

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF MOSQUE YOUTH COMMUNITIES IN ACEH BESAR REGENCY TO COUNTER BRAINWASHING AND DESTRUCTIVE CYBERBULLYING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

Mosque youth in Aceh Besar Regency are a vulnerable group exposed to radicalism on social media, often framed through religious issues. A community engagement program in the form of mentoring for this group can serve as an effort to raise awareness, build understanding, and develop media literacy skills. This initiative targets individuals from Generations X, Y, and Z who have strong religious habituation within the mosque environment, ensuring they are not trapped by hoaxes and radical narratives disguised as religious tendencies. The goal is to prevent their enthusiasm for social media from becoming a medium for brainwashing, cyberbullying, and mobilization towards radical thinking and actions, which could ultimately lead to legal consequences.

Keywords: Social Media Radicalism, Mosque Youth, Media Literacy

INTRODUCTION

A study conducted by the Research and Community Service Institute (Puslitpen LP2M) of UIN Ar-Raniry in 2023 found positive changes among former terrorism convicts (napiter) from Aceh who had previously joined ISIS. These ex-convicts demonstrated more moderate attitudes, behaviors, and thinking. Similar findings were observed in former convicts involved in military training in Aceh Besar. Research by Fakhri et al. (2023) revealed that social media plays a significant role in attracting individuals to engage in radical and terrorist activities. Despite intensive government efforts to combat terrorism, such as raiding training camps and arresting perpetrators, the spread of radical content through social media remains a major challenge in preventing acts of terrorism.

Exposure to radical content on social media has created a fertile environment for the growth of extremist ideologies among the youth in Aceh Besar. The case of Zakiah Aini, who was exposed to radical information through social media and later connected with terrorist networks, illustrates how easily vulnerable individuals can be influenced and drawn into violent acts based on extremist ideologies. Although no physical attacks have occurred in the past three years, the threat of radicalism persists. The COVID-19 pandemic has led many people, especially young individuals, to spend more time online, making them more susceptible to radical ideologies through misinformation spread via social media.

This situation aligns with a 2020 survey conducted by Indonesia's National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), which indicated that radicalism with potential implications for terrorism is prevalent among young Indonesian internet users. The survey found that the radicalism potential index for Generation Z reached 12.7%, Millennials 12.4%, and Generation X 11.7%. This trend is closely linked to the consumption of religious content on the internet. The survey concluded that young people and internet users actively seeking religious content have a higher radicalism potential

index (12.6%) than those who do not (10.8%). Additionally, those who frequently share religious content online have a higher radicalism index (13.3%) than those who do not (11.2%). Despite numerous studies highlighting the potential for radicalization among urban youth, particularly those engaged in religious communities, efforts to guide and provide proper understanding of radicalism remain insufficient. If left unaddressed, this situation could become increasingly dangerous, as witnessed in Aceh's past, where terrorist groups successfully recruited and trained many young people. To prevent history from repeating itself, intensive programs are needed to enhance young people's ability to recognize and counter misinformation and radical ideologies circulating on social media.

Social Media

Social media is a digital public space that enables individuals and groups to interact, share information, and build communities online. These platforms have transformed how people communicate, relate, and understand the world. The definition of social media is dynamic and multifaceted, making it difficult to pinpoint a single understanding. Experts offer various perspectives reflecting the complexity of this phenomenon. Mandibergh, for instance, emphasizes social media as a platform for user collaboration in content creation, while Rulli (2017) focuses on its role in shaping individual existence within the platform. Antony Mayfield takes a more philosophical approach, viewing social media as a reflection of humanity itself—fundamentally social beings who continuously interact and collaborate (Suryanto, 2018). Indonesia's younger generation has become highly dependent on social media, reaching an alarming level. Almost every aspect of daily life, from waking up to bedtime, revolves around smartphones. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become addictive. Time that could be spent on studying, face-to-face socializing, or even resting is instead consumed by the digital world. Excessive social media use not only affects mental and physical health but also hinders productivity and social development among teenagers.

Radicalism

Radicalism is an ideology aimed at overthrowing societal systems from their roots. Its adherents believe that radical change is the only solution, even if it requires violence, such as bombings. Narrow religious interpretations often justify these extreme actions, particularly amid social inequalities (Zainudin Fanani, 2022). From the perspective of radical groups (Agus Purnomo, 2009), religious violence is considered a solution to religious deviations. They believe that through violence, they can force society to return to the "true" and "pure" understanding of religion. However, Islamic teachings emphasize tolerance and peace. Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, one of the largest Islamic schools of thought, has formulated four core principles for social life: tolerance, moderation, balance, and justice. These principles serve as guidelines for Muslims in interacting with others and fostering a harmonious society (Slamet Efendi, 2019). The rise of terrorism and intolerance under the guise of religion poses a serious threat to national unity. Efforts to standardize religious interpretations and eliminate local traditions have caused divisions within society. Religious practices deeply rooted in Nusantara culture, such as Yasinan and Tahlilan, are considered heretical by certain groups. However, these activities reflect humanitarian and fraternal values that align with

religious teachings.

Spread Of Radical Ideologies

Proponents of radical Islamic ideologies have effectively utilized various media and communication channels to propagate their beliefs. They have exploited platforms ranging from mosque sermons and closed meetings to modern technology, such as social media, websites, and instant messaging apps. This sophisticated approach allows radical messages to reach diverse audiences, particularly young people who are increasingly immersed in digital technology (Abdul Munip, 2022). Radicalism and terrorism can be classified into two categories. The first includes militant and hardline radical-terrorist groups that have historically existed across different societies. The second category consists of individuals who are not inherently militant radicals but possess characteristics that make them susceptible to radicalization.

The Impact of Social Media on Youth

The influence of social media on young people is complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, digital platforms provide unlimited access to information and enable connections with peers worldwide. On the other hand, excessive social media use can have significant negative impacts. For teenagers, dependency on social media can isolate them from real-world interactions. They may feel more comfortable engaging in virtual conversations and constructing digital identities different from their true selves. As a result, they may withdraw from social interactions, become less empathetic, and focus more on online activities. This behavior can hinder their emotional and social development, ultimately affecting their ability to build healthy relationships (Sudarsono, 1991). The surrounding community also feels the impact of behavioral changes in young people due to social media use. A growing sense of apathy and individualism often prevents teenagers from participating in social activities. Many believe that societal issues are solely the responsibility of parents or authorities, leading to disengagement. However, active participation in community affairs is essential for character development and social responsibility. Additionally, parent-child relationships have undergone significant changes due to social media. Parents often struggle to understand their children's digital world, which is constantly evolving with new trends and terminologies. This generational gap widens the emotional distance between them. Teenagers feel misunderstood, while parents worry about the negative effects of social media on their children's development.

Radical Teachings In Social Media

Terrorism is a highly debated concept in social sciences due to its political and ideological implications. Aceh has historically been a breeding ground for various ideological movements, including ethnonationalism, separatism, territorial terrorism, capitalism, liberalism, socialism, communism, and even Zionism. In recent years, new ideologies such as Takfirism and Jihadi Wahhabism have also emerged (Alchaidar, 2015). The people of Aceh were once indifferent to terrorism-related activities, leading to the establishment of a military training camp in the Jalin mountains of Aceh Besar. Although short-lived, the camp successfully indoctrinated and trained over 100 individuals, including former members of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Between early 2009 and March 2010, these recruits underwent military-style training, fostering radical mindsets,

attitudes, and planning. Unlike past conditions, radical indoctrination today is largely conducted through social media. Many individuals from Generations X, Y, and Z are exposed to radical content wrapped in religious narratives, shaping their thinking, behavior, and habits. Several cases have shown that youth, influenced by hoaxes and radical content, have been mobilized to carry out terror acts or cyberbullying. Without realizing it, such actions can lead to legal consequences. Therefore, young mosque communities, as part of Generations X, Y, and Z, must develop critical thinking skills and ethical awareness to prevent social media from being counterproductive to their religious engagement.

COMMUNITY SERVICE METHOD

To assess the impact of this mentoring program, a quasi-experimental design was employed. According to Creswell, quasi-experiments are experimental designs conducted without randomization but involve the assignment of participants into groups (Creswell, 2017). The one-group pretest-posttest design was used as the quasi-experimental approach. This pre-test and post-test method aimed to measure changes in the ability of mosque youth to identify harmful content before and after the mentoring intervention. The participants in this mentoring program consisted of 61 mosque youth representatives from various mosques located in coastal and central areas of Aceh Besar Regency.

IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

Activity Implementation and Location

The mentoring program for mosque youth in Aceh Besar was successfully conducted using face-to-face sessions and hands-on practice. Through presentations, demonstrations, and exercises, participants from diverse backgrounds—both from coastal and highland areas—enhanced their ability to counter radicalism and cyberbullying in the digital era. The pre-test and post-test method demonstrated the effectiveness of this program. This initiative specifically targeted mosque youth from two different regions: coastal areas (Baitussalam and Panga Villages) and highland areas (Samahani and Indrapuri Villages). Each session was facilitated by two individuals—a moderator and a facilitator. The invited speakers came from various backgrounds, including a former terrorism convict from Bukit Jalin, academics, and representatives from the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Forum. To ensure smooth execution, the organizing team and speakers held a briefing session the day before the event, conducted both in person and online.

The training program for mosque youth in Aceh Besar was a success. The training covered identifying and combating radical ideologies and online bullying (cyberbullying), as well as using social media responsibly. It was conducted through lectures, discussions, and hands-on practice. The event lasted two days, with participation from numerous mosque youth. The main goal of this program was to prevent mosque youth in Aceh Besar from being influenced by radical ideologies and online bullying. The training was carried out through face-to-face activities, including lectures, discussions, and hands-on practice. The participants were mosque youth from several mosques in Aceh Besar, and the program was held on May 26 and June 25, 2024, for a total duration of two days. The training ran smoothly and was expected to be beneficial for the participants.

A total of 61 mosque youth from different backgrounds participated, representing:

- a. Masjid Tuha Indrapuri
- b. Masjid Nurul Jadid Gampong Aneuk Glee
- c. Masjid Baitul Magdis, Gampong Seuot
- d. Masjid Assyuhada
- e. Masjid Taqwa Gampong Lam Pupok Indrapuri

The program on the first day lasted for half a day, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM WIB. It began with an opening ceremony, followed by an explanation of the training objectives and mechanisms. Participants took a pre-test to assess their initial understanding of the topics covered. These pre-test results served as a basis for designing a more effective mentoring program tailored to participants' needs. The second day ran as a full-day intensive session from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, divided into two intensive sessions. The event received strong support from Imam Chik Tuha Abu Indra Puri, who not only distributed invitations but also attended in person to motivate the participants.

Mosque Youth's Understanding and Awareness of Legal Aspects in Social Media

The advancement of information technology has led to the emergence of various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, transforming the way people communicate, interact, and access information. Most mosque youth are deeply influenced by social media, using it as a source of information, discussion platform, and even a marketplace. The interactive features of social media allow users to share information quickly and easily, as well as engage in online commerce. Consequently, social media has become an inseparable part of modern life while providing numerous benefits to its users (Interview with mentoring participants, Masjid Tuha, Indrapuri). The digital revolution has fueled the rise of social media applications, significantly altering global communication landscapes. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and messaging apps have made it easier for individuals to engage in discussions, share information, and build connections worldwide. This is evident in the high engagement levels of mosque youth in this mentoring program (Interview, 2024).

Social media not only connects us with friends and family but also allows us to join communities with shared interests. The rapid growth of e-commerce is closely linked to social media's role in product promotion and sales. Despite its numerous benefits, social media also poses significant risks, such as the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and social media addiction. Therefore, it is crucial to use social media wisely and responsibly. To safeguard against these threats, digital literacy is key. Everyone must develop the ability to distinguish between genuine information and hoaxes to avoid falling victim to scams that exploit false information. Moreover, managing online identities wisely is essential:

- a. Limit personal information shared on social media.
- b. Use strong passwords and enable additional security features provided by digital platforms.

The facilitator introduced several strategies to protect personal data, as suggested by Bernal (2014):

1. Use strong passwords.
2. Create separate email accounts for personal and work purposes.
3. Enhance knowledge of digital security and best practices.
4. Avoid excessive sharing of personal activities and data.

Impact of the Mentoring Program on Mosque Youth in Aceh Besar in Identifying Hoax Content, Cyberbullying, and Destructive Radicalism on Social Media With the rapid development of information technology, social media has become an integral part of daily life, including for mosque youth. However, alongside its ease of access, social media presents serious challenges, such as the spread of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and radical content, which pose risks to security and well-being, especially for the younger generation. To address these challenges, a religion-based community service program was initiated. This program specifically targeted mosque youth in several districts of Aceh Besar Regency, equipping them with critical skills to identify and counter harmful content circulating on social media.



Figure 1. Mentoring on Characteristics of Radicalism

This session presented social media and issues of religion-based radicalism, enabling mosque youth to gain knowledge about blind adherence (taqlid buta), extremism, and militancy without religious tolerance.

Data Analysis Results

Normality Test

The normality test is used to determine whether the sample taken is based on a normally distributed population. Based on data processing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test with a significance level (α) of 0.05, the results of the normality test are as follows: The hypothesis test results for the Mosque Youth variable can be seen in the Tests of Normality table after being processed using SPSS. The normality test applied is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test method. Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, it can be understood that for the Mosque Youth variable in countering radicalism using social media, the obtained significance value is 0.02, which indicates Significance > 0.05. Thus, H_0 is accepted, and H_a is rejected, leading to the conclusion that there is a significant difference.

Paired Sample T-Test

The Paired Sample T-Test is used to determine whether there is a difference in the mean of two paired samples. The requirement for conducting a Paired Sample T-Test is that the data must be normally distributed. In performing the T-test, the researcher must consider the desired level of significance. The significance level indicates the probability of making an error in rejecting the null hypothesis.

- If the desired significance level is small (e.g., 0.01 or 0.05), the observed difference must be larger for the null hypothesis to be rejected.
- Conversely, if the desired significance level is higher (e.g., 0.10 or 0.20), the observed difference can be smaller for the null hypothesis to be rejected.

The data processing results can be seen in the following figure:

Paired Samples Test								
		Paired Differences						
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	HASIL PRETEST - HASIL POSTTEST	-24.775	4.335	.685	-26.161	-23.389	-36.144	<.001

Based on the figure above, it can be understood that the T-test result obtained is 0.01, which is greater than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test conducted on mosque youth. Furthermore, based on the N-Gain score analysis of the pre-test and post-test results using the social media literacy questionnaire, a percentage score of 63.8% was obtained. This 63.8% score falls into the "moderately effective" category, meaning that the intervention provided was moderately effective in countering brainwashing and destructive cyberbullying through social media literacy. The study results indicate that the intervention, in the form of training and mentoring, has had a significant positive impact on the youth's ability to identify hoax content, cyberbullying, and destructive radicalism on social media. This improvement demonstrates that effective and relevant mentoring can enhance youth awareness and skills in navigating digital challenges.

CONCLUSION

The community service program conducted in Aceh Besar Regency has shown highly satisfactory results in improving digital literacy among mosque youth. Several key points can be concluded as follows:

- Improved Ability to Identify Hoaxes:** Through intensive training programs, mosque youth now have better skills in distinguishing between accurate information and hoaxes. This is crucial in the digital era, which is filled with misleading information.
- Enhanced Ability to Tackle Cyberbullying:** The participants have gained sufficient knowledge about cyberbullying, its negative impacts, and strategies to prevent and address it. They now feel more confident in handling unpleasant situations in the online space.
- Increased Understanding of Destructive Radicalism:** The program has successfully instilled a deeper awareness of destructive radicalism and its dangers. Mosque youth are now more critical in assessing various religious and social issues circulating in society.
- Effectiveness of Training and Mentoring Programs:** The training and mentoring model applied

has proven effective in enhancing digital skills and awareness among youth. The combination of theoretical and practical approaches, along with support from mentors, has yielded optimal results.

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