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THE CONTESTATION OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISM DISCOURSES BY INDONESIAN MUSLIM NETIZENS

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ABSTRACT

The point of this study is to examine the patterns of Islamic discourses constructed by radical Islamic groups on social media. This study examines several Instagram accounts used by Islamic discourse-shaping groups. Despite the fact that Islamic radicalism discourse was not a novel concept, it has become one of the most discussed phenomena today. This study examines the discourse of Islamic radicalism on social media; one of its goals is to advance the concept of formalizing Islamic sharia in Indonesia. This study employs qualitative descriptive research methods. The analysis then applies Foucault's perspective on power relation theory to these issues. The data collection techniques were observation and documentation techniques. Islamic Khilafah discourse that carries "anti-democracy" and a campaign to marginalize women's role in the public sphere were identified as forms of Islamic radicalism on social media. These issues are produced by radical Islamic groups via social media because these platforms are deemed strategic and effective for promoting their discourses as a form of ideological conflict. Fundamentalist Islamic groups are eager to read the gap; they identify a change in modern society's way of life that cannot be separated from the device. Therefore, they attempt to control and construct Islamic discourses in cyberspace from their point of view without allowing for contextual differences.

Keywords: Religious discourses, radicalism, power relation, social media

1. Introduction

In religious studies, radicalism has been a highly popular and debatable topic over the past few decades. Regarding radicalism, Karen Armstrong has written two objective analyses (Armstrong, 2015). First, it must be understood that this movement's ideology is rooted in a fear of secularism, which is feared to completely eradicate them. Therefore, they develop counterproductive doctrines. Second, it should be made clear that this movement is not an old thing of the past, but rather a modern, innovative, and modernising one. They rationally read their religious foundations.

Religious radicalism as a social phenomenon expands with the assistance of social media. People in urban areas or urban communities tend to adopt a religion that opposes culture and personal religious life. There are tensions between religious life and local culture and traditions. Amidst urban communities' worldly pursuits and spiritual aridity, it turns out that many urban communities are eager to study or learn about religious topics once more (Nisa, 2018). This is supported by the high accessibility of the internet and social media, which are the biological offspring of modernity, and by the fact that diverse urban communities spend their time on the internet; consequently, a large

portion of today's society is eager to study and search for a great deal of religious literature via their closest media, the internet and social media. (Cholidah, 2018) As a result of the Internet and social media, information about anything can be accessed more quickly, at any time and from any location. But unfortunately, both beginners and those seeking to strengthen their religious knowledge are later exposed to the social media accounts and websites of radical Islamic groups, simply because the accounts have a large number of followers or the websites have high traffic.

In the meantime, in addition to urban society as a whole, which seeks a great deal of religious information and literature from the internet and social media, the youth tend to do the same in terms of obtaining religious information. According to a national survey conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, young people are more likely to obtain religious information via the internet and social media (Maulana, 2018). In the survey, approximately 50.89 percent of students reported seeking religious information via the internet or social media. Additionally, the millennial generation of young people relies heavily on the internet, with approximately 84.94 percent of students/university students having internet access, 96.20 percent accessing the internet via cell phones, and 61.05 percent using the internet daily to find religious information.

A large number of users makes social media an effective tool for groups, organisations, communities, and individuals to disseminate ideas, understandings, beliefs, and ideologies in modern society, where social media has become indispensable and a way of life (Haramain, 2017a). For radical groups, the existence of social media creates numerous opportunities for their activities and accelerates the propagation of their ideas and discourse because it can reach a large number of people from various backgrounds.

Lorne Dawson and Douglas Cowan explain the distinction between "online religion" and "religion online" (Dawson & Cowan, 2004). Online religion is the experience and practise of religion via the internet. Online religion is defined as the presence of religious information on the internet. In other words, the virtual space has become a focal point for the search for modern human religion, which has repercussions for offline religious rites.

A large number of social media users in Indonesia makes social media the most effective tool for individuals, large groups, and actors, including state actors, non-state actors, and radical Islamic groups, to spread their ideas, discourse, and ideology, as well as to develop their group networks while representing themselves online (Muthohirin, 2015). Using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, radical Islamic groups disseminate their doctrines in a variety of ways, including the use of terms or slogans with religious connotations, as well as the appearance of religious symbols or slogans. This is done to simplify and facilitate the spread of radicalism's message via social media. (Affan, 2018a, 2018b)

The emergence of new media, particularly social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Path, Line, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram, strengthens the identity and discourse of radical Islamic groups. The discourse circulates on social media and other platforms, such as news websites. Diverse forms of information can be rapidly disseminated, outpacing traditional print and electronic media such as newspapers, magazines, bulletins, tabloids, television, and radio, whose readership is gradually declining. The presence of social media is utilised extensively by radical Islamic organisations.

On social media, various forms of Islamic discourse from Islamic radicalism groups such as calls to wear Hijrah customs (Prasanti & Indriani, 2017; Sari & Mahadian, 2018), return to the Alqur'an and Sunnah, or slogan Khilafah is the world resolutions are dispersed widely. The author believes that this could erode the old discourse, which represents a moderate and tolerant interpretation of Islam. The dominant discourse of the radical group, which we frequently encounter on social media, was also supported by the daily conduct of its militant followers. (Haramain, 2016)

Thus, it becomes interesting for researchers to examine multiple social media accounts, particularly Instagram, which is believed to produce Islamic radicalism discourse using the discourse relations and power approach of Michel Foucault. Regarding this research topic, the relationship between dominant power and discourse production is utilised to dissect how discourse about Islam is produced and disseminated by those with power, and how this discourse then becomes the dominant consumption in the religious field for the social media user community. The discourse formed by radical groups in social media will eventually display concepts or knowledge that are formed and perpetuate truth claims regarding their version of religious understanding or what they have created and produced for the social media audience.

2. Method

The study is qualitative research that attempts to construct an analysis of Islamic discourse produced by a selection of Instagram accounts. These social media accounts are believed to have certain ideologies that distinguish them from others. In this study, the author will conduct a textual analysis of several Islamic discourse-related Instagram posts from the selected account. This text analysis would reveal the identity and ideology concealed in a social media text.

This article uses radical Islam as a research material object, while its formal object is Michel Foucault's concept of the relationship between discourse and power. The authors selected the Instagram accounts "Indonesia bertauhid official," "Mercusuar Umat," and "Indonesia Bertauhid Reborn" for this study. The account was selected due to the number and variety of posts on the discussion of Islamic studies, as well as the number of followers or followers (other accounts) listening to or responding to each post from the aforementioned accounts. Another reason is that the aforementioned accounts contained a production of Islamic discourse related to the theme of religious and state

relations, the enactment of Islamic law as a positive law, a discourse on the establishment of the Islamic Khilafah, women and democracy from an Islamic perspective, and several other discourses that are directly related to the discourse of Islamic radicalism.

Several data sources, including observation and documentation, are employed in the data collection procedure. This study utilises data in the form of a corpus of texts, images, and videos containing statements on social media, specifically Instagram, which contains the discourse of Islamic radicalism.

In addition, these Instagram accounts' textual and image- and video-based posts will be elaborated upon during the data analysis. The author will explain not only the text, images, or video as a means of communicating messages, but also the meaning contained in the use of language and text. By analysing the meaning of the texts, videos, and images posted on the Instagram account, it will be possible to determine how Islamic discourse is formed. Textual descriptions will be regarded as part of the social media value-discussion language. Therefore, what is meant by the text at this stage is not only a series of sentences that complement uploaded images or videos, but also reveals the context and meaning that accompany it.

When a text in a speech transcript of a video or an image is displayed in a medium, the purpose of this will become apparent. The language and symbols in the post will subsequently be utilised by radical group Instagram accounts to create a new ideology or discourse.

The final step is the explanation of the analysis, which provides answers and explanations as to why the text, images, or videos from the Instagram post must be selected, what substance will appear, and what substance will be produced. This stage will generate an analysis that identifies the ideology of the Instagram account.

3. Result and Discussion

According to the concept of discourse contestation, social media is viewed as the construction agent of discourse or message, which defines reality based on its own interests and then distributes it to the public. The media facilitates the dissemination of dominant or powerful groups' ideas, the control of other groups, and the formation of community consensus. The media is viewed as an agent of social construction that defines reality with its perspectives, biases, and allegiances, rather than as a free and neutral channel. Regardless of the discourse produced by the media, it is always the result of a social construction involving particular perspectives, values, or ideologies. The media is also viewed as a manifestation of the ideological battleground between social groups.

The role of traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, as well as new media such as online news portals and social media, in the process of constructing people's understanding of things in everyday life cannot be ignored. These

media have an effect on how people perceive things. The construction of people's understanding is a fundamental method for determining why and how an individual or group perceives the world and all things in a certain way and what role the media plays in shaping that perception. In this study, the author will focus on the discussion of social media, which is used as one of the Medias to disseminate messages in the formation of Islamic discourse on social media, particularly through the examination of a selection of Instagram accounts.

The process of constructing a discourse within a group emphasises the media's role as a means of constructing the discourse through broadcasted content (Sulfikar, 2019). Due to the characteristics of the new media it introduced, the internet can be viewed as a social change agent capable of influencing the beliefs and actions of individuals (Kwahk & Park, 2018). In addition, new media can become cultural production media that reflect social environment beliefs and behaviour. Inferred from the preceding statement, social media has inadvertently become an integral part of human life in terms of shaping perspectives.

In light of this, it is not surprising that social media is rife with competition. Instagram is the platform utilised by radical Islamic groups for contestation in the context of this study. In accordance with their group's understanding, the content or discourse they produce is symbolically embedded with text and images that depict the reality of the true teachings of Islam in the community.

There are numerous interpretations of discourse, depending on context and application. There is no consensus on the definition of discourse because the concept has a complicated history and is used differently by diverse perspectives (Wahid, 2018). With today's rapidly advancing technology, creating discourse is no longer limited to speech alone, but also includes the use of writings, symbols, and even images and videos.

Foucault does not view discourse as a series of words or propositions in a text, but as something that produces something else (an idea, concept, or effect) (Horrocks & Jetvic, 2004). Discourse is detectable because it systematically consists of an idea, opinion, concept, and worldviews formed in a specific context so as to influence the way of thinking and acting (Eriyanto, 2001). Discourse as a system of representation is no longer limited to language alone. Discourse, according to Foucault, in addition to constructing topics, defining and producing objects of knowledge, also regulates how topics can be continuously discussed and influences how ideas are implemented and used in social reality. This is because discourse has power and influence in a social context and structures our understanding of reality and ideas about our identity. On the other hand, discourse also has the capacity to limit and exclude other approaches that are not part of the dominant discourse.

The idea of the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and power is one of Foucault's most notable ideas. Implementation of power will perpetually generate knowledge, and knowledge ownership will lead to power. This can be interpreted as

evidence that the role of knowledge is capable of perpetuating the superior group's dominance over other groups through the control of power by asserting the truth. Communities ruled by the dominant group will always be persuaded to accept these truth claims in the form of dispersed discourse, such as social media.

Knowledge always demonstrates power, and knowledge always has a potent effect. Operating the power would always generate knowledge as its foundation. Knowledge is produced by power, and not just because it benefits power. There is no power without knowledge, and there is no knowledge without power. Certain discourses generate truths and knowledge with a powerful impact. Power is not limited to the language of ownership or the state; it also exists in the form of small individuals. Power is the authority to determine the composition, relationships, and rules of such things as socioeconomic relationships, family, sexuality, and communication media, among others. Each power generates and produces its own truth, which leads the populace to adhere to the established truth.

The concept of Foucault's discourse is utilised here to determine the discourse construction that emerges in the Instagram post uploaded by the chosen account. Therefore, the Instagram account's content will be reviewed by the discourse construction that underpins the development of Islamic understanding.

Among the various forms of radicalism discourse that emerged from these Instagram accounts, it is evident that the aforementioned accounts seek to shape and direct the public's perception of social media. Here is where the power of discourse through language rules as the fabrication machine for interpretation.

According to Foucault, discourse can produce knowledge while displaying a fear of the audience. Using as an example the implementation of a new ritual in a religion where the ritual is regarded as having no origin, the argument asserts that those who do so will be rejected (not rewarded) and sinful. These rituals, such as tahlilan for the dead, mauludan, reading barzanji, etc., are frequently performed by the community (Arifin, 2017). By categorising what is good and bad, which discourses are acceptable and which are not, it is possible to exclude other discourses that are considered distinct. In order to weaken them, it discriminates against certain groups. This is utilised to convey the discourse to the general public.

Radical Islamic groups use discourse pertaining to this new ritual to stigmatise other Islamic groups that frequently incorporate it into their religious practises, in this case the Traditionalist Islamic group or Nahdlatul Ulama. This new ritual is described as a bad religious practise, a source of conflict, and one that leads to superstition, shirk, etc., similar to the practises of the Nahdlatul Ulama. The systematic use of tactics based on public fear is designed to increase panic and vigilance so that individuals who perform new religious rituals will stop doing so. This pattern of power relations is also present in other forms of Islamic radicalism discourse generated by these Instagram accounts.

In general, radical groups frequently use verses from the al-Qur'an, hadiths, ulama's sayings, or other forms of religious authority as the basis for their discourse on social media (Fealy & White, 2008). (Haramain, 2017b). They use the verses of the alQur'an, hadiths, and sayings of Ulama posted on their account as a tool of legitimacy, with the expectation that after the public reads the post, the community will feel restricted in their movements when acting or performing religious rituals that are not in accordance with the posts they have read.

This is consistent with Foucault's theory regarding Panopticons, the 'watchtower' that seems to continuously monitor the movements of individuals. Foucault uses the term panopticons to refer to the discipline of prisoners' bodies. It was interpreted by Foucault as a general formula for the dominance of power. In Foucault's theory, disciplinary social order (disciplinary social order) and community organisation based on discipline are crucial concepts. The formation of obedient and disciplined individuals through the use of panopticons is a form of omnipresent power. Here, power is not as straightforward as Gramsci's notions of hegemony and dominance suggest. Therefore, power operates via the construction of diverse knowledge within a specific discourse.

Foucault observes that the greatest impact of panopticons is to stimulate public awareness and perspectives of those who believe the existence of the role of power that occurs automatically in our daily lives (Foucault, 2012). Thus, the concept of panopticons is defined by the power of one party's information over another. In a panopticon prison, the authority over all information resides with the guard, while the prisoners are never informed. Consequently, prisoners are never permitted to communicate.

In the context of this study, modern Muslim society is portrayed as a prisoner overseen by guards in the form of a radical social media account that uses verses of the Qur'an, hadiths, sayings of Ulama, and other forms of religious authority to control every action, method of worship, and individual perceptions of Islamic discourse (Githens-Mazer, 2012). Like prisoners in a panoptic system who believe they must conform to the wishes of the guards, social media users believe they are constantly monitored and will be judged by social media audiences if they act in opposition to the dominant discourse. This is what Foucault later termed the Panopticon, spaces where power relations run directly.

In media such as social media, a post's value or ideology is typically determined by its religious background and the values it espouses. When compared to other types of posts from the aforementioned Instagram accounts, the radicalism is evident, although there are also posts discussing trivial matters such as advice to get married at a young age. This also has implications for the language employed by the aforementioned Instagram accounts, which directly invite Muslims to return to Islamic teachings based solely on the Quran and Sunnah. Language is a type of material ideology dialectically shaped on purpose by an interest. This indicates that there is a tendency for the aforementioned Instagram accounts to promote the ideology or discourse of Islamic radicalism.

Foucault describes a power relationship in which the production of Islamic radicalism discourse on Instagram and other social media platforms is a power practise that does not operate repressively and intimidatingly, but rather creatively and strategically by an ideology that is concealed and operates behind an Instagram account. Use social media to subjectively construct the truth values of religion for social media users.

4. Conclusion

Through social media, radical Islamic groups construct forms of Islamic radicalism discourse, such as calls to avoid Bid'ah, campaigns to implement Islamic law or Islamic State and Islamic Khilafah discourse, and campaigns to marginalise the role of women in the public sphere. This form of discourse was created and disseminated by radical Islamic groups via social media using images or sermons from their preachers. This is a strategic and effective method for promoting their discourses, as well as a tool for gaining the support of a new generation of contemporary Indonesian Muslims. This generation is a Muslim community that is constantly connected to the internet and digital media and requires propaganda content that is more interactive, effective, and accessible.

Radical Islamic groups are eager to exploit gaps by observing changes in the lifestyle of modern humans that are inextricably linked to technology, the internet, and social media. To this end, they attempt to master and construct Islamic discourse on social media in accordance with their beliefs. This strategy of mastering and constructing discourse via social media is the result of knowledge construction work that will effectively shape and perpetuate a Regime of Truth and is therefore anticipated to become popular knowledge derived from God and evolve into norms or standard rules used by the community to determine what is considered true and false. Thus, the power of Islamic radicalism discourse operates and shapes individuals' and society's knowledge of Islamic discourse. The public is compelled to interpret texts as they are produced, without reinterpreting them critically

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