

Localizing UNSCR 1325 in Indonesia: Study of Local Women Religious Groups in Peacebuilding and Counter Radicalization

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of UNSCR 1325 in Indonesia is a significant stage in recognizing women's role in the peace process at the national and local levels. This research is interested in examining how local communities, especially religious groups, perform their agency in peace-building, specifically counter-radicalization. This research questions the perception and strategies of women Quran study groups in Cilacap regency in counter-radicalization efforts and later provides an overview of peace-building and counter-radicalization activities by women religious groups in Cilacap. The research shows that these women religious groups' perceptions on radicalization influence their understanding as an agency in various counter-radicalization activities and contribute to building the foundation of peace in the community by strengthening society's resilience through social and religious activities.

Keywords: counter-radicalization, peace activism, women's agency, women Quran study groups

Adopsi UNSCR 1325 di Indonesia menjadi satu tahapan yang signifikan untuk mengakui peran perempuan dalam proses perdamaian, baik di level nasional hingga lokal. Dengan tujuan mempelajari cara komunitas lokal, khususnya kelompok-kelompok pengajian perempuan, berperan sebagai agensi dalam upaya bina damai di ranah kontra-radikalisasi, penelitian ini mempertanyakan persepsi dan strategi kelompok pengajian perempuan sebagai representasi kelompok perempuan dan kelompok agamis di Kabupaten Cilacap dalam upaya-upaya kontra-radikalisasi dan bina damai. Lebih lanjut, artikel ini memberikan gambaran mengenai aktivitas-aktivitas bina damai dan kontra radikalisasi oleh kelompok pengajian perempuan di Cilacap dan menjelaskan bagaimana persepsi mereka tentang radikalisasi memengaruhi pemahaman sebagai agensi dalam rangkaian aktivitas kontradikalisasi dan berperan dalam upaya mereka membangun fondasi bagi perdamaian positif di komunitas dengan penguatan ketahanan sosial melalui aktivitas-aktivitas sosial keagamaan.

Kata-kata kunci: kontra-radikalisasi, bina damai, agensi perempuan, kelompok pengajian perempuan

Various literature has shown that cases of terrorist attacks are not unique to modern times. However, after the 9/11 attack, the issue of terrorism became one of the leading security issues in international relations. On September 11, 2001, the United States declared its massive counterterrorism measure named the Global War on Terrorism to anticipate another massive terror attack, such as the Al Qaeda group attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, happen in the future. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, several religious-based terrorist groups, explicitly using the religion of Islam, have carried out a series of acts of terrorism since Indonesia's independence in 1945.

The proliferation of religious-based terrorist groups in Indonesia can be traced to the beginning of Indonesia's independence when a group named the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) or also known as Darul Islam (DI), led by Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwiryo, fought against the government in West Java during the early 1950s (Solahudin 2013). Even if the Indonesian government pressured NII and arrested many of its sympathizers, NII's initial idea of establishing a state based on Islamic law continued to receive support from several societal elements. For instance, in the 1970s, two of NII's former members who worked as teachers of the Al Mukmin Islamic boarding school in Ngruki-Central Java, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, formed an organization called Jamaah Islamiyyah (JI). Later on, JI was suspected to be responsible for Bali Bombing I in 2002 and the Bali bombing II in 2005.

Under the Indonesian National Counter-Terrorism Agency (2016), the Indonesian government has formulated two programs to counter radicalism: deradicalization and counter-radicalization. Deradicalization is an effort to assist radicalized people or groups in leaving terror and violent methods. Whereas counter-radicalization refers to the inculcation of Indonesian nonviolent values carried out through formal and non-formal education (Indonesian National Counter-Terrorism Agency 2016). Counter-radicalization can be conducted through formal teachings included in the school curriculum from elementary school to college level, or non-formally through religious activities (*pengajian*), youth activities (*Karang Taruna*), and social activities at the village and

neighborhood level.

In this contemporary era, Cilacap is one of the red zones of terrorism in Indonesia (Tempo 2013). Even though the previous finding was dated back in 2013, during in-depth discussions and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) held with various government agencies in Cilacap held in August 2019, it was emphasized that Cilacap's designation as the red zone of terrorism was still relevant. Geographically, the city of Cilacap includes the island of Nusakambangan, where the Nusakambangan prison is located. Nusakambangan prison is a place where convicts of significant terrorism cases in Indonesia are held. For example, it became the location for the execution of the bombers of Bali Bombing I, Amrozi, Muklas, and Imam Samudra, on November 9, 2008 (Tempo 2013).

Based on data from the official website of Statistics of Cilacap Regency (2018), Cilacap is the largest city in Central Java province, with an area of 225,360,840 hectares, divided into 24 sub-districts, 269 villages, and 15 sub-districts. This city has excellent industrial potential marked by an integrated industrial area that became the location of numerous notable industries, such as the Holcim cement factory, Pertamina oil and gas mining company, Julia International Foods Inc., and the steam power plant area. Furthermore, Cilacap also has a seaport named Tanjung Intan which currently provides access to the export-import process. The dynamics of the Cilacap area then become one of the reasons why the region attracts many migrants to enter and live temporarily or even permanently, including terrorist groups.

Given Cilacap's dynamic socio-economic state and its status as a red zone of terrorism, it is imperative to discover counter-radicalization strategies in the area. Concerning that, this research is particularly interested in studying women's experiences in Cilacap in confronting radicalism and conducting counter-radicalization efforts as part of the broad framework of women's role in peace study. The importance of women's roles in peace-building efforts has been increasingly recognized with the making of the Woman Peace and Security Agenda and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women and Peace. The resolution demonstrates the international commitment to pay

more attention to women's unique positions and needs, especially in times of conflict and post-conflict (Security Council 2000). Furthermore, exploring the role women play in the counter-radicalization measures in Cilacap also aligns with the core value of peace studies and activism, which is an effort to build the roots of peace structurally and culturally without violence through dialogue, upholding justice, and the realization of equity (Galtung 1969).

The development of radicalism in Indonesia has generated suspicions towards certain religious groups, especially the Islamic group. The suspicions are somewhat similar to the fear and securitization of the Muslim communities in Western countries where the Muslim community is a minority. However, the picture is actually different in Indonesia, where Muslims, especially the Sunnis, become the majority of the population and enjoy the freedom and civil and political rights. Hence, it will be interesting to study how Muslim groups identify radical activities around them and develop strategies to prevent radical thought from turning into violence that endangers society.

This article then questions the role and approach of women's religious groups in Cilacap in conducting counter-radicalization efforts. In international security studies, this research contributes to the ability of local actors, especially women, to build a discourse for peace through their social activities, whether they are profession-based or religious-based. Since radicalism is a transnational issue where the movement of ideas and people is easily crossed national borders, the discussion of non-state actors at the local level is as significant as the discussion of international organizational actors. Counter-radicalization efforts in one place will significantly prevent violence in other areas.

The concept used to address the problem formulation in this study is women's agency in peace and security. Besides, this study also uses the idea of peace without violence in the peace study initiated by Galtung (1969) to critically appraise the counter-radicalization effort and its contribution to building positive peace. With reference to the previous two concepts, this study examines the extent to which women play a role in the counter-radicalization efforts in the Cilacap region, especially the role of women or mothers who

are members of seven women Quran religious groups in Central Cilacap, South Cilacap, and Kesugihan Districts.

Methods to Examine Women's Role in Peace-Building and Counter-Radicalization Efforts in Cilacap

In order to explore the issue of how women play their role in peace-building and counter-radicalization efforts in Cilacap, this study uses qualitative methods and an interpretive approach. This study took the sample of religious groups based on the membership of the majority of whom were women and the scope of their religious material, which included counter-radicalization material. There are seven religious groups that focus more on socio-religious activities and stay away from political discussions or study material that are used as the sample here. Those seven groups are the Asmaul Husna Kauman Cilacap Tengah religious group, the Al-Hikmah religious group at Jalan Bromo Cilacap Selatan, the Slarang Kesugihan Muslim religious group, the Tegalreja Selatan Cilacap prayer group, the Central Cilacap Kalimas religious group, the Central Cilacap Thamrin street religious group, and the Central Cilacap Miftahul Huda religious group.

The data collection technique employed in this study consisted of three activities. The first was in-depth interviews, in the form of questions and answers with selected sources from the seven groups of women who were the research samples—furthermore, an FGD involving selected informants and the research team members. Third, collecting secondary data in the form of news, reports, and policy documents related to the research topic. Interviews were conducted to identify the following three things. First, the women's Quran study groups' activities related to their primary objectives. Second, the study group members' perceptions about radicalism and how they recognize individuals or groups who develop radicalism. Third, the way the women's study group responds when they find individuals and groups with radical views and the specific strategies that they use to respond to them. The FGD was then conducted by re-inviting the interviewees and asking similar questions to see their perceptions and strategy consistency.

Understanding the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security

The UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security is the first UN resolution that called for more women's participation and gender mainstreaming in the peace and security agenda. The resolution was issued because violent conflicts and humanitarian tragedies worldwide impact women and men differently. Women and girls often experience multiple layers of oppression due to conflict, war, and patriarchal culture. On the other hand, women also play an essential role in efforts to resolve disputes and in peace-building. In this context, UNSCR 1325 was launched by the United Nations (UN) as the first resolution to recognize the need to integrate a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace-making. Afterward, the UNSC issued six additional resolutions on women, peace, and security issues to support gender perspectives in the peace process, conflict transformation, and security.

The women, peace, and security agenda in UNSCR 1325 has at least five pillars: prevention, protection, participation, assistance, and recovery. Through UNSCR 1325, many countries are encouraged to produce national action plans, which list the strategies governments implement to promote gender equality at home and abroad (Kirby and Shepherd 2016). In addition, the UNSCR stresses the importance of women's participation in the peace and security agenda at all levels, from local to international. According to the resolution, women should also be included in conflict prevention, management, and resolution efforts. For instance, violence prevention can be done by supporting local women's peace initiatives. Meanwhile, protection focuses on efforts to increase security and protect women's rights in conflict situations, including from gender-based violence.

Counter-radicalization is one example of activities that can also be included in the women's peace and security agenda. Through the broader agenda of conflict prevention, counter-radicalization can be understood as a peace-building effort to prevent terrorism. Numerous research states that the concept of radicalization has various interpretations. For instance, some researchers consider radicalization a cognitive phenomenon, while others believe it is coercive actions resulting from different ideas about the state and

society (Institute for Global and International Studies 2014). On the other hand, a document published by OSCE (2018) states that radicalization can lead to terrorism when the individuals accept the possibility of terrorist violence, even as a legitimate action. Since radicalization may lead to the proliferation of violence in the form of terrorism, counter-radicalization measures automatically become part of the peace and security agenda that should also include more women representation.

Women Agency, Peace, and Counter-Radicalization

Women's role in peace has been studied in the context of peace and conflict situations as well as counter-radicalization. These studies focus on women's agency beyond stereotypes about their roles limited to the domestic sphere. For example, in a report titled *Women and Violent Radicalization in Jordan* written by UN Women (2016), the view on the possibility of women as counter-radicalization agents focuses on women's perception as mothers who teach specific values to children and other family members. Not many realize that women in society performed this role as leaders or mobilization agents (UN Women 2016). Just like men, women can take an active part in the community to build peace in conflict situations or counter-radicalization efforts in areas prone to the spread of radicalism.

The discourse that women can participate in peace-building and counter-radicalization efforts is not common, and studies about how women can do it in religious groups are even rarer. That is because there is the assumption that religious groups tend to be close to radicalization. A study by UN Women (2016), for instance, found that stereotypes about women as religious and conservative figures encourage them to join religious groups. Hence, it can make them more vulnerable to exposure to radicalization (UN Women 2016). Meanwhile, when researchers hold on to that assumption, they have taken for granted the general view that often links Muslim women's movements to fundamentalism or the subjugation of women who became stronger after 9/11. That is why from a critical perspective, there should be more studies on women's religious groups that explore how they can develop peaceful and counter-radical discourses in their activities.

Discussing the role women's religious movement can play in peace-building and counter-radicalization efforts, it is interesting to look at a study by Saba Mahmood (2005). Mahmood (2005), a Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, studied Muslim women's religious movements in her research. By conducting in-depth interviews with several Muslim women's religious movements, she analyzed the concept of self, agency, and politics contained. Although it is a study that rejects the position that simplifies religious groups as fundamentalists, Mahmood (2005) does not intend to use her analysis to illustrate the value of liberation in this movement or fit into the picture of liberal feminists.

In her pioneering study, Mahmood (2005) left the view that agency must always emerge in the form of resistance to the dominant patriarchal system. She does not deny the existence of a patriarchal system, but she insists on seeing agency modalities in the various forms of activities and attitudes carried out by women. For example, Mahmood (2005) discovers that wearing a veil/niqab and head covering or believing the al-Hayat's perspective of humility, modesty, and not being aggressive is often considered a form of objectification or subordination. In addition, Mahmood (2005) also studied working women who were active in the religious group. She found that they studied religion and maintained their attitudes according to spiritual teachings not because they submitted to patriarchy in general but because of their desire to have a good and quality life as human beings. It means religious movement is not only a representation of identity politics with the aim of recognition and equality but also an action to form ethical awareness to create a desired social and moral order (Mahmood 2005).

To analyze the role of women in counter-radicalization in Indonesia, this study then adopts the concept of agency modality that is developed by Mahmood (2005). Here, the agency modality concept helps this study assess the meaning of women's religious activities. By freeing the analysis from general judgments, this movement is a form of subordination to women using religion, fundamental movement, or the conservative movement. Meanwhile, by realizing the specific context of Islam and

Muslims in state-building and modernization in Indonesia, we can understand the Quran religious group to consciously develop themselves to become people with good values that they believe.

Peace-building and Positive Peace

The analysis in this study was carried out further by using a positive peace thinking framework by Galtung (2007) to assess the counter-radicalization effort itself. According to Galtung (2007), positive peace is built by developing peaceful culture and structures, peace-building measures, mediation, nonviolent means, conciliation, and forming a virtuous circle. The transcend approach developed by Galtung (2007) assumes that consensus will be formed through a peaceful process rather than a security one. The way of thinking of peace-building actors must go beyond the win-lose, 'us versus them' polarization, and mainstream dialogue to understand the root of the problem and seek solutions. Repetition of violent cases can be understood as the absence of a peaceful approach to peace efforts. There are still parties who hold feelings of resentment or frustration over conditions that are considered peaceful.

Based on Galtung's conception of positive peace, this study explores the extent to which women's perspectives and approaches influence peace-building efforts by examining how they build the structure and culture needed to make peace. Previously, a study by Marddent (2017) examined a similar case. In the article, Marddent (2017) analyzes the role Muslim women's groups play in conflict areas in Southern Thailand, showing the various forms of influence their beliefs have on peace building there. This movement has a long history where women were involved in political reform in Thailand after the resistance to the military dictator in 1973 and the student movement's massacre in 1976. Marddent (2017) then underlined that the mindset of the women's movement members, who believe that inner peace will help society's peace process, eventually contribute to the peace-building measures. Upon their beliefs, the female Muslim groups in Southern Thailand mobilized various civil organization movements that aimed to develop *da'wah* and create peace-making networks based on religious views (Marddent 2017, 241-242).

Another example of studies exploring how women's religious groups can contribute to peace-building measures is by Al Qurtuby (2014), which describes the peace movement's experience by women's religious groups to end the conflict in Maluku, Indonesia. In Maluku, there is a group whose members are women from across religious groups, namely the Caring Women Movement (*Gerakan Perempuan Peduli/GPP*). According to Al Qurtuby (2014), women who promote peace are driven by difficult conditions, especially economically due to conflict, and their belief in their respective religious teachings. These conditions and ideas encourage them to hold meetings, organize nonviolent protests, and mobilize people into their peace movement (2014, 50-51). Al Qurtuby (2014) also noted that women's religious groups' role is also seen in Indonesia's other places, namely Aceh, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Java.

Based on the previous explanation of the concept of agency and positive peace, this study aims to explain two things about the relations of women's religious groups and peace-building as well as counter-radicalization efforts. First, this study explores the extent to which women, namely members of the religious groups, play a role as political agents outside their traditional roles as mothers or household educators. In addition, the agency concept also helps understand how women actively build knowledge relevant to the formation of the desired social structure, in this case through religious learning. Second, this study also uses the idea of positive peace to criticize further the meaning of counter-radicalization in building positive peace in Indonesia.

Localizing the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Indonesia through Peace-Building and Counter-Radicalization

In the Indonesian context, the formulation of the national action plans recommended by UNSCR 1325 primarily involves state actors: the Ministry of Women's Empowerment, the National Commission on Women, and the National Commission on Human Rights. However, the formulation process also involves non-state actors, such as the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), and representatives of women's organizations from five conflict areas in Indonesia

which are Aceh, Central Sulawesi, Ambon, Papua, and Atambua. In addition, representatives from civil society organizations such as AMAN Indonesia often work with women religious groups such as Fatayat Nahdhatul Ulama to promote peace-building efforts in Indonesia. These state and non-state actors work together from planning, discussing terms of reference, developing substances for discussion, involving participants from various organizations, and forming a national steering committee (Gayatri 2017).

Currently, Indonesia is one of 86 countries that already have national action plans based on UNSCR 1325, which in 2006 was called RAN P4DK (*Rencana Aksi Perlindungan, Pencegahan, dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan di Daerah/National Action Plan on Protection, Prevention, and Empowerment of Women in Conflict Region*). Through the Presidential Decree (Perpres) No. 18/2014, the national action plan was then called RAN P3AKS (*Rencana Aksi Nasional Perlindungan dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak dalam Konflik Sosial/National Action Plan for Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflict*). At the local level, several provinces have already established governor regulations on the P3AKS Working Group to implement regional action plans, such as in Maluku, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Lampung, and Sulawesi Tengah (Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection 2020). Even though not every region has regional action plans yet, especially in Central Java, all regions can implement RAN P3AKS by referring to the circular letter of Ministry of Home Affairs No.460/5131/PUM about Acceleration of the Implementation of P3AKS in the regions (WPS-Indonesia 2020).

In the implementation, the women, peace, and security agenda of UNSCR 1325 has three tracks. Track one is the official negotiations by the leaders of conflicting parties. Track two is the participation of civil society organizations in the peace process. Track three involves individual actors' involvement in overcoming conflicted people in conflict zones (Viartasiwi and Scaramella 2018). In that regard, the second track of the agenda implementation especially needs women's inclusion. However, women's participation at all levels, including local women's peace activities, organizations, and women's contributions to society, is essential to peace-building

efforts. Meanwhile, in the case of the Cilacap region, women's civil society, such as women's Quran study groups, can be considered as a representation of the inclusion of women in peace-building activities at the local level.

Women Religious Groups as Women's Agency Representation in Efforts of Peace-building: A Case Study of Cilacap

The women's Quran study groups in Cilacap, which are the focus of this study, demonstrate the pattern of religious-based women's activism that is conducted outside the understanding of women's traditional roles. These groups' main activity is studying religion and conducting social activities with the broader community. Although individuals in this group played a counter-radicalism role through education in the family, they did not limit their role in this area. Our research found that within the neighboring sphere, they remind each other and protect their surrounding against any indications of radicalism. They also take notes on suspicious persons and activities and further convey them to the authorities. The religious lessons described further in the next section shows how religion and religious-based activism can be a part of peace-building efforts.

In terms of counter-radicalization, this study finds how understanding and learning religion in a religious group helps the group members and the people around them to detect forms of radical spiritual knowledge. In the following section, this study underscores the structure of the approach taken by Muslim women's religious study groups in Cilacap when they detect the presence of radicalism around them. The way the women's religious groups can detect radicalism indicates the existence of positive peace-building efforts in counter-radicalization activism in Cilacap.

Group Members' Perception of Radicalism

The moderate religious ideology promoted by several women Quran study groups in Cilacap is based on the doctrine of *ahlussunnah wal jamaah*, an ideology adhered to by one of the largest mass

organizations in Indonesia, the Nahdhatul Ulama (NU). Another ideology that also widely proliferates in Cilacap is the doctrine of Muhammadiyah, another Indonesia's major Islamic mass organizations that applies the concept of returning to the purity of the Quran and Sunnah's teachings and emphasizes the modernity of Islamic teachings. In Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah are two mass organizations with a moderate Islamic ideology based on the agenda of tolerance, pluralism, and democracy. The two mass organizations are also consistent in carrying out counter-radicalization efforts in Indonesia through their networks from the center to the regions (Amal 2016).

Under the guidance of the NU and Muhammadiyah ideology, the seven women's religious groups in Cilacap can detect radicalism around them. The indicators they utilize to detect the indication of radicalism include justification for using violence in enforcing ideas and anti-tolerance for people outside the group. Based on in-depth interviews and FGD the writers conducted, the women religious group members in Cilacap will label a group as 'radical' when (1) the Islamic teachings of the so-called radical groups attack other groups with different perspectives on Islam; (2) the so-called radical groups show xenophobic behavior; and (3) the so-called radical groups have attitudes that tend to be anti-government and not patriotic. Those findings were obtained after the authors conducted interviews with twenty-two interviewees representing seven women Quran study groups in Cilacap, in which the researchers chose two to five members from each group as the interviewee.

Another way the women religious groups in Cilacap can detect an indication of radicalism is by looking at certain physical appearances combined with a particular behavior. Fifteen respondents stated that they could see hints of radicalism in certain groups' dress styles in society. For example, men who wear pants cut above their heels and growing beards and women who wear a niqab—full-body and face-covering—usually are a radical group if they show exclusive behavior by not letting people outside their group interact with them. Meanwhile, the other seven respondents argue that a person's appearance does not always correlate with their radicalism level because someone who does not wear the

above attributes can also become radical. Those seven respondents further argued that radicalism is an individual's thought. Hence it cannot be easily identified.

In more specific circumstances, several women Quran study group members that the author interviewed explained that they could also sense an indication of radicalism from a new female resident in the neighborhood by observing the person's attitude towards the other neighbor. A radical group member is usually active in recruiting and influencing other residents when they move in, especially women around her, to gather at her house and participate in Islamic studies with the religious teacher, called *ustadz*, chosen by this recruiting agent. The indication of radicalism can be confirmed if, during the gathering, the religious teacher and the new resident teach a different way of worshipping and use a perspective against democracy and the state. The last time the interviewees encountered that situation, they eventually discovered that the suspected radical neighbor was part of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), a community organization banned by the Indonesian government.

In another case, some other respondents identify radicalism through daily activities or habits of people around them, for example, people who call for prohibitions in everyday life such as a ban on singing and sports and their attitude of rejecting nationalist activities. Another respondent highlighted individuals who said it is blasphemous to take *tahlil* (chanting phrases to praise Allah repeatedly), *yasinan* (a gathering to read Surah Yaseen for the dead), grave pilgrimages, and other religious practices commonly practiced by the NU group. Differences in spiritual practices within one religion, such as Islam, are common in Indonesia. Still, when an individual or a group of people perceive religious practices conducted by other groups are wrong, sinful, and prohibitive, it often leads to violent clashes between different groups.

Members of the women's Quran study groups in Cilacap think that abrasive attitudes from intolerant groups potentially harm the peace and harmony in their neighborhoods. Moreover, they believe that intolerant groups may affect the whole nation on a larger scale, such as in Afghanistan under the Taliban administration during the 1990s and early 2001. Hence, most

members agree that they must be careful in judging attitudes that can be considered radical or potentially harmful to society. That is why the majority of respondents showed high enthusiasm during the in-depth interviews and the FGD towards the concept of counter-radicalization, demonstrated by their questions about where they should report if they found anything suspicious and threatened tolerance around their neighborhoods.

Based on the findings above, it can be summarized that the female Quran study groups in Cilacap can detect an indication of radicalism, especially religious radicalism, through specific indicators. According to most respondents, religious radicalism is commonly indicated by intolerant behavior toward different worship practices, such as condemning other groups as profane, non-conformist, and the nature of closed group activities. Another indicator of religious radicalism is extreme views or opinions on state and nationalism. For example, respondents would consider a group in society as radical when they reject nationalism and are eager to build an Islamic state in Indonesia. After showing how the religious women's group in Cilacap sense radicalism, the following section focuses on explaining how those women groups do counter-radicalization based on their knowledge.

Women Quran Study Group's Activism

This study finds that women involved in the religion study group perform an agency role because they can act as agents who bring about change, both in their mindset and at certain activity levels. By being active in the religion and giving voice to their families and the surrounding community to avoid being involved in beliefs that tend to be intolerant, these women leave the reproductive realm. They are actively engaged in activities with the district. It would be different if these women were tied at home to take care of the household only and had very minimal time to socialize with the surrounding community.

The seven Women Quran study groups involved in this study shared similar activities and perceptions of the concepts of religious teachings. The main activities of the female religious group are worshipping and studying, including the Asmaul Husna recitation, Quran studies, Salawat of the Prophet, praying together,

or even doing religious tours together, such as pilgrimages to the graves of the Wali Songo. Aside from the routine group activities, these groups also hold events joined by the broader community, such as competitions and Quran studies with some Ulama. Those external activities are conducted based on the idea of maintaining *silaturahmi*, which means maintaining good interpersonal relationships with other religious groups.

Central to the counter-radicalization efforts of female religious groups in Cilacap is the Islamic concept of *lil alamin*, which means grace for all nature, and the concept of *hubbul wathani minal iman*, which means love for the Motherland is part of faith. Some members of the groups explain that their Asmaul Husna recitation and Quran study are the places to introduce the notion that Islam is a peaceful religion and that citizens must love their Motherland. They argue that these ideas make the women's religion study group useful for counter-radicalization strategies. Following are the statements of Sainah Ahmad (2019) and Yuliarti (2019) when interviewed on why the female religious groups in Cilacap are eager to do counter-radicalization:

“(The Woman religion study group in countering radicalization) gives the correct understanding about Islam as *rahmatan lil alamin* and act humanely.”

“(The Woman religion study group in countering radicalization) held *Mujahadah Asmaul Husna*, prayer, and Quran study. In the Quran study, the value of love for Motherland is usually instilled, and we pray for the safety of the nation and the state of Indonesia, especially during the heated political situation.”

The idea of Islam as grace for all that they uphold produces their view of radical teaching as an idea that is problematic, agitative, and needs to be fought against- in peaceful ways, through a humanist act, as posited by Sainah Ahmad (2019) above. Furthermore, from her statement, Ahmad (2019) also believed that the community could have a role in countering radicalization by growing honesty and opened minded characters. In that regard, the religion study group mainly works to prepare the members to face and counter radicalism activities. In her interview, Kurniawati (2019)

explained that a common way to fight radicalization is by reciting *Asmaul Husna* (Allah 99 names). The female religious groups in Cilacap usually do the recitation of *Asmaul Husna* to get together and defend themselves from negative traits like radicalization.

In terms of their cooperation with external stakeholders, most of the women's Quran study groups in Cilacap still did not have meaningful collaboration with the government for counter-radicalization. The regional government once invited some groups to socialization events about the dangers of radicalism and terrorism. However, there was no follow-up after the event. When interviewed, some respondents actually wanted a firmer policy from the local government regarding the counter-radicalization strategy in the Cilacap district. They believed that dissemination of the dangers of radicalism and terrorism is vital. Therefore, they expect strategic practical approaches from the government, such as clear regional regulations related to counter-radicalization. Though there was still limited partnership with the government, the female religious groups in Cilacap eventually had some cooperation with external non-government partners. For example, the group members cooperate with several non-governmental groups to do social activities related to counter-radicalization, such as fundraising, counseling, and free medical treatment.

Counter-Radicalization by Women Religion Study Groups from the Peace Perspective

When viewed through the lens of peace study, the activities of the women's religion study group in Cilacap can be critically understood as attempts at nonviolent activism and building cultural as well as structural peace. From the seven components of the peace approach by Galtung (2007) discussed in the previous section, at least three are relevant to this study and the case of female group activism in Cilacap. However, as there was no open conflict between the women's religion study group and the radical groups within this research scope, we did not identify the groups' activities in the remaining four components of Galtung's peach approach, which are conciliation, mediation, peace building, and virtuous cycle creation.

In line with the peace approach, the activities carried out by the women's Quran study group in Cilacap have implemented nonviolent methods. During her interview, one of the group members, Ning Palupi (2019), explained the nonviolent orientation of the female religious groups.

“We hold collective praying (*mujahadah*), morning prayer (*shalat Dhuha*) and praise to Allah, praise to the Muhammad Prophet (*Sholawat*) because we always hope for his grace (*Safaat*). We love our Motherland and always pray together to keep Cilacap safe.”

Many respondents agree that their routines are also part of their strategies in countering radicalization. The routines are nonviolent approaches to radicalism in the way that they do not attack the people they deem as radicals—instead, grounded in the sense of piety, the female religious groups in Cilacap attempt to achieve peace through prayers. Aside from the internal group activities, women's religious groups in Cilacap also encourage the broader society to join their activities, for example, to study with Ulama, as explained below by Sukarni (2019) during her interview. In this sense, the female groups believe that the broader community needs to grow their piety as well in order to be able to tackle radical thinking.

“We invite people to join the Quran studies held by the Ulama in our region. The activities include *Mujahadah*, collective pray (*Istighosah*), praising Allah (*Tahlil*), and *Quran studies*.”

The female Quran study groups in Cilacap have not earnestly advocated peace in their region through the structural dimensions, as they focus on nurturing their society to be pious, nonviolent, and nationalist, as opposed to the anti-nation state ideas of Islamic radicals. However, some have demonstrated concern about societal problems that may jeopardize counter-radicalization efforts. For instance, when interviewed, Wijaya (2019) and Yuliarti (2019) explained their groups' awareness that the poverty problem might link to radicalization, in which the poor are more prone to radical ideas due to their sufferings. However, they also acknowledged their groups' limitations in addressing the problem due to external

stakeholders' lack of funding and support.

“One of the obstacles we face is that not all parts of the society have joined our Quran Study Group yet. Furthermore, there need to be more social funds for the poor communities, which are more prone to radicalization or to be objects of extreme Quran Study groups. The use of the social fund may include money aid, food aid, books, or clothes” (Wijaya 2019).

“The funding obstacle (that we face), for example, happened when our Quran Study group wants to hold a social charity event by giving books of Asmaul Husna, religion books, food or clothing for the poor community that are prone to radicalization, is difficult to get. There are also many other social program plans that have not been realized due to funding problems. This is because the contribution is voluntary” (Yuliarti 2019).

The cultural aspect of the peace approach by female Quran Study groups in Cilacap is strongly represented by their routines of collective prayers, Quran studies, and constant efforts to maintain *silaturahmi*. In addition, those groups also envisioned creating a culture of peace in Cilacap since they tried to diminish violent ideas of the radical teachings by making it a character of the Muslim community to worship together without hate or inclination to violence against others. The vision to create a culture of peace in Cilacap was stated by Ning Palupi (2019) below, a member of the female religious group in Cilacap.

“We counter radicalism by blending in with all groups in the society surrounding us to have good *silaturahmi*. In Cilacap, especially in our neighborhood, the residents are generally cautious of the newcomer who follow different (Islam) teachings [...]”.

Unfortunately, while peaceful in a way that they urge building a good relationship with everybody, the cautiousness of the female religious groups in Cilacap toward outsiders is somewhat counterproductive to their ideals of having a good relationship. However, this cautiousness does not lead to a violent approach, indicating that these groups remain nonviolent in their activism

and are more concerned about different teachings that may be radical and may influence the broader society. Aside from being nonviolent, the peace culture of the women's religious groups in Cilacap remains nationalist since the members believe that being a proper Muslim means being a nationalist. They regard upholding these beliefs as an attempt to counter radicalism in the region, as stated by Wahyudin (2019 below).

“Our Quran study group has regularly held Islamic studies that are calming the minds. We do not badmouth the government; we do not incline to engage in harmful activities and build a love for our Motherland and nation. I believe this love for Motherland is the real implementation of Islamic values.”

Conclusion

This study analyzes moderate female Islamic religious groups' role in counter-radicalization and peace-building efforts in the Cilacap region, specifically in seven women Quran study groups. Moderate religious groups are usually characterized by their allegiance toward the Constitutional State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), loyalty to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, tolerance, and understanding of pluralism or respect for differences. The allegiance of the female religious groups in Cilacap towards Indonesia as one nation-state is in line with the religious concept that they held named *hubbul wathani minal iman*, which means the love of the Motherland is part of faith. This women's study group demonstrates women's agency in peace through their religious knowledge. Their religious-based activism makes them an essential part of counter-radicalization in Cilacap because they can detect when there are societal actors who show indications of spreading radical or intolerant ideology.

As an active actor in counter-radicalization, the female Quran study groups in Cilacap interact directly with the local community at the horizontal level through various cultural activities, such as holding collective prayer. Meanwhile, at the vertical level, the groups collaborate and coordinate with community leaders from NU, Muhammadiyah, and figures from local governments.

Although the response of the local government to the threat of radicalism in Cilacap is still not optimal, there has been at least an opportunity to hold a dialogue between different elements of society to discuss and form effective strategies in dealing with radicalism or counter-radicalization. Judging from the peace approach, the counter-radicalization efforts that the Cilacap women's Quran study groups have carried out are the application of the principle of non-violence, attention to structural peace through their social activities, and creating a culture of peace through religious beliefs. On the other hand, efforts to build a dialogue with groups indicated to be radical are still not found and need special attention from the local authorities.

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