

Online Radicalization and Extreme Islamic Values in Social Relations: a Case Study on the Use of Social Media in the Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran Movement

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Abstract. Nowadays, as Indonesia is preparing its human resources to reach the Industry 4.0 stage, it turns out that other parts of the world have reached the Industry 5.0 stage. Unlike Industry 4.0, Industry 5.0 continues to rely on the role of human beings, and is human-centered in its use, so that the role of human beings is not degraded or replaced. The role of humans in Industry 5.0, in addition to having a positive impact, also has the potential of leading to negative impacts, which are now widely found in the circulation of hoaxes, online persecution (doxing), and also online radicalization, which are spread using the Internet. This study tries to analyze the *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran (ITP*, literally Indonesia Without Dating) movement in creating online radicalization through Facebook to spread the extreme values of Islam in the context of social relations or friendship between different genders among adolescents. *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* was founded on September 7, 2015, and currently has a membership of more than 20,000 persons, and continues to grow. The movement has a mechanism for regulating the use of social media for its members, allowing its use only at certain times. The message conveyed by *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* through the social media is basically encouraging its members to become married without going through the dating process. The main objective is to avoid the occurrence of extramarital sex, and by extension, extramarital pregnancy. This movement is considered to have interpreted Islamic teachings in an extreme way. This study uses the qualitative approach with a case study method. The sources of the data in this study are the results of in-depth interviews with social observers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* members as primary data sources. The findings of this study reinforce the notion that *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* is a highly exclusionary movement. This movement is hostile to people outside their groups on the basis of differences in identity and extreme understanding of Islamic values. Besides, this movement is also found to be radical, because it encourages marriage by ignoring the process of becoming acquainted, and the social dynamics between individuals. Another finding is that this movement also has the potential to encourage social conflict in a pluralistic Indonesian society.

Keywords: Social Media; Radicalism; Online Radicalization; Extreme Islamic Values; Friendship

1 Introduction

The demise of the New Order government in Indonesia was marked by the emergence of freedom of association and assembly, ushering in what is called the *reform* era. Among the tangible forms of freedom of association and assembly are the emergence of various community organizations based on various ideologies derived from Islam, including those that tend to be radical in nature such as: Islamic Defenders Front/FPI, Jema'ah Islamiyah/JI, Laskar Jihad and Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid/JAT [1]. In line with the rise of these ideologically radical organizations, with the granting of freedom of expression, the media also emerged, which are often used as a tool to spread the values of radicalism [2]. This is reinforced by the research conducted by UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, showing that many Muslim youths who use the Internet tend to become more radical and intolerant. In general, the purpose of creating these websites is for propaganda purposes, and also for recruitment. Looking at the projection of Internet users in Indonesia in 2019, which is estimated to reach 179 million users, or around 65.3% of the total population of 268 million people, this number is a significant target for radical websites in Indonesia to develop [3].

In response to the increasingly widespread growth of radical websites, the Indonesian government luckily does not remain silent. Based on data obtained from Kemenkominfo, between January and April 2018, the government has shut down 237 websites because of radical Islamic religious content [4]. However, the steps taken by the Indonesian government, in terms of preventing, monitoring and closing radical websites, are not easily done, given the increasing extent of Internet penetration nowadays. The influence of radical websites does not only occur in the political context, but also in the social context, which is seen in the emergence of the *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* organization, whose entire activities rely heavily on its website, and also social media such as *Facebook* and *Instagram*. *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* is a social movement that has a vision of becoming the front line in the fight to eliminate dating in Indonesia. The media with the highest reach is Instagram, with its account *@indonesiatanpapacaran*, having a total of 914,000 followers.

The ideology of eliminating dating, which was pioneered and developed by *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*, originated from the Islamic value of *ta'aruf*, which means getting to know one another before entering marriage. This value is interpreted and developed by *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* as a step that must be taken for the purpose of marriage. This ideology also opposes the process of dating in the introduction stage, because it is considered to have a negative impact, especially by making it easier for the participants to engage in premarital sex. Therefore couples that are attracted to one another should get married without going through the process of dating.

This will be very difficult to occur in urban communities that have high levels of complexity in the context of social relations. According to Macionis [5], that "Our culture celebrates romantic love... connection and sexual passion for another person... as the basis for marriage. We find it hard to imagine marriage without love and popular culture." The high level of complexity makes it difficult especially in relationships between men and women, which are bound by various needs and interests based on trust and difficult to restrict.

This research seeks to analyze how *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* conducts online radicalization to spread the values of extreme Islam in the context of social relationships of friendship.

Friendship is important in building social relationships because friendships can shape a person's behavior. It's emphasized by Liberman and Shaw [6] that there are three important

elements in influencing friendship namely: *similarity and propinquity* in which the two elements are interrelated to each other in the process of formation of the behavior of social relations. *Similarity* becomes a major cornerstone in building friendship, which emphasizes the establishment of relations based on shared characteristics for example: age, origin, gender and skill to encourage the creation of familiarity with each other. Similarity refers more to something that is seen and all of this must be closely related to the attitude, behavior and characteristics displayed by individuals who are interconnected [7].

Meanwhile *propinquity* sees relations based on spatial proximity and geographical proximity. So propinquity emphasizes the importance of distance and looks at the closeness that is formed on the basis of physical proximity. Physical closeness becomes important as an effort to maintain friendships in order to stay close [8]. Propinquity is based on mutually influence and proved by Liberman and Shaw [6] that the relationship between propinquity and similarity is very strong because *propinquity* requires more time, especially in the effort to recognize characters before making friends. However, Griffin [9] adds another important element, which called attractiveness that determines friendship besides the two factors above. Attractiveness refers to the relationship between partners of different sexes. Attractiveness plays an important role in the context of dating relationships.

Nowadays social relations in the form of friendship have experienced developments due to the inclusion of interconnection-networking (Internet) technology, which is no longer limited to face to face, but also through online media in the form of applications. This is emphasized by the statement of Singh and Gill [10] that the community of social media users with similar interests tends to share information that is considered relevant and closely related to their interests. So there is a visible process of socialization and even an effort to influence and convince each other, which can have a negative or positive impact on its users.

The link between social media and community life is evident not only in the social, but also in the political dimension. The use of social media in political activities strongly supports the democratic process, especially in terms of increasing the participation of community members. This fact is also supported by [11] who asserted that the Internet provides numerous opportunities to assert political freedom and also provides many ways to influence the political situation and make a person active in politics. This can be seen clearly as stated by Jones [12], who explains that while using the Internet provides flexibility for someone to express their opinions and expressions mainly through social media.

Social media can give rise to radicalism, especially when it comes to social and political issues that occur in many countries in Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines. It's clearly emphasized by Veldhuis and Bakker [13] that radicalization is based on ideology that seeks to impose certain values and keep a distance from other groups. The definition of online radicalization according to [14] is "a process whereby individuals through their online interactions and exposures to various types of Internet contexts, come to view violence as a legitimate method of solving social and political conflicts". So the process of radicalization always emphasizes violent behavior, which can be seen from acts of terrorism, persecution, hate speech, the spread of hoaxes and intimidative behavior committed against groups or people with different interests. The understanding of radicalization itself according to [15] is "the process of (an individual or a group) adopting an extremist belief system (inspired by philosophical, religious, political or ideological notions), including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence as a method to effect societal change.

Radicalism often arises from the existence of fanatical beliefs about a certain religion that are often associated with a political ideology. Islam is a religion that is often associated with radicalism because of the narrow and fanatical interpretation of the Islamic religion. This has

led to the emergence of Islamophobia in many European countries and also in America due to Islamic extremist behavior. The meaning of extremism as stated by Raffie [16] is closely related to fundamentalism, which emphasizes the understanding as “rejection of democratic and secular form of governance as adopted by the West.” From this understanding it appears that extremists reject the diversity and values other values shared by other groups or people.

2 Method

This study uses a qualitative approach because this approach is considered the most appropriate in answering the phenomena that occur in *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* organization in conducting online radicalization to spread extreme Islamic values. The method used in this research is case study, because the method uses a strategy that is considered capable of revealing certain cases that occur in individuals, groups of people, institutions or organizations [17]. The data collection methods carried out are in-depth interviews, observation, and using secondary data concerning the organization. Interviews were conducted with three informants, Halili (Research Director of Setara Institute), a non-governmental organization that conducts research and actively promotes pluralism and humanity; Ida Ruwaida, a social observer capable of understanding and describing the radicalization process that exists in Indonesian society; and Rheinhard Sirait as Director of the Prima Analytica Research Institute, which focuses on issues of intolerance and social media. Further, data collection was also carried out through interviews with *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* members named Nur Aida and Faiza Khairunisa (pseudonyms).

3 Results and Discussion

Research data are grouped based on 3 (three) themes, namely: Radicalism and Social Media; Basic values in shaping collectivity in *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*; Radicalization in Embedding Islamic Extreme Values and Exclusivity of *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*. In this section the data obtained are categorized to find certain patterns in order to explain the phenomena.

3.1 Radicalism and Social Media

The use of social media has been undergone many changes; initially social media tends to be democratic and have freedom of expression. This is clearly emphasized by Jones [12] that Internet provides flexibility for someone to express their opinions and expressions mainly through social media. However the use of social media nowadays is more associated with efforts to influence and spread the interests of groups related to political issues. One form of interest is seen from the dominance of interest groups related to certain religions. One of the research findings, as stated by Rheinhard, a scholar who studied *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*, is that the “dominance of the use of social media is done by Islamist groups, whose discourse often leads to separation between Muslims and non-Muslims”. What leads to the separation is what gives rise to the process of radicalization.

Separation sharpens differences and, adds to the strengthening of identity, especially with extreme and misleading teachings. Halili, one of the activists from Setara NGO, clarifies, “increasing rejection of the different in the social sphere and in the public sphere of the state

has the potential of causing social conflict.” Strengthening of identity is usually done by preaching or appealing through the social media. Social media is considered to have advantages because it is fast in terms of distribution and also does not require a verification process. Halili also added “the reinforcement of identity and also the rejection of differences show a puritanical attitude towards a religion”. Such ideas will quickly spread very widely through social media and increases the potential for conflict, especially if this happens to a country as diverse as Indonesia.

3.2 Basic Values in Forming Collective in *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*

The similarity of feelings will create a closer relationship between individuals and this will get stronger and wider influence with the role of social media. According to [6], in the context of social relations there are 3 (three) aspects that greatly influence friendship, namely: *similarity*, *propinquity* and *loyalty*, which are interrelated with one another in the process of forming behavior. This also applies to the behavior of direct interaction or by using social media. *Similarity* becomes the most fundamental in building friendships and also refers to something that is closely related to attitude, behavior and characteristics displayed by individuals who are interconnected. Related to *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*, Ida Ruwaida Noor, a sociologist, explained that the existence of religious studies, religious mentoring in schools and religious activities obtained during school days were the main reasons for the formation of emotional similarity. This indirectly limits the association of a person with their social environment.

Nur Aida, an *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* member, strengthened this opinion by saying that: “I wear the robe with a long and wide veil when I am working in the office and I feel the intimidation from co-workers in the form of ridicule, or even directly talking to me, asking me which cult I am joining, or if I had chosen wrong friends, and also about what religion teaches, especially with male friends because they see me as a strange person and stay away from me. This makes me uncomfortable, so I choose to get along with those who are ‘the same’ as me.”

This situation encourages someone to prefer associating with people who have similarities both in the form of symbols and interests. The use of social media in the community as supported by Singh and Gill [10] based on the similarities of interests that hold by the members and tends to be shared among the members. *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* perceives this situation as an ‘opportunity’ to be able to recruit more and more members by using Islamic values that are interpreted extremely. Physical closeness becomes important as an effort to maintain friendships in order to stay close [8]. As stated by Reagans [7], similarity has a close relationship with propinquity or proximity because the process of mutual influence between attitudes and behaviors that arise in the context of the relationship with the distance created in the relationship. *Propinquity* emphasizes relationships on the basis of spatial and geographical closeness. So propinquity emphasizes the importance of distance and looks at the closeness that is formed on the basis of physical proximity.

The development of social media indirectly creates perceptions in the community, which actually makes *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* freer in becoming exclusionary. Rheinhard also acknowledged this and emphasizes that: "Social proximity remains existing, but it became clear, the separation from one another, especially between the group and the public in general, the group of which cannot mix with the wider community because their closeness that exist in the group was more powerful because it is based on an understanding of Islamic values."

This statement was also reinforced by Halili who said, “There was a problem because in the end a segregative society was formed due to the compartmentalization deliberately carried

out by *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*". So *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* can build a sense of being bound among its members and foster loyalty because *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* guarantees its members to feel more comfortable in groups even though it is segregated rather than in society.

3.3 Online Radicalization in Embedding Extreme Islamic Values and the Exclusiveness of *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*

In addition to *similarity* and *propinquity*, which are interrelated with one another, it turns out that *attractiveness* also has an equally important role. According to Griffin [9], attractiveness refers to a special relationship that is built between couples of the opposite sex, which is known as *dating*. The concept of *dating* is strongly opposed by the *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* Movement. Halili clarifies by saying that: "If you intimidate me by saying there are special places in hell for people who date. Although discourse is not a problem, it would be problematic if delivered in the private sphere, because the contestation is democratic and should not be overbearing."

Rheinhard also considered a similar case by asserting that "*Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* and the issues about the Islamists in general play in psychological territory that aim to spread fear and when we follow what they convey". So here it is seen that Islamic values are interpreted and used to intimidate people who are dating or have failed in dating. Islamic values that are interpreted to the extreme and arouse a sense of fanaticism make *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* highly exclusive. This fact is also supported by Bowen [11] who asserted that social media provides numerous opportunities to assert political freedom and also provides many ways to influence the political situation and make a person active in politics.

This exclusive feeling has the potential to create social segregation and conflicts in the nation because it views the views of different individuals and other groups as wrong and becomes an obstacle. This was confirmed by Ida Ruwaida who stressed that "What is dangerous is when groups like this become exclusive which means they feel to have a monopoly of being right". The view of rejecting dating is not wrong within a society, because it is a choice, but the way the *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* interprets these values and conveys them to people is intimidating and coercive. This makes the *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* movement highly exclusionary.

Social media has the potential to generate radicalism, especially when it comes to conflicting political, social and economic ideologies. It is clearly emphasized by Veldhuis and Bakker [13] that radicalization is based on ideology that seeks to impose certain values and keep a distance from other groups. The entry of the Internet makes radicalization possible through social media. The definition of online radicalization according to [14] is "a process whereby individuals through their online interactions and exposures to various types of Internet contexts, come to view violence as a legitimate method of solving social and political conflicts". Violence here has the meaning of coercion and is not always related to violence.

Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran in the beginning, according to Ida Ruwaida is a moral movement that seeks to invite people to get closer to the values of Islam for not dating because it carries more sin than positive benefits. This movement is done through social media in the form of propaganda and campaign very aggressively. But in its implementation according to Rheinhard, this movement tends to be intimidating, intolerant and threatening to cause fear. It is also stated by Raffie [16] that, extremism is closely related to fundamentalism, which emphasizes the understanding as "rejection of democratic and secular form of governance as adopted by the West." This was also reinforced by Halili, who stressed that this movement

later entered the social sphere and then there were public rights that were violated because they wanted to develop their views more broadly in society. Campaign and propaganda made by *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* beginning from the narratives spread through social media, and indeed been received by many people, especially women, who make the majority of its membership are women, because of the assumption that dating has a sinful nature, and make women the main victims.

4 Conclusions

Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran is a social movement whose aim is to eliminate dating in order to preserve the moral values that exist in society based on Islamic values. The efforts made to eliminate dating are to carry out campaigns through social media. This study found that one of the things that made *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* able to get a lot of followers was because of giving attention to two things, namely: *similarity* and *propinquity* which were used as foundations in forming the same perception, especially among its members. Similarity is important because it is a strengthening of identities for members who use Islamic values as the basis for adhesion. It is this similarity in understanding the value of Islam that gives rise to social propinquity between members and this closeness is made easier by using social media. But unfortunately this understanding of Islamic values experiences extreme interpretations so the approach taken tends to be intimidating.

This intimidative approach does not only occur in the private sphere but has also led to the social sphere and this threatens the existing democratization in the context of the diversity of Indonesian society. This approach is considered radical because it tends to force what it believes to be correct. So *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* tends to understand Islamic values unilaterally and has a very extreme perception of these values. Another finding in this study, it is seen through the contents on its social media, *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* is also highly exclusionary in all its activities. This is also evident from the intolerant attitude displayed by the rejection of all differences in society. Moreover, this group also creates segregation in society by creating a dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims.

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