Deradicalization da'wah: Religious rehabilitation efforts for former terrorism convicts

Fachrur Rozi,[1]* Ilyas Supena,[2] Agus Riyadi[3]
[1,2,3] Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract

Terrorist acts that often claim religious grounds have become a significant threat to national stability. Based on data from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), Indonesia, terrorist attacks not only cause casualties but also have an impact on public perception of Islam. This study aims to understand why radical ideology often persists among former terrorist convicts and how deradicalization preaching plays a role in their rehabilitation. This descriptive qualitative study uses a sociological approach, using data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that radical ideology persists due to limited social support, non-holistic deradicalization programs, ideological backgrounds, and social stigma. External factors such as the lack of special programs, limited officer training, and inconsistent funding also contribute. Deradicalization preaching plays a crucial role by teaching peaceful religious values, empowering socially and economically, reducing social stigma, and involving families and communities. For effective rehabilitation, deradicalization preaching must be holistic, involve various parties, and consider cultural, social, and economic aspects to address the root causes of radicalization.

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Abstrak

Aksi terorisme yang sering mengklaim landasan agama telah menjadi ancaman besar terhadap stabilitas nasional. Berdasarkan data dari Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT), Indonesia, serangan teror tidak hanya menimbulkan korban jiwa, tetapi juga berdampak pada persepsi publik terhadap Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami mengapa faham radikal sering kali tetap bertahan di kalangan mantan narapidana terorisme dan bagaimana dakwah deradikalisasi berperan dalam rehabilitasi mereka. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan sosiologis, menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faham radikal

tetap bertahan disebabkan oleh dukungan sosial yang terbatas, program deradikalisasi yang tidak holistik, serta latar belakang ideologi dan stigma sosial. Faktor eksternal seperti kurangnya program khusus, keterbatasan pelatihan petugas, dan pendanaan yang tidak konsisten juga berkontribusi. Dakwah deradikalisasi memainkan peran krusial dengan mengajarkan nilai-nilai agama yang damai, memberdayakan secara sosial dan ekonomi, mengurangi stigma sosial, dan melibatkan keluarga serta komunitas. Untuk rehabilitasi yang efektif, dakwah deradikalisasi harus holistik dan melibatkan berbagai pihak, serta mempertimbangkan aspek budaya, sosial, dan ekonomi untuk mengatasi akar penyebab radikalisasi secara menyeluruh.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of terrorism, which often takes place in the name of religion, has become a serious threat to national security (Pradhan, 2021). Data from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) shows that Indonesia, since the Reformation era, has experienced various acts of terror that have resulted in casualties and affected the image of Islam as a religion of *rahmatan lil alamin* (Sutawijaya, 2023). As a result, deradicalization and rehabilitation efforts for former terrorism convicts are crucial in overcoming the root of the problem of religious radicalism (Maufur, 2017).

Deradicalization is a systematic process to change extremist thought patterns and beliefs to become more moderate and in line with human and national values (Webber et al., 2018). The state carries out this effort through law enforcement and detention and requires society's active role, including religious institutions, in spreading the message of Islamic peace (Grip & Kotajoki, 2019). One of the approaches used in deradicalization programs is rehabilitative da'wah, which combines religious aspects with psychological and social approaches to help former terrorism convicts return to everyday life (Koehler & Horgan, 2016).

Based on BNPT data until 2023, more than 1,000 former terrorism convicts have undergone a deradicalization program. However, the challenges faced are not only in the legal aspects and physical rehabilitation but also in efforts to change the distorted view of religion (Mukorobin et al., 2023). Former terrorism convicts often have a rigid, intolerant, and exclusive understanding of religion. In this case, deradicalization preaching is expected to effectively provide a more inclusive and moderate religious understanding (Naldo, 2022).

The importance of deradicalization preaching to former terrorist convicts is not only related to efforts to prevent terrorism (Arnus, 2017) but also to their social recovery and reintegration into society (Harrison, 2022). As part of primary prevention and rehabilitation efforts, deradicalization da'wah aims to change radical thought patterns

and behavior to become more moderate and peaceful (Yunanto et al., 2017). The approach in preaching deradicalization to former terrorist convicts must not be purely secular but must pay attention to religious and spiritual dimensions. This is because the main motivation for acts of terrorism often comes from a wrong understanding of religious teachings, so preaching that contains a religious context can be more effective in dismantling false radical narratives (Rahmanto, 2020).

One of the key aspects of deradicalization preaching is a holistic and integrated approach (Rokhmad, 2012). This includes religious, psychological, educational, social, and economic development (Sukabdi, 2018). This comprehensive approach makes it possible to reach various aspects of the lives of former terrorist prisoners and build a solid foundation for their reintegration into society (Mibtadin & Zainal Habib, 2022). Besides, deradicalization preaching must prioritize a humanist and empathetic approach (Nasor, 2017). This means that former terrorist convicts are not seen as enemies but as individuals who still have the potential to change and contribute positively to society (Rokhmad, 2014). This approach also requires the strong presence of religious figures, community leaders, and families to provide support and guidance (Faizin, 2019).

The importance of an inclusive approach in deradicalization preaching should not be ignored. This includes involving various parties such as ulama, psychologists, law enforcement, government, and civil society in the process of counseling, coaching, and monitoring former terrorist convicts (Gunaratna, 2011). Although the challenges in implementing deradicalization preaching to former terrorist convicts cannot be ignored, its success can produce a significant impact on efforts to prevent terrorism (Zora, 2015). By giving former terrorist convicts a second chance to improve themselves and become a constructive part of society, we can build a stronger foundation in fighting radicalism and extremism (Hettiarachchi, 2018).

Deradicalization preaching to former terrorist convicts also needs to pay attention to their society's social, cultural, and political context (Marsden, 2015). This makes it possible to design relevant and effective programs according to local needs and characteristics. In addition, it is important to pay attention to the fact that each individual has a unique journey and experience, so the approach to deradicalization preaching must also be flexible and adaptable (Cherney, 2021). This makes it possible to provide appropriate support according to the needs and challenges faced by each former terrorist prisoner.

The role of the family is also vital in supporting the deradicalization process of former terrorist convicts. The family has closer access and can provide strong support in influencing changes in individual attitudes and behavior (Marjuni et al., 2022). In the global context, cooperation between countries is also a key factor in the success of the

deradicalization da'wah strategy for former terrorist convicts (Haris, 2020). This includes exchanging information, experience, and resources to strengthen capacity in preventing and dealing with radicalism and terrorism (Zuhri, 2021). Apart from that, using information technology and social media can also effectively spread moderate da'wah messages and fight radical narratives (Mutakin & Khasanah, 2023). Using online platforms, deradicalization preaching can reach a broader and more diverse audience (Khisbiyah et al., 2018).

In evaluating the success of deradicalization preaching to former terrorist convicts, it is important to have clear and measurable indicators. This makes it possible to assess the impact and effectiveness of the programs that have been implemented. However, it is important to remember that the deradicalization process is complex and requires sufficient time (Wahyudi & Kurniasih, 2021). By digging deeper into the factors that encourage someone to fall into a network of terrorism and through a holistic, inclusive, and human values-based approach, deradicalization preaching to former terrorist convicts has the potential to make a significant contribution to efforts to prevent terrorism globally.

METHODS

This research is descriptive qualitative research. Meanwhile, this research approach uses a sociological approach, where terrorism and former convicts are seen as a social phenomenon that does not stand alone. It involves many factors that influence it—economic factors, culture, education, social environment, religious understanding, politics, etc. As a social phenomenon, it is a form of social interaction because sociologists view objects, knowledge, practices, and institutions in the social world as products of human interaction and social construction (Cannolly, 2016).

The data collection technique in this research was as follows: 1) observation in which the researcher observed the deradicalization preaching for former terrorist convicts at the Semarang Class 1 Correctional Center; 2) interviews conducted with several leaders and officers of the Semarang Class 1 Correctional Center, former terrorism convicts, and community figures who are concerned about this research's problems; 3) documentation by looking for documents related to deradicalization efforts against former convicts' terrorism that have been carried out by various parties, especially by the Semarang Class 1 Correctional Center.

The researcher's data analysis technique uses four stages of qualitative and interactive model data analysis techniques. The first stage contains a series of data collection processes obtained from various sources. The second stage is the reduction stage, which contains the process of combining all forms of data that have been obtained

into a piece of writing that will be analyzed. The third stage is the display stage, which contains data processing prepared in written form and has a clear theme flow. Next, the final stage is the conclusion stage, which contains the answers to the research questions that have been carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Radical beliefs still exist among former terrorism convicts.

Radicalism among former terrorism convicts is a crucial issue in deradicalization and social reintegration efforts (Aisy, 2021). Many of them still adhere to radical beliefs after serving their sentences, especially if, during the rehabilitation process, they did not receive proper guidance. This radical ideology often arises from a narrow understanding of religion and the doctrine of violence, which is strengthened by the experience of living in a radical environment (Amin & Windiyastuti, 2023). Handling clients with a background of radicalism is a big challenge for the Semarang Class I Correctional Center (BAPAS). Deradicalization programs, which aim to change clients' thinking patterns and behavior, require a comprehensive and sustainable approach. Several factors can cause radical ideology to persist among former terrorism convicts, even though they have gone through a deradicalization process.

One of the main factors that causes radical ideology to persist among former terrorism convicts is the lack of social support after they are released. Society still views them negatively, making it difficult to access work, education, or even healthy social relationships (Aisy, 2021). As a result, they again feel isolated and vulnerable to the influence of radical groups that offer support and identity. In situations like this, former terrorism convicts are more easily tempted to return to old radical thought patterns and networks (Amin & Windiyastuti, 2023).

Apart from that, deradicalization programs that are not holistic also cause failed rehabilitation (Anastasia, n.d.). Programs that only focus on cognitive aspects, such as a moderate understanding of religion, without paying attention to the client's psychological and emotional aspects, are often ineffective (Baugut & Neumann, 2020). Former prisoners need a comprehensive approach, including mental, social, and spiritual development, in order to truly change their beliefs and behavior. The involvement of psychologists, ulama, and social workers with competence in this field is necessary to help the deradicalization process run well (Kruglanski et al., 2016).

The role of family and community is also no less important in supporting former terrorism convicts to reintegrate into society. Family is often the first place where they look for emotional and moral support (Naser & La Vigne, 2006). If the family does not have the proper understanding or is even influenced by radical ideology, the

deradicalization process will be even more difficult. Therefore, assistance must also be provided to families so that they can play an active role in the rehabilitation process and prevent former terrorism convicts from returning to radical networks.

Apart from these factors, the reasons why radicalism still exists among former prisoners are:

First, a strong ideological background is one of the leading causes. Most terrorism convicts have ideologies rooted in extreme religious or political beliefs, usually connected to radical groups. This ideology is often formed through a process of indoctrination and traumatic experiences, such as involvement in violence or oppression (Dugas & Kruglanski, 2014). Some clients may remain steadfast in their extremist beliefs, rejecting deradicalization efforts because they view them contrary to their ideological principles (Asrori et al., 2020). This psychological process shows that radical beliefs are difficult to change without a proper and in-depth approach.

Second, environmental and network influences play a significant role in the success or failure of deradicalization. Clients who are still connected to radical networks or are in an environment that supports extremist ideology tend to find it difficult to abandon radical ideology (Cheung, 2023). Dependence on the support of this group, both socially and ideologically, can cause them to re-engage in radical activities after being released (Cheung, 2023). Rejection of deradicalization programs also often occurs due to pressure from these networks.

Third, the social stigma faced by former terrorism convicts hinders their reintegration process into society. Society still views them with suspicion and distrust, isolating clients (Ariefuzzaman, 2016). This adds to the psychological burden and can strengthen their desire to return to the radical community that gave them identity and support. Therefore, education and outreach to the community are critical in reducing this stigma. This program can provide understanding to the public regarding the importance of providing support in the deradicalization process to prevent former prisoners from returning to radical activities.

Fourth, the level of education also influences the effectiveness of deradicalization. Clients with a lower level of education may be more susceptible to radical ideological indoctrination due to limited critical understanding (Sukabdi, 2021). Meanwhile, clients with higher formal education are often more skilled at rationalizing their radical beliefs, making the deradicalization process more complex.

Fifth, the client's social and economic background also plays a role in forming and maintaining radical ideology. Clients from low economic backgrounds or marginalized communities tend to see radicalism as a way out of their social and economic isolation

(Jusmiati & Darlis, 2019). Therefore, deradicalization programs must include economic and social empowerment strategies to prevent their return to radical ideology.

On the other hand, several external factors make radical ideology still exist among former terrorism convicts, including (Safi'i, 2019):

1. Availability of Special Programs. The lack of deradicalization programs specifically designed for clients with a background in radicalism is one of the factors that causes radical ideology to exist still (Amirault & Bouchard, 2017). Existing programs may not be in-depth enough or may not suit the client's needs.

2. Limited Officer Training. BAPAS officers require special training in understanding and handling clients with radical ideologies. These limitations in training can affect the effectiveness of deradicalization programs. So, it has not touched on the most fundamental aspect of radicalism. Therefore, increasing the budget and specially trained human resources is necessary to handle deradicalization. This includes further training for officers and adding experts in psychology and socialization.

3. Limited Approach. A deradicalization approach that only focuses on security aspects without paying attention to clients' social, psychological, and economic aspects can be less effective. A holistic approach is needed to achieve better results. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive deradicalization program covering security, social, psychological, religious, cultural, and economic aspects (Webber & Kruglanski, 2018).

4. Funding Uncertainty. Inconsistent or limited funding for deradicalization programs can hinder long-term program implementation. This uncertainty makes it difficult to plan and implement programs effectively, so radical beliefs persist among prisoners (Cleary et al., 2024).

5. Cultural and Religious Resistance. Handling clients with a background of radicalism often involves sensitive cultural and religious aspects. Mistakes in approach can cause further client resistance so that radical ideology can strengthen (Khamdan, 2015).

6. Limited Resources. Limited human resources and budget are among the main challenges. Officers who deal with clients with a background in radicalism require special training and a deep understanding of extreme ideology. The deradicalization program requires adequate funds, experts, and infrastructure to be carried out effectively. Handling deradicalization requires strong cooperation between agencies, including the police, intelligence agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations. Ineffective coordination can hinder the implementation of deradicalization programs. Therefore, it is necessary to

increase coordination and cooperation with related agencies, such as the police, intelligence agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations (Al Adawiah, 2021).

By considering all these factors, deradicalization efforts must be carried out comprehensively, involve various parties, and focus on sustainable rehabilitation. Not only moderate religious guidance but also psychological, social, and emotional support plays an important role in changing the mindset and behavior of former terrorism convicts. The Correctional Center (BAPAS) and related institutions must continue to develop deradicalization programs that are more effective and integrated so that former terrorism convicts can lead more productive lives and not be trapped again in radicalism.

Deradicalization da'wah in the religious rehabilitation of former terrorism convicts

Deradicalization preaching to former terrorism convicts is crucial in preventing and overcoming extremism and promoting societal peace and safety (Webber et al., 2018). Former terrorism convicts, after serving their sentences, often face significant challenges in the process of reintegrating into society. They have the potential to become targets for re-recruitment by radical groups if they are not given proper attention and assistance (Anastasia, n.d.).

Through deradicalization preaching, former terrorism convicts can be given a deep understanding of religion, which aligns with the teachings of peace, tolerance, and humanity (Achmad, 1985). Proper da'wah will provide an opportunity for them to re-understand actual religious values and understand the negative consequences of acts of terrorism (Zahrah, 1994). In addition, da'wah strategies also help former terrorism convicts acquire the social and economic skills necessary to integrate into society (Bungo, 2014). Intensive training and mentoring will allow them to get decent work and build positive relationships with the surrounding environment (Tampubolon, 2021).

The importance of preaching deradicalization toward former terrorism convicts also lies in their role as agents of change (Riyadi & Adinugraha, 2021). With the proper guidance, they can become critical voices in dealing with extremism and terrorism, as well as help prevent the recruitment and spread of radical ideology in society (Khotimah, 2009). Therefore, sustainable deradicalization da'wah strategies that focus on former terrorism convicts are a crucial step in building a safe and peaceful society (Mahfuz, 1979). By involving them in reintegration and providing the proper support, we can create a more inclusive environment, steer them away from violence, and build a solid foundation for peace and harmony.

Deradicalization preaching towards former terrorist convicts is also important to change society's perceptions and attitudes towards them. Often, former terrorist convicts are considered a threat who must be shunned and isolated. However, through effective da'wah, we can help society see them as capable of change and making positive contributions (Solihat, 2017).

By providing education, counseling, and open dialogue, deradicalization of da'wah strategies can help reduce the social stigma attached to former terrorism convicts (Al Adawiyah, 2020). People need to be given the understanding that they have served punishment for their actions and now have the opportunity to improve themselves and make a positive contribution to society (Prasetyo, 2019). Apart from that, da'wah strategies also play an important role in building networks and cooperation between former terrorism convicts and the wider community. Through open dialogue and interaction, they can understand each other, build trust, and work together to prevent extremism.

No less important, the deradicalization da'wah strategy can also help identify and overcome the factors that cause terrorism. By listening to the experiences and thoughts of former terrorism convicts, we can understand the factors that pushed them onto the path of extremism and find practical solutions to prevent the spread of radical ideology (Hasani, 2021).

The urgency of the deradicalization da'wah strategy for former terrorism convicts must not be ignored (Supena, 2012). Through a holistic approach, da'wah can help them reintegrate, build public awareness, and provide the support needed to avoid re-involvement in terrorist activities (Nasrullah, 2016). Thus, da'wah strategies become important in promoting peace, building social resilience, and protecting society from the threat of extremism (Supena, 2021). Furthermore, the da'wah strategy for former terrorism convicts must be supported by cooperation between the government, religious institutions, and civil society. The government needs to create policies that facilitate the social and economic reintegration of former terrorism convicts, as well as provide holistic rehabilitation programs. Religious institutions can provide spiritual formation, teach peaceful religious values, and strengthen their spirituality.

Civil society also has an important role in supporting deradicalization da'wah strategies. Society needs to give former terrorism convicts a second chance by accepting them back into their social environment. Social support, employment opportunities, and inclusion in community activities can help them feel valuable and beneficial to society. The deradicalization mission strategy for former terrorism convicts must be preventive (Khalifa, 2022). Through education, empowerment, and preventing radicalization, we can prevent individuals from being trapped in the cycle of extremism and terrorism. In

schools and communities, these programs must start early to provide a proper understanding of religion, develop critical thinking, and promote inclusive values and mutual understanding.

Awareness of the urgency of the deradicalization da'wah strategy for former terrorism convicts also needs to be expanded to the international level. Cooperation between countries in exchanging information, training, and experience will enrich this da'wah strategy. Countries must share knowledge and best practices in facing the challenges of reintegration of former terrorism convicts (Hajar & Anshori, 2021). By implementing a comprehensive and sustainable deradicalization propaganda strategy, we can build a safer society, reduce the potential for terrorist recruitment, and promote peace and harmony. Changing the narrative and giving former terrorism convicts the opportunity to improve themselves is an important step in the fight against global extremism and terrorism.

CONCLUSION

This research found that radical ideology often persists among former terrorist convicts due to several key factors: 1) limited social support: negative stigma from society, lack of social support, and difficulties in finding work and accessing education trigger isolation and return to radical networks; 2) non-holistic deradicalization programs: many programs only focus on cognitive aspects and do not integrate psychological, emotional, and social development, thereby reducing the effectiveness of rehabilitation; 3) ideological background and environmental Influence: strong extremist ideology and dependency on radical networks making the problem worse; 4) social stigma and limited education and socio-economic background also play a role. Apart from that, external factors, namely the lack of special programs, limited officer training, and inconsistent funding, hamper the effectiveness of deradicalization programs.

Deradicalization da'wah plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation of former terrorism convicts: 1) peaceful understanding of religion: da'wah can teach moderate religious values, reduce attachment to radical ideology, and provide a more peaceful and tolerant outlook; 2) social and economic empowerment: social and economic skills training is important for the integration of ex-convicts into society, as well as helping them find work and build positive relationships, 3) reducing social stigma: education and outreach to the community regarding the importance of support for ex-convicts of terrorism can reduce stigma and facilitate their reintegration; 4) the role of family and community: family and community involvement in the rehabilitation process is very important to support positive change and prevent a return to radicalism. This means that deradicalization preaching must be holistic and involve various parties, including the

government, religious institutions, and civil society. Practical cooperation and ongoing support are essential for the success of the rehabilitation process and integration of former terrorism convicts into society. This strategy also needs to explore cultural, social, and economic aspects to address the root causes of radicalization.

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