



The Role of Social Media in the Spread of Religious Extremism Thoughts and Their Impact on Social Pathology

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Abstract. *This research aims to explore the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism and its impact on social pathology. With the development of increasingly sophisticated times, nowadays it is very easy to disseminate an idea via social media which is quickly absorbed by the public. This research will use a qualitative approach with a literature review of works relevant to the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism and its impact on social pathology. The sources used in this research are books, journals, articles and related academic writings. Content analysis of this research will be used to identify key emerging themes in the relevant literature. The results of this research reveal the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism thoughts, religious extremism from a social and transpersonal psychology perspective, as well as the impact and ways of overcoming religious extremism thoughts on social pathology. To overcome the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism, including: increasing awareness, regulation and supervision, inclusive religious education, individual awareness. Therefore, preventive and intervention steps need to be taken to overcome this problem, including increasing awareness, regulation, interfaith collaboration, inclusive education, and individual awareness.*

Kata kunci: *Religious Extremism; Social Media; Social Patholog*

INTRODUCTION

With increasingly advanced and sophisticated developments, everything becomes easier and more practical, especially when searching for and sharing information via social media. The use of social media has become a global phenomenon that influences various aspects of human life, including in the context of religion. Social media provides a wide platform for certain individuals and groups to share their thoughts, views and beliefs. However, unfortunately, social media can also be used as a tool to spread religious extremism thoughts.

Religious extremism is a radical and intolerant view that uses religion as a justification for carrying out acts of violence or discrimination against people who have different views or beliefs. Through social media, extremist individuals and groups can easily spread their propaganda to a wider audience, including people who are vulnerable to the influence of extremism. One of the impacts of the spread of religious extremism thoughts through social media is the emergence of

social pathology. Social pathology refers to disorders or deviations in society that damage harmony, solidarity and social stability. The spread of religious extremist thoughts through social media can cause polarization, conflict between groups, discrimination and even violence.

Social media provides a space for individuals to interact with people who hold similar views, forming groups that mutually reinforce their extreme beliefs. This can isolate individuals from different perspectives and strengthen attitudes of intolerance towards people of different religions or beliefs. Additionally, social media also provides anonymity which allows individuals to spread extremist thoughts without fear of being identified or being held accountable for their actions. These events can strengthen individual courage in spreading extreme messages and influencing others.

The internet and social media among extremism groups are used to recruit certain individuals or groups and as a means of promoting their ideology. In this case, an example is carried out by the ISIS network. Online propaganda within the ISIS network via social media as a tool for recruiting members is very strong. The purpose of propaganda in the context of digital platforms is to create chaos in the cyber world so that it has consequences in the real world (Nurish, 2019).

In the phenomena that occur, the relevant theoretical approaches to be applied are social psychology and also transpersonal psychology. Social psychology is a branch of psychology that studies the relationships between humans and their groups (Myers, 2012). This is influenced by human behavior itself so that arguments, disputes and disputes can occur. Based on this knowledge, social psychology makes interventions to shape human personality and behavior so that they are more adaptive and appropriate to the situation at hand. Meanwhile, transpersonal psychology is also a branch of psychology that discusses and studies the state of human experience processes more broadly and deeply and integrates spiritual aspects (J. R. Battista, 1996).

Based on a sociological perspective, the recent emergence of religious extremism can be explained as a form of re-enchancement, namely resistance to the rationalistic worldview that modernization and secularization aspire to. As Allah says in Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 11: Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change the condition of themselves. Re-enchancement among Muslims is explained as a form of reaction to cognitive dissonance in modern Muslim individuals, especially those who really think about the implications of the rationalistic worldview for their faith. Cognitive dissonance, which was first put forward by psychologist Leon Festinger in 1957, is a psychological symptom that occurs when sufferers feel uncomfortable because of a mismatch between what they believe and what they do (Alkatiri, 2018).

In this research, the author will describe three things related to " the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism thoughts and its impact on social pathology ", namely: *first*, what is the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism thoughts. *Second*, religious extremism from a social and transpersonal psychology perspective. *Third*, what are the impacts and ways to overcome religious extremism thoughts on social pathology. The content analysis in the descriptive description for the three things above aims to understand the role of social media in the spread of religious extremism and its impact on social pathology.

METHOD

The method used in this research is a qualitative method, namely a method that is descriptive and tends to use analysis. Qualitative research is defined as an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups related to social problems (Ishtiaq, 2019) which can be used to interpret, explore or develop a deeper understanding of certain aspects of human beliefs, attitudes or behavior. The approach used in this research is *narrative* and *phenomenology* (Bungin, 2001). This *narrative* approach focuses on the object of the event (the person who experienced the event), usually one to two samples are taken for a cohesive story by conducting in-depth interviews, reading documents, and looking for themes. Meanwhile, this *phenomenology* approach is more about finding the essence of meaning of a phenomenon experienced by several individuals (A. H. Khilal, 2015). The steps taken in this research method are determining the research objectives, collecting reference literature and relevant data, analyzing the data, then reporting the results.

RESULT

A. The Role of Social Media in the Spread of Religious Extremism Thoughts

Social media has a significant role in the spread of religious extremism thoughts in Indonesia. In this article, (S. Sayyid, 2016) states that social media allows extremists to spread their ideology quickly and widely to a larger audience. One of the reasons why social media is an effective tool for the spread of religious extremist thoughts is because of its ability to create open and anonymous discussion spaces. This allows individuals with extreme views to communicate and share information without fear of being identified or arrested by authorities.

In addition, social media also allows extremists to take advantage of search and recommendation algorithms on these platforms. This algorithm will display content that suits the user's interests and preferences, including extremist content. In this way, social media users will continue to receive information and views that are in line with extremist thinking. The impact of the spread of religious extremism thoughts through social media is the disruption of religious tolerance in Indonesia. The more individuals are exposed to extremist thinking, the more likely they are to adopt those views. This can lead to the emergence of inter-religious conflicts and increased distrust between religious believers.

To overcome this problem, (S. Sayyid, 2016) mentioned the important role of social media in promoting religious tolerance. Social media can be used as a platform to spread messages of peace, interfaith dialogue, and better understanding of religions in Indonesia. Apart from that, the government and related institutions also need to make efforts to monitor and limit the spread of extremist content on social media.

Social media has a significant role in the spread of religious extremism thoughts in Indonesia. Extremists' use of social media allows them to spread their ideology quickly and widely to larger audiences. This has an impact on disrupting religious tolerance in Indonesia. Therefore, efforts need to be made to promote religious tolerance through social media and monitor the spread of extremist content on these platforms (S. Sayyid, 2016).

B. Religious Extremism from a Social and Transpersonal Psychology Perspective

Religious extremism is a complex phenomenon and can be understood from various perspectives, including social psychology and transpersonal psychology. From a social psychology perspective, religious extremism can be seen as the result of complex social interactions between individuals, groups and environmental factors (Hogg, M. A., & Vaughan, 2018).

Social psychology studies how individuals are influenced by groups and how individual behavior is influenced by social norms. In the context of religious extremism, social factors such as radical groups or extreme ideologies can influence individuals to adopt extreme beliefs and actions. Apart from that, social identity theory can also explain how individuals can feel involved and tied to extreme groups (Friedman, H. L., & Hartelius, 2013).

On the other hand, transpersonal psychology sees religious extremism as the result of extreme or transcendental spiritual experiences. Transpersonal psychology studies human experiences that go beyond conventional boundaries and include spiritual and transcendental dimensions. In the context of religious extremism, individuals may experience intense and profound spiritual experiences that influence their beliefs and actions (McCauley, Clark., & Moskalenko, 2008).

However, it is necessary It is known that no one theory can fully explain the phenomenon of religious extremism. This phenomenon is very complex and involves many interacting factors. Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach and holistic understanding are needed to understand and overcome the problem of religious extremism.

C. Impact and Ways to Overcome Thoughts of Religious Extremism on Social Pathology

The impact of religious extremism on social pathology can include:

1. Increased intolerance and hatred: Thoughts of religious extremism can strengthen intolerant attitudes towards other religious groups and trigger hatred between communities. This can cause social conflict and damage interpersonal relationships individual and group.
2. Discrimination and unfair treatment: Thoughts of religious extremism can encourage discrimination against minority religious or non-religious groups. This can lead to unfair treatment, oppression, and human rights violations.
3. Violence and terrorism: Thoughts of religious extremism can be a trigger for acts of violence and terrorism. Individuals influenced by these thoughts may carry out attacks against individuals or groups they perceive as enemies or who disagree with their beliefs.
4. Restrictions on religious freedom: Thoughts of religious extremism can influence government policies in limiting religious freedom and inhibiting the practice of different religions. This can harm religious minority groups and threaten the principles of democracy and religious freedom.
5. Decreased tolerance and social harmony: Thoughts of religious extremism can threaten social harmony and reduce the level of tolerance in society. This can divide communities and hinder the process of social integration.

It is important to remember that religious extremism thoughts do not represent the entire religious community and do not reflect the universal values of that religion. Efforts to combat extremist thoughts and promote interfaith dialogue and tolerance must continue to be made to prevent wider negative impacts on social pathology (S. Sayyid, 2016).

To overcome the role of social media in spreading religious extremism thoughts, here are the steps :

1. Raising awareness: The public must be given an understanding of the dangers of extremist thinking and how social media is used as a tool for spreading it. Education and awareness campaigns should be conducted to help society identify and counter extremist thinking.
2. Regulation and oversight: Governments and social media platforms must work together to develop effective regulations to tackle the spread of extremist thought. Strict monitoring of harmful content and legal action against individuals or groups that spread extremist thoughts is necessary.
3. Interreligious collaboration: Interreligious dialogue and cooperation can help build understanding, tolerance, and reduce polarization in society. Social media can also be used as a platform to promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation.
4. Inclusive religious education: The religious education curriculum must include an inclusive understanding of other religions and teach the values of tolerance, mutual respect and peace.
5. Individual awareness: Individuals should be critical of the information they receive through social media and verify its veracity before believing it or spreading it further. Developing media and critical literacy is an important skill in dealing with the spread of extremist thought.

Social media has a significant role in the spread of religious extremism thoughts. The impact on social pathology can damage social harmony and stability. Therefore, preventive and intervention steps need to be taken to overcome this problem, including increasing awareness, regulation, interfaith collaboration, inclusive education, and individual awareness.

CONCLUSION

Religious extremism is a radical and intolerant view that uses religion as a justification for carrying out acts of violence or discrimination against people who have different views or beliefs. Through social media, extremist individuals and groups can easily spread their propaganda to a wider audience, including people who are vulnerable to the influence of extremism. One of the impacts of the spread of religious extremism thoughts through social media is the emergence of social pathology. Social pathology refers to disorders or deviations in society that damage harmony, solidarity and social stability. The spread of religious extremist thoughts through social media can cause polarization, conflict between groups, discrimination and even violence.

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