Religious Extremism in a Multifaceted Context

El extremismo religioso en un contexto multifacético

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Abstract: Religious fundamentalism is a vigorously debated topic these days. It is frequently confined to a one-dimensional structure, which has been connected to religious violence. The current study claims that the existing use of the term "extreme" did not apprehend the various perceptions, opinions, and outlooks that characterize excessive religious behavior. The study deconstructs the implication of the word "extreme" in religious perspectives and responds to researchers' calls for a complete framework encompassing the many different components that make up religion. The research typically progresses religious extremism in intellectual, ceremonial, social, and political dimensions of religion, centered on the diversity of Islamic groups in Islamic states. An examination that connects Muslim radicalism with violence is being conducted elsewhere. According to the study, Muslims (or any religious organization) can be severe in some areas but moderate in others, such as extreme in ritual but moderate in politics. Understanding religious extremism in terms of these four characteristics offers new visions into the worldwide issue of religious extremism and well predicts how religious extremism manifests. More often, the framework proposed in this study can aid in expanding one's understanding of radicalism beyond a focus on violence.

Keywords: religious extremism, Muslims, violence, extreme behavior, Islam

Resumen: El fundamentalismo religioso es un tema fuertemente debatido en estos días. Con frecuencia se limita a una estructura unidimensional, que se ha relacionado con la violencia religiosa. El estudio actual afirma que el uso actual del término "extremo" no comprende las diversas percepciones, opiniones y puntos de vista que caracterizan el comportamiento religioso excesivo. El estudio deconstruye la implicación de la palabra "extremo" en las perspectivas religiosas y responde a los pedidos de los investigadores de un marco completo que abarque los muchos componentes diferentes que componen la religión. La investigación generalmente avanza el extremismo religioso en las dimensiones intelectual, ceremonial, social y política de la religión, centrada en la diversidad de grupos islámicos en los estados islámicos. En otros lugares se está realizando un examen que conecta el radicalismo musulmán con la violencia. Según el estudio, los musulmanes (o cualquier organización religiosa) pueden ser severos en algunas áreas pero moderados en otras, como extremos en el ritual pero moderados en la política. Comprender el extremismo religioso en términos de estas cuatro características ofrece nuevas visiones del problema mundial del extremismo religioso y predice bien cómo se manifiesta el extremismo religioso. Más a menudo, el marco propuesto en este estudio puede ayudar a expandir la comprensión del radicalismo más allá de un enfoque en la violencia.

Palabras clave: extremismo religioso, musulmanes, violencia, comportamiento extremo, Islam

1. INTRODUCTION

There is an upsurge in researches investigating the impact of religion on human lives (Brambilla et al., 2016; Coyle & Lyons, 2011; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). The reason for this upsurge can be elaborated by uncertainties of Western countries about the political and societal effects created by bad religion (Basedau et al., 2016). This, in turn, gave rise to a deep argument regarding the risk faced by society and the importance of religion and its role in a concerned state (Coyle & Lyons, 2011). The current study believes that the concept of good or bad religion, the defined unidimensional and dichotomous category of religion as moderate or extreme, does not do justice to the recent concern. But, it portrays religion or religious extremism as the only cause of violence and terrorism in the world.

These concepts and categorization of religious beliefs are of utmost importance. Religion or religious extremism can be expressed in multiple ways, and the vast majority of religious groups are present. Moreover, these basic images are problematic because they shape public perceptions of extremist groups. For example, after the incidence of 9/11, nearly 70% of the U.S. security officers victimized Muslims and Arabs by giving a statement that was perceived to be linked to this extremist activity (Cainkar, 2009). After 9/11, it seems like the term religious extremism provokes destructive stereotypes to specific religious peoples in both; community and policy-makers. This highlighted the importance of eliminating the association of the

concept of using extremism and terrorist activities to particular groups (Schipper, 2003). The purpose of this research article is to address this issue and to provide more clear knowledge of religious extremism. The article develops a multidimensional model of religious extremism to improve religion and religious extremism regarding social identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). In addition, the article also challenges the concept of manifesting religious extremism in one specific way. It believes that extremism in one dimension of religion (for example, a radical dimension in politics) is not necessarily related to extremism in other dimensions (for example, intolerant to rituals' diversity). There is a need to understand the enthusiasm of people to support violent political action. Therefore, the researchers need to discover religious extremism in multiple domains and develop the concept that not every religious extremism is linked with a desire to obtain violent goals in different ways.

The main objective of contemporary research is to develop a framework that permits a more precise and complete knowledge of multiple dimensions of religion and religious extremism. Different concepts, interpretations, and considerations of religious extremism have also been reviewed. The findings of this research will aid in explaining why, despite apparent commonalities that cause people to lump them together, extreme religious activities frequently clash over what it takes to be a good religious person.

2. THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF RELIGION AND THE FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS EXTREMISM AND VIOLENCE

The multidimensionality of religion is present over the decades. These multiple dimensions connect to some essential behaviors, such as satisfaction from life, stress, youth deviation, etc. The research proposed that five distinct components are significant with all religions. These components are defined as ideological, intellectual, ritual, experimental, and consequential components (Robbins, 1966). In recent years, a researcher proposed four distinct elementary dimensions of religion and individuality of religion. Believing, connection, behavioral expression, and belonging are the elementary dimensions defined in the research (Saroglou, 2011). This and various other studies on religious dimensions demonstrate that a behavioral expression is a complex form of religious dimensions.

The current article relies on these proposed frameworks to observe religious extremism. The article practices perceptions of previous frameworks

to offer a multidimensional approach to religious extremism. The offered approach can help to comprehend how moderate or extreme religious groups can be expressed. The article elaborates four-dimensional approach. The literature on violent religious activities has also been addressed, in which the only political dimension is considered. Before going into detail about these dimensions, it's crucial to note that the four focus dimensions in this research don't rule out the possibility of other dimensions when it comes to describing religious extremism. The article proposes that the current dimensions are critical in comprehending the opinions of different religious groups. However, as a result of certain historical and cultural changes or group analyses, these four dimensions may become more crucial. This can also be defined as various dimensions that may need to be considered for various religious groups and when researching other situations (Ysseldyk et al., 2010; Zarkasyi, 2008).

3. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM; MODERATE TO EXTREME

There has been a deep discussion and struggle in history about how religion should be linked to politics (Armstrong, 2004; Thomas, 2001). The political dimension of religion has not gained much importance (Armstrong, 2004) but has been discussed from the perspective of bad religion (Basedau et al., 2016). The main focus of "religious extremism," as defined by many researchers, has been political views and activities (Webber et al., 2018). Extreme religious movements use this strategy to gain political power and use laws or force to encourage their religious values.

The current religious extremism of political dimension faced by the world is closely associated with support for the Muslim empire. This support continued from the 700s to 1924 AD, when the last Caliphate was abolished in Turkey. Islam was connected with a structured, sometimes imperialistic, imperial power during the period and a particular system of religious, political, and cultural systems known as sharia law. More extreme religious groups argue for a progressive political agenda (e.g., resurrecting an Islamic empire, creating a transnational state that includes all Muslim states) (Mohamed Osman, 2010; Ward, 2009). They argue that political rules should be used to reform regionally developed political systems of many Muslim nations. Contrary, more moderate groups, push for religious beliefs to be integrated into present political institutions (e.g., democracy, national state,

etc.). They argue that the legitimacy of the social structure of religion should not be used to represent it politically.

When researchers analyze Islamic religious extremism, the political factor is usually the most prominent. Approval for extensive sharia and support for the restoration of the Caliphate are more progressive ideas on this political dimension. However, it must be highlighted that religious extremism on the political level can take many forms and that politically extremist parties advocate for a variety of approaches to integrating the constitutional with religious standards. Some religious groups, for example, offer to spread sharia rules through constitutional administration while others openly agitate for the implementation of sharia without violence, and yet others are likely to offer violence to disrupt the government (Ward, 2009; Webber et al., 2018). The support for full sharia rule and the rebirth of an Islamic empire, with or without backing for violent means of change, reveals a radical ambition to overturn the current political structure.

Aside from their differing perspectives on the role of religion in the state, Muslim organizations also vary in democratic values and support (Halla et al., 2013). A few of them oppose democracy, claiming that democracy as a political system is inconsistent with Islam (Fealy, 2004; Ward, 2009), and that the Quran and Hadith clearly enunciate Islamic instructions on all aspects of life. According to this viewpoint, musyawara (political consensus-building) should only be employed to make choices regarding specific technical issues, not essential social ideals (Nurhayati, 2014). On the other hand, other Muslim organizations do not promote or endorse any specific democratic structure but instead argue for ideals of tolerance and love in all political systems' management. As a result, the other groups see democracy as a manner of managing state affairs that is not incompatible with Islam (Nurhayati, 2014; Ward, 2009).

4. THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM; MODERATE TO EXTREME

For ordinary people, religious ideas determine religion (Saroglou, 2011), and scholars like (Stark & Glock, 1970) have emphasized the relevance of intellectual conceptions of God in understanding religious involvement and personal beliefs of people with religion (Granqvist et al., 2010). Different viewpoints of seeing God offer a meaningful picture of a believer's view of

religion. The question is, how moderate or extreme practices of religion take shape?

According to the findings, beliefs in an impersonal force separate from sophisticated affairs predominate among religious organizations at the moderate end of the theological spectrum. A person who has a moderate view of God represents nurturing love (Bader & Palmer, 2011). The relationship with God is characterized by compassionate imagery that allows for various religious views and broads tolerance of many values. On the other hand, groups at the far end of the theological spectrum tend to see God as a particular person and embrace names for God that have an aggressive implication, contributing to inflexible views and pressure to repress conflicting ideas.

Multiple evidence is present in the history of religious studies to support the claim that these viewpoints about God are significant. For instance, social norms linked with an oppressive image of God indicate more acceptance of the death penalty (Bader & Palmer, 2011). Furthermore, an oppressive understanding of God (e.g., God as the One who lashes out in anger) has been linked to a tendency to believe, feel, and act harshly toward persons deemed evil. People who define God more soothingly (for example, God is love) are more socially competent with others (Granqvist et al., 2010). In the past, an oppressive image of God was commonly related to catastrophic scenarios to entice people to join their organization and force them to abandon their dishonest practices (Lewis, 1986).

Based on this framework, this article suggests that dissimilarities in the theological dimensions of religious extremism are linked with varying behaviors that people adopt to obtain their goals and express their loyalty. The dominance of compassionate images of God and an understanding of variations in religious ideas imply moderate perspectives on the theological dimension. Those organizations at the far end of the theological spectrum, who believe in an oppressive image of God, are more likely to attack apparent opposing theological beliefs. The paper suggests, for example, that individuals who believe in an oppressive, pursuing God are more prone to believe that natural catastrophes strike people who live in manners that God dislikes. Moreover, Muslims who believe in an oppressive concept of God will prefer to understand jihad as the obligation to wage a holy war, whilst others on the more moderate end of the spectrum will consider the term jihad as action geared at bringing about positive change (Esposito, 2003). The same difference can be seen in Christianity. In Christianity, Moderates will see the religious obligation to construct the "Kingdom of God" as a spiritual exercise to reform society into more loving, caring, and inclusive (Whitlark, 2012).

5. THE RITUAL DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM; MODERATE TO EXTREME

Particular rituals serve to construct concepts of religion as a lived experience by allowing for the expression of devotion or similar emotions with others (Whitehouse et al., 2014). Almost every religious individual thinks that God straightly directs their rituals. For example, many Muslims think that God guides their rituals, comprising their prayers five times per day. Once religion has expanded to a larger population, various ritual patterns may arise due to local customs or the blending of religious rites with ancient customs. This acceptance of new behaviors can frequently divide religious believers into groups that are either responsive to innovative ideas or dismiss compromises as prohibited inventions. Some Mandinga migrants in Portugal, for example, believe that a "writing-on-the-hand" ritual is necessary for bestowing both Muslim and tribal identities (Johnson, 2006). Children are introduced into Quranic study (and adulthood) through having a verse written on their hands that they subsequently lick off promptly, absorbing the verse. For many who believe that this Mandinga "tradition" should be abolished to keep Islam clean, the ritual is divisive (Johnson, 2006).

This article suggests that prejudice of variations in ritual practices varies between extreme and moderate religious groups. Tolerance of the effect of local customs on the way rituals done is a sign of moderate religion on the ritual dimension. Because it is not a mandatory ritual and is not expressly instructed by God, moderate groups can allow the impact of tradition within the ritual. On the other hand, those at the far end of the theological spectrum are more prone to strive for purity in religious rituals. This is frequently accompanied by a concern to safeguard the purity of rituals and intergroup tension, in which radical factions condemn more moderate groups of doing sin. For example, in Indonesia, the Salafi movement is the most powerful force fighting for ceremonial purity in opposition to more liberal Muslim religious practices such as allowing prayer in their forefathers' graveyards and celebrating the Prophet's birthday.

The Salafi movement considers those who conduct those rituals as idolatrous (Musyrik) or perhaps even infidels (Kafir) to some extent. These labels are emotionally painful for Muslims. The Puritan movement, which rejected other Christian churches as inadequately pure and tainted by liberal tolerance of cultural activities, is one historical example of ceremonial radicalism within the Christian tradition.

6. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM; MODERATE TO EXTREME

The concept of social dimension is focused on intergroup contacts (both religious and non-religious) and intragroup activities, which are represented in rules about how to engage with others. Religious extremist groups generally have a negative view of the religious beliefs of other peoples. They believe that out-groups utilize nefarious conspiracy as weapons to manipulate members of religious groups (Fealy, 2004; Kohut et al., 2006). Criticizing others (foreigners, for example) for in-group deprivation is a typical concept they used to gain public support for their desired cause. On the other hand, some moderate religious groups generally considered internal elements like anti-intellectual prejudices, regional tensions, and immorality as the core causes of in-group problems (Lackey, 2013). In evaluating the origins of the in-difficulties, the group's moderate groupings are more open to complexity. Moderates also place a stronger focus on the need to change to solve contemporary issues.

As a result, moderate religious organizations are more open to participation in interfaith and intercultural discussion, whereas extremist religious groups prioritize denial and avoidance. More moderate religious organizations frequently develop interfaith discussions to increase interfaith collaboration as a means of solving common concerns (e.g., ecological issues, a consistent national individuality, financial issues, and law implementation). On the other hand, more extremists religious groups frequently oppose this collaborative effort, believing that inter-religious communication is part of a plot to undermine confidence in their religion.

Establishing an intergroup relationship with other community members of their belief is a critically important factor. Religion is an essential aspect to develop typical fundamental values and to express in-group customs. In terms of social interaction, these in-group customs can vary in the degree of accepting and tolerating variations and differences within the religious groups. When universal ideals of tolerance and group-specific values collide and individuals are obliged to accept group-specific standards, harsh attitudes toward rebels and deviants could emerge. For example, Islam has prohibited the use of alcohol; some Muslim religious groups force the government to ban the availability of alcohol without bearing in mind that other religious groups might have different values and standards to permit the use of alcohol consumption (Mohamed Osman, 2010).

7. INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND THE EFFECTS OF SIMILARITY IN EXTREMISM ON THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF RELIGION

The various ways in which religious groups represent their religious belief on theological, ritual, social, and political levels impact how they seek to accomplish their objectives and interact with other religious organizations. This article claim that the structure of intergroup ties between moderate and extreme religious groups is affected by the initial degree of similarity on the four dimensions through social identity theory as an image to construct intergroup connections (Turner & Oakes, 1986). For example, when two or more groups sense similar values and a wider identity, they can collaborate in their joint activities. Yet, when ideological divisions are prominent, they can clash. When the state senator of Jakarta (Basuki Tjahaya Purnama aka Ahok) was indicted on allegations of disrespecting a part of the Quran, various Muslim groups banded together to urge him to be punished. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in a sequence of nationwide protests over the alleged blasphemy (Fealy, 2016). From an identification standpoint, it might be claimed that the united fury over the state senator, who was accused of insulting Islam, gathered together various Muslim groups. Various groups collaborated to address similar issues and challenges to the overarching Muslim identity.

Considering this display of solidarity, it is obvious that there are several situations where relations between moderate and more extremist religious groups are strained. According to the current study, these conflicts can be more assessed by looking at how moderate vs. more extreme displays of individuality manifest themselves on the four dimensions. Members of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and Hizbut Tahrir, for example, share a similar social attitude in that they both aspire to create a new Islamic social order in Indonesia through the implementation of sharia. However, The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) frequently criticizes the members of Hizbut Tahrir because they disagree with the best "Islamic" method to achieve their shared goal. PKS respects the democratic government, as evidenced by its engagement in the national election. At the same time, Hizbut Tahrir opposes the democratic government and ignores political discourse to gain political influence.

The amount of identification (i.e., subgroup or subsidiary identities) generated determines the likelihood of a settlement between two politically extreme groups. When they face shared opponents (for example, a group of Muslims or politicians who passionately favor variety and oppose the

implementation of Islamic law), their normative framework identity may become more important, and they may negotiate or even merge. Even if the parties are similarly severe on one dimension, open confrontation is probable when differences on another dimension are significant.

An analogous trend can be seen within Muslim groups regarded as having extreme ritual dimensions. The Salafi movement and other groups (such as Mathla'ul Anwar, Wahdah al Islamiyah, and others) may band together to create ritual purification narratives and charge Muslims who follow local traditions and their followers of religious mistake. When confronted by moderate Muslims (such as Nahdhatul Ulama, an organization that advocates for the protection of local customs and variety), they will generate a common normative framework identity and collaborate. When there are significant political disagreements, however, those ritually extreme groups can clash. Many Salafy group members, for example, believe that a public protest is an immoral act under Islam. On the other hand, those groups who share their extreme identification on the ritual dimension see it as an acceptable technique. Differences on a political level might contribute to them dominating each other and leading to power struggles.

The implications of familiarity and difference in religious extremism's characteristics are related to prior work on identities and conflict (Haslam, 2016). According to this model, the importance of subgroup identity (e.g., as a PKS or Hizbut Tahrir activist) can promote a desire for in-group preference, strengthening their self-image. On the other hand, in-group members regard members of other Islamic groups as part of the same group when superordinate identity is prominent. As per this, a single-dimensional strategy to religious extremism will miss the various ways the two groups align (e.g., socially) and disagree (e.g., politically), making it impossible to forecast different group members' political alignments or conflicts.

8. APPLICATION OF PROPOSED MODEL

The proposed model can be applied in the light of religious multidimensional model expansion. Unidimensional classification of moderate or extreme religious groups can give rise to basic understanding, whereas extreme religious groups are correlated with violence and terrorist activities. The article suggests that religious extremism can express in many dimensions. It is crucial to map the individuals and groups through multidimensionality of model to understand the pattern of their religious

beliefs and actions. This, in turn, permits a more nuanced understanding of terrorism associated with religious extremism. The article also suggests that various other reasons can trigger terrorism, and the interaction between varying dimensions of religious extremism can either give energy or limit terrorist activities.

The offered framework moves away from simplified illustrations of religious groups and deals with a practical way to realize the different aspects of religious extremism. The purpose is to evaluate religion at individual and group levels, expanding the knowledge of religious dimensions that might allow the precise predictions of extremism based on ideological accounts (Kruglanski et al., 2018). Some other researchers already present the four religious dimensions presented in the article, but this article proposed a custom framework in Muslims and their religious movements. Suppose this model is adopted in the broader context (for example, Islamic movements in Pakistan or Egypt or Christian groups in the Philippines or Northern Ireland). In that case, researchers will need to scrutinize the model's transferability.

In practice, researchers must engage in the qualitative examination of the qualities religious groups utilize to convey their religiosity when using the concept in diverse contexts. Researchers should investigate the indications of extremism compared to moderate opinions for each dimension discovered in a given situation. To enable a multidimensional model suited and modified to unique circumstances, extensive descriptive information about the situation and specific intra- or intergroup dynamics must be addressed. Some dimensions (for example, ritual and political) don't always apply to all circumstances, while others may need to be introduced.

The overall findings of the article lead to the conclusion that the political dimension is the most vital dimension which explains irrational behavior. The other three suggested aspects, such as social, ritual, and theological, are unimportant. Considering the example of the extremism done by the Rakhine Buddhist in Myanmar against Rohingya Muslims currently. Vicious actions performed by the Rakhine Buddhists on the Rohingya Muslims in 2017 were deemed legitimate as a suppression against the alleged Rohingya revolutionaries. This example shows that understanding the political aspects of extremism may be the hardest concept. Although, in other situations, various magnitudes may seem to have prompted vehemence. For example, in regards to the Buddhist brutality, the extremist sarin attack done in the Tokyo subway in 1995 by a small group of cult followers called Aum Shinrikyo was not exactly motivated based

on the political aspects of extremism. Rather, it was an act of extremism solely based on the theological and ritual basis. More importantly, the occurrence was driven by the collective communal trust and belief amongst the followers of the cult that inhumanity and barbarity of such kind would clear all their sins and mistakes and provide them with some redemption also that this would permit them to persist as a member of the forthcoming Armageddon.

Understanding these examples can prominently show that the motif of the various aspects of extremism and how it mediates compared to the utmost religious faith that establishes itself varies with the diverse religious groups moreover. At the same time, it is indispensable to apprehend the political brutality amongst the Muslims of Indonesia regarding the diverse beliefs on the sharia laws while considering Myanmar; political terrorism pivots on the beliefs opposing the minorities and their rights. While the theological terrorism in Indonesia is connected with the beliefs of God and ritual radicalism recounts to the acceptance for drifting from the normally approved standard ways of endorsing the religion. According to the Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, activism on these aspects is associated with the theories and beliefs regarding the day of judgment.

Lastly, when administering the model in other circumstances, it is essential to take into account the new perspectives that may be crucial in grasping the concept of radicalism. For instance, Smart, (1996) presented seven aspects of Buddhist religiosity: mythological and experiential. Researchers will find if these aspects apply to the differences between moderates and extremists by conducting the investigative study and pilot testing. For instance, the Buddhist cult that is more mystical tends to be less likely to be a fanatic.

Of course, we support efforts to prevent barbaric extremism, but we also believe that religious fanaticism isn't always associated with a willingness to use violent techniques (Revell & Elton-Chalcraft, 2021). For example, strong narratives about injustice and projected changes may motivate people to join in violent intergroup conflict (Horgan, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005). But, on the other hand, religious narratives can fuel the propensity to join violent actions on behalf of their community in numerous situations, for instance, when the fight involves religious groups. By documenting how extremism manifests itself across many lengths and how these characteristics predict support for violence, policy-makers can focus their efforts on combating religious

narratives that may be exploited as a trigger for violence but aren't significant to address or even be ineffective.

CONCLUSION

Categorizing some religious groups and individuals as extremists is often deceiving. This tag has a narrow judgmental meaning that generally linked extremism with terrorist activities. Suppose the world does not understand the complications of religious extremism and associated hazards. In that case, it will stigmatize some religious groups as unreasonable and supporters of terrorist activities and violence, although it is not valid. These negative stereotypes give rise to separation, loss of public status, discrimination, high usage or wastage of resources in terrorist activities, and wasted political resources. The current article provides insights into a broader comprehension of religious extremism and will well expand the discussion. A comprehensive understanding of the multidimensionality of religion and religious extremism will aid in precisely portraying this picture. The research will also help to realize the complication of religious groups and the processes linked with religious change, which have been ignored.

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