Prevention Of Religious Extremism: Analysis of Munāṣaḥah Wahb Ibn Munabbih

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of approaches employed by Wahb ibn Munabbih, a prominent Islamic scholar born in 34 AH, in managing religious extremism, particularly among those influenced by the Khawarij ideology. This study employs a qualitative methodology within the library research framework. Data collection includes reviewing documents from various books, articles and journals related to the research topic. Subsequently, content analysis is used to ensure that a dependable research outcome is being produced. Conducts qualitative document analysis on documents which includes the holy Quran, Hadith and relevant authoritative texts, both printed and electronic, in a methodical manner. The analysis involves examining and interpreting a variety of data to uncover meaning and gain understanding prior to reaching to a conclusion. The need to prevent religious extremism and circumventing of radical movements in a society is the main deliverables of this study. Hence the result and discussions would delve into specific advice and methods to counter and manage extremist ideologies. The findings provide insights on preventing extremism and offering guidance to rehabilitate those who had been influenced with extremist ideologies. Besides, the study encourages religious understanding and fostering a culture of tolerance and dialogue. The study advocates a peaceful coexistence and countering radical ideologies. It could potentially promote mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation among diverse religious communities to build resilient and harmonious societies.

Keywords: Religious Extremism, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Munāṣaḥah

INTRODUCTION

Wahb ibn Munabbih, an Islamic scholar, renowned for his wisdom and profound knowledge of religion, offers significant insights in the context of preventing religious extremism. In the era where extreme interpretations of religion often become sources of conflict and tension, Wahb ibn Munabbih's thoughts have becoming increasingly relevant.

This article will explore his ideas and views with regard to preventing and managing religious extremism and its applicability or relevance in our dynamic times. By understanding Wahb ibn Munabbih's perspectives on the matter, valuable lessons can be learned to address religious extremism and promoting a correct understanding of religion.

In exploring Wahb ibn Munabbih's thoughts, it is essential to understand several key aspects that had shaped his views. He believes that most conflicts and extremism stem from incorrect or extreme interpretations of the religious principles, and such arose from 2 counts; first being genuinely ignorance of true religious principals, and another was intentional or a deliberate act by certain quarters to create a tense and stressful condition in community.

To address these challenges, he encourages the Muslim community to deepen their knowledge and understanding on the religion. He believes that by providing religious education to the society, values such as tolerance, justice and love could alter extreme interpretations. He opined that a narrow interpretation of the religious principles, often form the basis of extremist thinking and conflicts. Moreover, Wahb ibn Munabbih

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also sees that having wise, trusted and capable leadership in the Muslim community would be an excellent advantage to education, combating extremism and at the same time promoting Islam as a religion of peace.

As for the differences that are bound to emerge from subscribing to the religious values, Wahb ibn Munabbih had highlighted the importance of effective discourse to address them. He believes that many conflicts could have been resolved or avoided should there exist a platform for an honest, open, and intelligent dialogue. By understanding Wahb ibn Munabbih’s perspectives and valuable insights, prevention of religious extremism is a probable endeavour.

**METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative study using a document analysis approach conducted on a well-known reference materials, namely the Quran, Hadith, and recognized classical texts. The document analysis approach involves data obtained by referring to the content of texts in terms of words, titles, symbols, images, and meanings (Sabitha Marican 2009). Data collected through document analysis provides relevant information for the research problem. These documents inherently contain data that are authentic and free from manipulation as they have been long existed (Jasmi 2012).

Through the document analysis approach, this study explains Wahb ibn Munabbih’s concept of Munāṣṣahah in managing religious extremism. In this regard he was successful in restoring the understanding of a man who had fallen into the extremist ideology of the Khawarij sect, bringing him back to the right path. The manner he conducts his counsel had been documented and studied upon as guidance in managing religious extremism. More so as he was seen as a wiser figure from the tradition of al-Salaf al-Ṣaleh to handle and overcome matter related to religious extremism. This study will provide a deeper understanding of how the tradition of al-Salaf al-Ṣaleh views religious extremism and how Wahb ibn Munabbih’s counsel influences the understanding and practices of society in facing religious extremism. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the understanding of religious extremism and how the tradition of al-Salaf al-Ṣaleh manages them.

This study involves applying data collection techniques through content analysis of manuscripts, books, and works of ancient and contemporary scholars. They are divided into two categories, namely primary sources and secondary sources. For the purpose of this study, the primary source is being prioritized and leveraged upon; Facts from the Quran and prophetic sayings, from books of Hadith, are 2 main referral and focus point in this study. Values extracted from the Quran and Hadith are all having clear explanation of what the ghuluww attitude entails, and research was also conducted to identify the development of the extremism culture before and after the prophetic era. Other reference used include the treatise "Munāṣṣahāh Wabab ibn munabbih Li Rajulin Ta’āthhara Bi Fikratī Al-Khawārij," Investigation by Abd al-Salam bin Barjas Alu Abdul Karīm and the book "al-Ghulaww Fi al-Dīn Fi Hayātī al-Muslimīn al-Mu’aṣīrah" by Abd al-Rahman bin Mu’allā al-Luwaḥiq. Other primary works will be referred to in order to support and deepen the understanding on the concept of extremism, such as the works of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī and al-Baghdādī, aiming to provide a comprehensive explanation of the concept of extremism in religion from the perspective of the salaf al-Ṣaleh. Both of these works and a contemporary work titled al-Ghulawn Fi al-Dīn Fi Hayātī al-Muslimīn al-Mu’aṣīrah are predominantly used because they extensively discuss the issue of ghuluw or extremism in religion.

In addition, secondary sources are also used in this study to support the research findings with existing writings. The secondary sources used include methodological books, al-Targhib Wa al-Tarhib, research journals on counseling theory used in this study, and many others that includes doctoral and master's theses, educational books, and other reference materials are also consulted.

This study employs content analysis techniques on books and works which are divided into two categories: primary and secondary sources. The primary sources for this study include:

1. Analyzing books related to the content of religious extremism to identify the causes, harmful effects, and solutions. The research is conducted to identify the best and proven methods in dealing with religious extremism. The books used are Tarikh Madinah Dimashq by Abu al-Qasim Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Hibaṭullah ibn Abdullah al-Shafi’ī, known as Ibn Asakir, Mukhtaṣar Tarikh Dimashq by Muhammad
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ii. Analyzing the *munāṣabah* of Wahb ibn Munabbih to understand religious extremism from his perspective. The dominant work used is *Al-Ghuluw Fi al-Dīn Fi Ḥayātī al-Muslimin al-Mu’āṣirah: Dirāsah Ḥumayyīh Ḥafta Mafāḥīm al-Ghuluw wa al-Mafāḥīm al-Ta’darruf wa al-Uṣūliyyah* (2005) because it extensively discusses the issue of religious extremism. Secondary sources are also used in this study to support the research findings with existing writings.

Secondary sources used include books on ethics, psychology, education, counseling theories, and more. Doctoral theses and master’s theses are also used in this study, along with research journals and conference proceedings as reference sources.

In analyzing the study data, three methods can be used as explained by Miles & Huberman (1992): data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is the process of selecting and abstracting written data; data presentation involves the activities of informants in the field; and drawing conclusions is the process undertaken by the researcher to seek understanding, note patterns, explanations, and make recommendations. Based on the above explanation, the data analysis procedure for this study involves selecting and abstracting written data from classical texts to identify the forms of religious extremism from the perspective of Wahb ibn Munabbih, identifying the processes and methods he applied in dealing with religious extremism. After that, this study draws conclusions from the recovery process and methods applied to classify the methods of Wahb ibn Munabbih in addressing religious extremism.

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**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Al-Samaluti (2018) studied ways to address extremist attitudes, he focused more on emphasizing the formation and development of a moderate personality (*syakhṣiyah wasṭiyah*). At its initial stage, this involves emphasizing the best form of education and effective learning methods aimed solely at achieving harmony in real-life situations and attaining heights in the afterlife. This statement aligns with the formulation by Saiful et al. (2021) in their study that holistic and best education methods and content are only found in Islam because its comprehensiveness is suitable for the development of human life in all aspects, whether at the individual or societal level, all of which exist within the ideal human guided by revelation as their guide.

Muhd Imran Razak et al. (2018) conducted a study on the seriousness of extremist movements rapidly spreading their propaganda through the use of social media platforms. They mentioned that one of the methods or ways to address this is for authorities to utilize the same platforms in their efforts to address and curb the growth and spread of extremist groups. Awang et al. (2021) in their study found that in every religion, there are followers who exhibit extremist behavior in their religious practices. Among the examples they mentioned are the oppression, cruelty, and killings of the majority population in Myanmar, who are Buddhists, against minority groups who are Muslims. Similar situations occur in India, where anti-Islam sentiments have escalated to the point of leading to killings of Muslims.
Meanwhile, a study conducted by Reni (2022) shows that the extremist behavior of Hindu militant groups towards minority Muslim communities in India has led them to live under pressure, hardship, and poverty. The situation worsens when these Hindu extremists receive strong mandates and support from the ruling party in India. It becomes even worse when Muslims are prohibited from carrying out some of their religious practices; such as not being allowed to slaughter cows on Eid al-Adha because cows are considered sacred by Hindu followers.

Ramadani (2020) in his study also found that the undeniable fact is that Muslims in India face various forms of pressure and difficulties due to the extremist actions of militant and radical Hindu groups supported by the Indian government, which strives hard to marginalize Muslims and place them at the lowest caste. This clearly constitutes discrimination against Muslims in India, proving that the laws are designed to protect extremist factions.

According to the study by Rahim et al. (2018), religious extremism movements are based on takfirism, which involves declaring anyone who does not support or align with their movement as a non-believer (kafir). This is extremely dangerous for community safety as it can lead to chaos and threats to security. The takfir ideology or takfirism movement has existed since the early history of Islam, and it has continued to evolve until today. These groups manipulate fatwas of Islamic scholars to justify their beliefs and actions as genuine jihad.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results of the study and analysis of Wahb ibn Munabbih's munāṣbah revealed several preventive methods he applied, as follows:

Wahb ibn Munabbih, in preventing extreme attitudes in religion, emphasized methods based on the Quran and Sunnah. Among these methods are:

i. Understanding the Quran and Sunnah with the correct understanding. The correct understanding of religion is the understanding of the Companions r.a, as Allah has witnessed their faith and guidance. The Companions r.a are the best generation of all nations because they were guided by the best of mankind, namely the Messenger of Allah s.a.w. Turning away from following them is misguidance (Ibn al-Qayyim in Yazid Abdul Qadir Jawas, 2006). So, what about those who accuse the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) of being misguided?

Furthermore, limitations of the study and possible directions for future research are discussed. It is essential that both the results and the discussion are based on solid evidence and that they contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge on the topic addressed.

ii. Using a Wise Approach: In his efforts to prevent extremist attitudes, Wahb ibn Munabbih employed a wise approach as advocated by Allah SWT, which involves advising and gently persuading with a manner of speech that invites the affected individual to think and reflect on events that occurred during the time of the Companions may Allah be pleased with them. These events are relevant to the individual's situation and align with reality. The approach of gentleness is emphasized as a very effective method. What is meant by gentleness is an approach that allows someone to interact and communicate in a way that is full of understanding, sincerity, and without applying pressure or force. This approach not only helps prevent the spread of extremist attitudes but also builds a path to better understanding and harmonious relationships within society (Mokhamad Mahfud, 2022). Ahmad Shukri Yusoff (2016) in Berita Harian wrote that the ability to speak and argue is a great blessing from Allah to a person. Humans need to use their tongues to speak about beneficial matters.

iii. Using the Strategy of Dialogue: In his efforts to prevent religious extremism, Wahb ibn Munabbih applied the methods of the prophets (peace be upon them) in advising their communities. This involves a dialogue strategy by inviting and engaging in question-and-answer sessions to guide those being advised towards the truth.

iv. Presenting Arguments Through Declarative and Negation Interrogative: Wahb ibn Munabbih, in his counsel, used the method of posing sharp and provocative questions to encourage individuals
influenced by extremism to reflect. These questions were designed to stimulate thinking and provoke reflection.

v. Identifying the Root Causes Clearly: Identifying the root causes of problems is a crucial step in addressing religious extremism. The causes of religious extremism are highly complex, and a deep understanding of the factors that drive individuals in this direction is necessary to develop effective prevention and eradication strategies. Several root causes have been identified, among them is the incorrect understanding of religion, as has occurred among extremist groups throughout history.

vi. Explaining the Way Out of the Problem: One of the important methods used by Wahb ibn Munabbih in his counsel is explaining the way out of the problem of extremism. This involves explaining the fundamental principles of truth and falsehood, which serve as the starting points for achieving the intended goals and objectives.

vii. Wahb ibn Munabbih utilized past experiences and history as guidelines in his efforts to cleanse religious extremism from those he advised. He encouraged individuals influenced by al-Khawārij to contemplate and reflect on past events during the time of the companions r.a that resonate with their current realities.

viii. In the munaṣṣāḥah of Wahb ibn Munabbih, it can be understood that several factors contribute to the occurrence of religious extremism, including misunderstandings in the appropriate method of reasoning within the context of the Quran and Sunnah, which contributes to the occurrences of extremism in Islam.

CONCLUSION

This research examines the prevention of religious extremism by reviewing Wahb ibn Munabbih's munaṣṣāḥah. Specifically, three research objectives were set in reviewing this munaṣṣāḥah. First, to explore the concept of religious extremism according to Wahb ibn Munabbih's perspective. Second, to analyze the methods of preventing religious extremism proposed by Wahb ibn Munabbih. Third, to analyze Wahb ibn Munabbih's argumentative methods for addressing religious extremism in his 'munaṣṣāḥah.' The findings of the first objective, which is the concept of religious extremism, identified four main themes related to the concept of religious extremism according to Wahb ibn Munabbih's views. These themes are: first, the definition of religious extremism; second, the causes of falling into extremism; third, the emergence of extremist religious groups; and fourth, the practice of takfīr (excommunication).

According to Wahb ibn Munabbih, the definition of religious extremism, as understood from his munaṣṣāḥah, is a dangerous attitude and behavior. This is because of his strong prohibition against extreme attitudes and behaviors, and he forbids associating with people who have extremist views. The causes of someone falling into extremism include being easily influenced by propaganda from extremist groups, especially through social media, and confusion due to a failure to correctly understand the religion, which leads them into the misguidance of extremist beliefs. Additionally, when one strays from the framework of al-wasaṭijyah (moderation). The emergence of these groups, according to him, will always exist throughout time. The fourth theme identified in preventing religious extremism according to him is the practice of takfīr (excommunication), where these groups declare anyone who does not share their views as an infidel.

REFERENCES


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