejected the offer of the guardian angel of the mountain when he offered to destroy the city of *Taif* because the prophet was well aware that his vision and mission of being sent as an apostle was to save and enter as many people as possible into heaven. If the prophet agrees to the offer of the guardian angel of the mountain to destroy the city of *Taif*, then it is the same as the prophet supporting the program of Satan to put as many people as possible into hell. This happened because the *taif* people who were disobedient and disbelievers died in disbelief and iniquity when destroyed.

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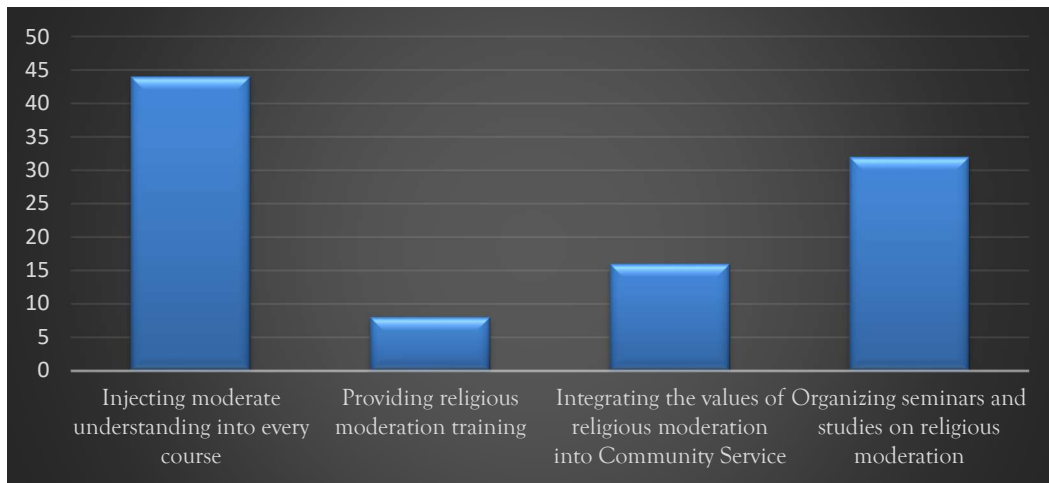
<sup>44</sup> Aulia Nurusyifa Elabida, Personal interview, 2024.

Unless the disbelievers start a war first and want to destroy the Muslims, then Muslims are allowed to defend themselves. Rasulullah and his companions hold this principle: the wars that occurred in the time of the prophet and his companions all began with the provocation of the infidels who wanted to destroy Islam.

This fact needs to be disseminated and conveyed repeatedly to students so that students understand the essence of Islamic da'wah very well. Islam is a peace-loving religion and not a religion that spreads terror or does arbitrariness against other human beings.

The data related to the strengthening of religious understanding (academic field) is also supported by the survey results, which stated that 44% of informants stated that the program to strengthen religious understanding (academic field) was implemented by inserting a moderate understanding in each course. As many as 32% of informants stated that the program to strengthen religious understanding (academic) was conducted by holding seminars and studies on religious moderation. As many as 16% of informants stated that the program to strengthen religious understanding (academic) was carried out by integrating the values of religious moderation in the Real Work Lecture (KKN) program. Real Work Lectures (KKN) are a very appropriate medium because students can transfer the value of religious moderation to the community directly during KKN activities. As many as 8% of informants stated that the program to strengthen religious understanding (academic) was carried out by providing religious moderation training. This religious moderation training is carried out on a regional and national scale. This training aims to share knowledge, experience, and solutions to counteract the spread of religious extremism in their respective regions. More details of this data can be seen in the diagram below,

Diagram 9. Religious understanding (academic)



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

The key to the program's success in strengthening religious understanding (academic) is the continuity of this program. This activity should not be carried out temporarily or at any time. The way that this activity can always maintain continuity is by using technology. Seminars, studies, or religious moderation training must be broadcast on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, website, or other online media. The function of using online media is to allow the content of the event to be accessed anytime, anywhere, and by anyone so that the community at large can feel the benefits.

The next effort to strengthen religious understanding is through non-academic fields. This effort prevention in the non-academic field is essential considering the large number of non-academic activities. Many students participated in Student Organization (Ormawa) activities. Ormawa has an important role in campus life. Ormawa is not only a forum for students to channel their interests and talents but also plays a role in developing soft skills, leadership, and non-academic experiences that support student character formation. Great potential must be used to inhibit the spread of religious extremism. This is as a result of the interview,

*"Efforts to prevent religious extremism must be carried out comprehensively in the academic and non-academic fields. The field that needs more attention is the non-academic field because, in this field, the campus is often careless so that sometimes it is infiltrated by religious extremism."<sup>45</sup>*

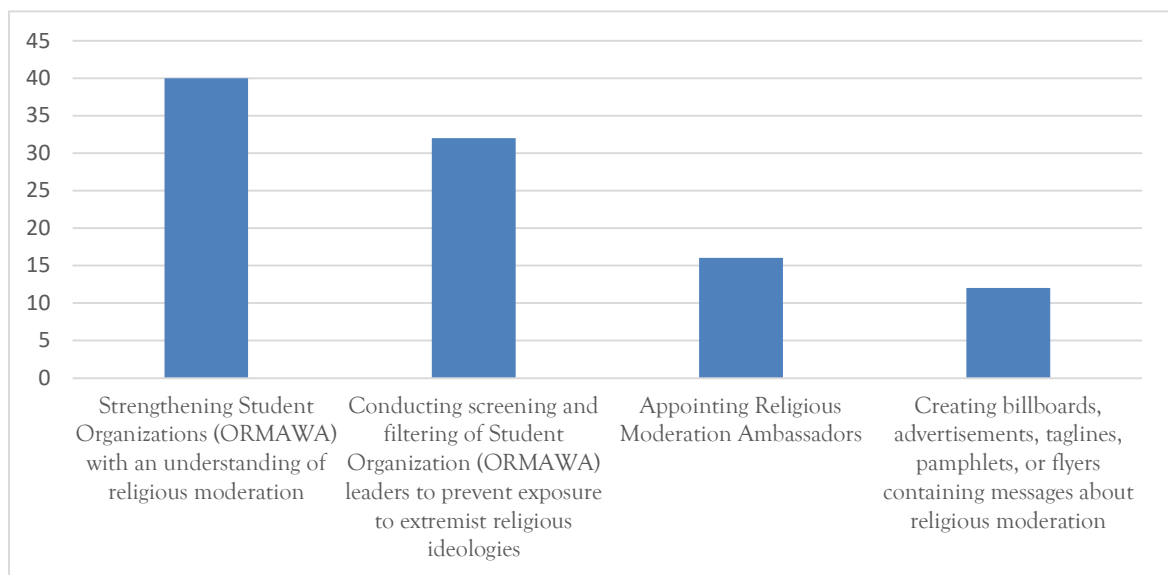
<sup>45</sup> Abdul Cecep Jalaludin, Personal Interview, 2024.



"Ormawa can be an effective medium in stemming the influence of religious extremism among students. This can happen because the one who understands students the most is the student himself. If students become agents or ambassadors for eradicating religious extremism, it will be more effective because they can mingle directly with students exposed to this understanding without being suspected."<sup>46</sup>

The results of this interview are strengthened by survey data related to promoting religious understanding (non-academic field). As many as 40% of informants stated that promoting religious understanding (non-academic field) was promoted by strengthening ORMAWA with an understanding of religious moderation. As many as 32% of informants stated that collecting religious understanding (non-academic field) was done by screening and filtering the Ormawa Management so they would not be exposed to religious extremism. As many as 16% of informants stated that the gathering of religious understanding (non-academic field) was carried out by appointing Religious Moderation Ambassadors, as many as 12% of informants stated that the gathering of religious understanding (non-academic field) was carried out by making billboards, reklama, taglines, pamphlets or leaflets containing religious moderation. For more details, you can see the diagram below.

Diagram 10. Religious understanding (non-academic field)



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

Plans for handling extremism must be carried out systematically and integrated. Therefore, all potential (academic/non-academic fields) that the campus can develop in the future must be used to the maximum. Each campus has a data server connected

<sup>46</sup> Sendi Reza Sadewa, Personal Interview, 2024.

to the internet, but it has not been used for integrated data storage to handle extremism. The creation of this online database is urgent, either to track adherents of religious extremism or to update the latest information. Information retrieval can be done quickly and easily by using an online database. Online databases can group, sort, and even calculate methodically. With the right design, the presentation of information will be done quickly and easily.

The urgency of this online database has been conveyed by many colleagues in the field who are fighting at the forefront of destroying the spread of religious extremism. This is the results of the interview,

*"In the military world, information is one of the keys to the success of a mission. In addition, in the issue of preventing religious extremism, information is an absolute necessity that must exist. It is time for us to have an online database that contains data on handling and preventing the spread of religious extremism both in Indonesia and internationally."<sup>47</sup>*

An online database is a primary need in today's modern era. Where mobility and speed of accessing data are in demand if you do not want to be left behind by others. Data mapping can be used to help appropriate policies in countering the spread of religious extremism. In addition to the need for this online database, many other potentials can be developed in the future.

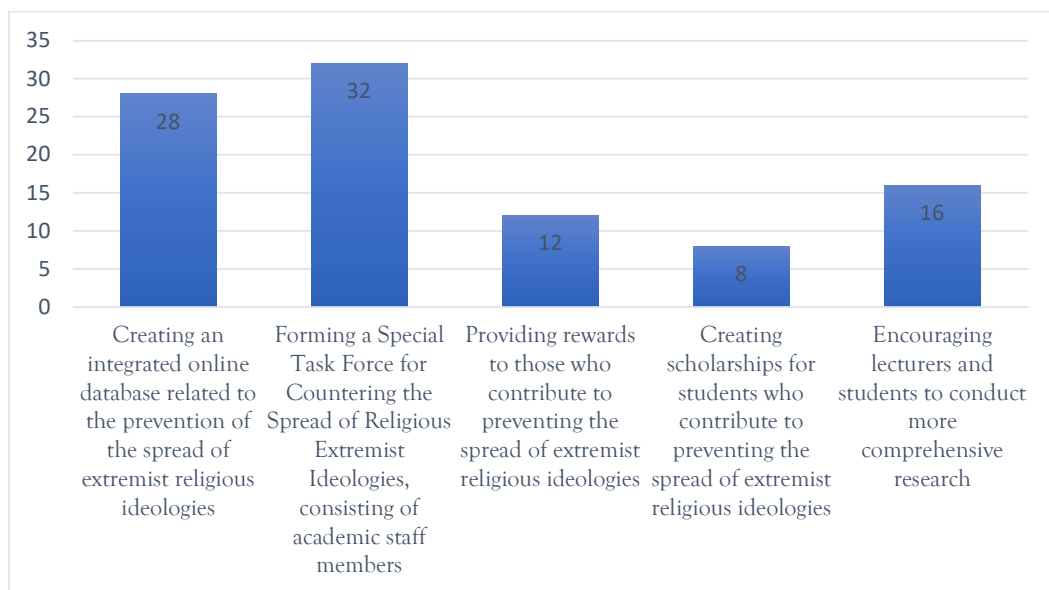
Based on the survey results, it is known that the potential of academic and non-academic fields to prevent the spread of "Religious Extremism" on campus are as follows. As many as 32% of informants stated that the development of campus potential that can be done in the future is the formation of a special task force to counter the spread of religious extremism, which consists of the academic community. As many as 28% of informants stated that the development of campus potential that can be done in the future is to create an integrated database (online) related to the prevention of the spread of religious extremism. As many as 20% of informants stated that the development of campus potential that can be done in the future is to provide rewards to parties who contribute to preventing the spread of religious extremism. As many as 12% of informants stated that the development of campus potential that can be done

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<sup>47</sup> Ahmad Suraji, Personal Interview, 2024.

in the future is to provide scholarships for students who have contributed to preventing the spread of religious extremism. As many as 8% of informants stated that the development of campus potential that can be done in the future is to encourage lecturers and students to conduct more comprehensive research. For more details, please see the table below,

Diagram 11. Potential (academic/non-academic) to prevent the spread of Religious Extremism



Source: Religious Extremism Survey 2024

If the potential above is realized, the results will be extraordinary in suppressing the spread of religious extremism on campus. This integrated and systematic system of dealing with religious extremism can be effective.

## CONCLUSION

After conducting comprehensive research, three important conclusions were obtained; first, in the contemporary era, the majority of students of State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia disagreed with Religious Extremism, but there was still a minority group of students who gave a positive response by agreeing to the existence of Religious Extremism. One of the reasons why there are still supporters of religious extremism is the existence of misinformation related to the true nature of religious

extremism. Second, the recruitment strategy for Religious Extremism at State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia is carried out in various ways, among others: holding religious activities whose content is packaged by instilling religious extremism. The following strategy is to utilize internet technology, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and TikTok. Social media platforms are effective for da'wah because of their flexibility and convenience. Students can access da'wah content online wherever and whenever they want. The following strategy is to purify the brain with extreme religious ideology, attract sympathy with financial assistance, publish bulletins, journals, or books containing religious extremism teachings, and appear religious to easily deceive and mislead teenagers who are thirsty for religious knowledge.

Third, efforts to prevent religious extremism in students of state Islamic religious universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia are divided into two parts: strengthening religious understanding in the academic field and strengthening understanding in non-academic fields. Strengthening religious understanding in the academic field is carried out by inserting a moderate understanding in each course, holding seminars and studies on religious moderation, integrating the values of religious moderation in the Real Work Lecture (KKN) program, and providing religious moderation training. This religious moderation training is carried out on a regional and national scale. This training aims to share knowledge, experience and solutions to counteract the spread of religious extremism in their respective regions. Meanwhile, the program to strengthen non-academic religious understanding is carried out in several ways, including strengthening ORMAWA with an understanding of religious moderation, screening and filtering Ormawa Management so that they are not exposed to religious extremism, appointing Religious Moderation Ambassadors, making billboards, reklama, taglines, pamphlets or leaflets containing religious moderation.

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#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT**

All authors played an important role in completing this research. Supardi Mursalin was responsible for developing the main ideas, designing the methods, analyzing the data, and writing the manuscript. Hamdan provided guidance and supervision and helped review and refine the manuscript. Robeet Thadi focused on collecting and verifying data and contributed to building the theoretical framework. Mohamad Salik conducted the literature review, organized the data, and wrote the findings and discussion sections. M. Fijar Ishlahul Ummah handled technical tasks, created visual materials, and ensured the manuscript was formatted correctly for submission. Each author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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