

# **GOVERNMENT AND PESANTREN COPING WITH TERRORISM ISSUE IN MALANG: A Collaboration Model**

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the collaboration model between the government and pesantren in dealing with the issue of terrorism in Indonesia. This topic is important because terrorism has become a complex issue, and the solution requires good collaboration from all groups, both government and non-government. Therefore, the authors conducted qualitative research using in-depth interviews, literature reviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as data collection methods. The informants and participants were the representatives of the government officers and the leaders of pesantren with various backgrounds. The data collected were analyzed using Nvivo 12 plus. The authors found that the government and pesantren had collaborated to face the issue of terrorism, but these efforts were not optimal because there were still several challenges. Thus, it is necessary to develop a model of job sharing to develop the preceding collaboration.

**Keywords:** model, collaboration, government, pesantren, terrorism, Indonesia

## Introduction

The issue of terrorism in this era is a complex problem because it involves various aspects such as social, cultural, economics, and politics. Terrorism has a background that encourages someone to commit violence and sacrifice his/her life in the name of jihad. Currently, terrorist networks have become transnational, but it has also grown into cyber-terrorism that utilizes sophisticated technology besides their conventional activities.

Its transformation into a transnational movement has posed challenges towards the governments due to many uncertain aspects.<sup>1</sup> The terrorists have carried out many online activities, such as member recruitment, funding, and coordination with their links.

In terms of funding, for example, it is common for them to commit cybercrime, such as stealing customer's money from various banks or getting involved in drugs trafficking. In several events, the Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN) had spoken about deradicalization, taking into account the connection between terrorism and illegal drug trafficking.

Meanwhile, terrorism is often being identified with Islam. There have been several attempts to discredit Islam—as well as *pesantren*—as the base of Muslim terrorist cadres. Some views pointed out that *pesantren* is one of the centers where radicalism spreads among terrorists.<sup>2</sup> For instance, some people build the image that a person with beard and whose wife is wearing a niqab is connected to the terrorist link. Moreover, some *pesantren* alumni have been considered the main actors in the networks and several terrorist attacks.<sup>3</sup>

In this case, the *pesantren* is defined as an Islamic educational institution that is established to educate the cadres of religious Muslims.<sup>4</sup> Those who study at the *pesantren* are students who

want to understand Islam more profoundly and comprehensively. Theoretically, the pesantren consists of several essential elements, namely the *kyai* as the leader and the owner of the pesantren, the students called *santri*, a place to study, classical Islamic books, and a mosque which is used as a center of activity.<sup>5</sup> When one of those five elements is missing, then the definition of pesantren is incomplete.

Concerning the issue of terrorism, it is strange that an act of violence is reported as a terrorist attack only if the perpetrator is a Muslim. Moreover, it is considered as related to pesantren. For example, this could be seen in the bomb blast carried out by a Muslim family in Surabaya in 2018. By wearing Islamic attributes, under the name of jihad, they carried out bombings against several churches. Several other cases, such as the Bali bombings (2002 and 2005), the bombing at the Australian Embassy (2004), and the Thamrin bombing (2016), had reinforced the justification that Islamic groups are involved in the terrorism movement. Meanwhile, when one committed a similar act of violence—and sometimes with political motivation—but one has no connection with Islam or pesantren, it is usually referred to as a criminal act.<sup>6</sup>

Media framing strengthens this justification within society. Many times, society would describe the terrorist as people who wear Islamic appearance. The government's perspective is of no exception. Therefore, on some occasions, the government authorities visit some pesantren that were suspected of having links to radicalism. This condition is inseparable from the growing opinion from the international community, which has paid particular attention to various pesantren in Indonesia after the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks on WTC and Pentagon since those were considered to be a vital circle connected with the Islamic terrorist groups.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes some Islamic events like preaching were banned because they were indicated as having a connection with the spread of radical ideology. At some points, campuses, as education institutions, were also spotlighting this matter. Media, which influences public opinion, often portray campus as a strategic area for the spread of radicalism. On the other hand, both pesantren and higher education institutions also have prominent modalities to prevent radicalism from influencing exposure. In their roles, higher education institutions provide students with the ability to think scientifically, critically, and open-minded. Meanwhile, pesantren plays its roles in educating students to present moderate Islam and be a blessing for the universe.

This condition would run well if there is a good and healthy collaboration between the pesantren, schools, campuses, scholars, and the government.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the collaboration between the government and the other groups is necessary primarily with pesantren, where the future cadres of Islamic scholars are nurtured. The war against terrorism should not lead to horizontal conflicts within the society because of misleading information about terrorism issues.

Several collaborations have been conducted between the government and pesantren to face the issue of terrorism. However, challenges still occur. Therefore, this article answers the question of how has the collaboration model between the government and pesantren been conducted? What are the challenges? Then, how to improve the existing collaboration?

## **Methodology**

To answer the research questions in this article, the authors conducted qualitative research in three regencies/cities in the Malang region, consisted of Batu city, Malang city, and Malang

regency. According to data released by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), these areas are included as red zones.<sup>9</sup> Terrorist groups consider Malang an ideal place to build networks, recruit cadres, and prepare their actions since Malang is known as the center of education and tourism destination.

The authors collected data using in-depth interviews with various government elements such as the local government, the police, the Indonesian National Army, the Ministry of Religion, and pesantren from various backgrounds of the Islamic movements, literature reviews, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Among the pesantren that were incorporated in this study were pesantren with Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Hidayatullah, Al Irsyad, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafi backgrounds.

After the data were collected, the authors performed reduction, display, verification, and conclusion. The valid collected data were analyzed using NVivo 12 plus, through coding, creating cases, analyzing the matrix framework, and clustering activities. Various reference sources from scientific journals reinforce the results obtained. Furthermore, the authors discuss and analyze the implementation and the challenges of the collaboration based on sociological and political approaches. The finding could further develop the collaboration between government and pesantren by implementing the model of job sharing in facing the issue of terrorism.

## **Results and Discussion**

Based on the process described in the data collection and analysis methodology, the authors found several findings related to the ongoing collaboration between the government and pesantren in dealing with terrorism, the challenges, and various essential efforts that need to be optimized. It is expected that through

the new model formulation, the threat of terrorism in Indonesia, especially in Malang, could be minimized.

### **The Implemented Collaboration**

The data describes that the collaboration of government and pesantren in facing terrorism issue was not properly managed. Both institutions have worked hard to face the issue of terrorism, but they worked individually without intense communication with each other. Any communication held between both parties was not directly addressing the issue of terrorism. Therefore, the collaboration between the government and the pesantren needs to be improved. The targeted objectives that should be concerned are both the prevention and handling of the consequences resulted from attacks carried out by terrorist groups.

So far, because each party is interested in building security within society, both government and pesantren have worked on their independent efforts to deal with terrorism. For example, the government has conducted several actions, in the form of regulations, institutions, and activities, to face the threat of terrorism. In the field of regulations, the government has issued new anti-terrorism legislation (Law No. 15/2003). This regulation stipulates that apart from imprisonment, terrorist offenders can also be sentenced to death in cases of an extreme nature.<sup>10</sup> In 2018, the government issued the law on the Eradication of Terrorism Acts No. 5 of 2018, which aims to stop the development of radical Islamic movements in Indonesia.

In the form of an institution, the Indonesian government has formed the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT). Its tasks are to carry out various programs, strategies, and policies for deradicalization to handle the threat of terrorism in Indonesia. Although in practice, BNPT cannot work alone. It needs to

collaborate with various other elements such as the Ministry of Education and various moderate Islamic organizations (for example, Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama).<sup>11</sup>

So far, collaboration with pesantren has only been conducted on the informal aspect. In theory, the government has several vital modalities, such as funding, competence, legality, and various structures.<sup>12</sup> However, this potential has not been sufficiently optimized, including in efforts to limit the movement of radical groups, for example, by issuing economic sanctions against anyone associated with terrorist networks. As a result, terrorist groups and networks are still enjoying their existence.<sup>13</sup>

Based on the field data found, the provisional government policy still concerns more about preventing the development of the terrorism movement by conducting socialization among the people to obey the government. Also, the government coordinates its staff to collect data on any newcomers to the village area.

Furthermore, the government has conducted informal communication with some pesantren leaders to deal with the issue of terrorism. Usually, the meetings were conducted during some events, such as the graduation ceremony of pesantren. The program was often initiated by pesantren to prevent prejudice about their links to terrorist networks. Meanwhile, the government rarely invites pesantren to have intensive discussions addressing the terrorism issue. The informant from pesantren mentioned that they have had joined a socialization program from the police about the threat of terrorism, but the program was considered ineffective. There was no real collaboration program, such as joint intelligence activities, that should be carried out or at least should be discussed. Meanwhile, intelligence strategy itself has very complex components, starting from planning, analyzing, and action.<sup>14</sup>

The government and pesantren have the very prospective potential for collaboration. Moreover, pesantren also have the necessary modalities in dealing with the issue of terrorism. Apart from functioning as an educational institution that transforms values to students, pesantren also has a social function.<sup>15</sup>

As an educational function, pesantren aims to produce Muslim cadres who fully understand Islam and become a blessing for the universe, not terrorists. Muslim cadres who are educated from pesantren are expected to be persons deriving the morals of Prophet Muhammad, who is far from violent. By teaching a moderate understanding of Islam towards the students, pesantren can produce outstanding cadres who are not exposed to extreme liberalism or extreme socialism. Therefore, pesantren are institutions that can be used as the front guard to ward off radicalism.

In terms of social function, the presence of *kyai* in pesantren is an essential factor that becomes the modality to face the terrorism issue. People are often more obedient to the *kyai* than to the government.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the spread of Islam in Indonesian society could not be separated from the roles of *kyai*.<sup>17</sup> This strong relationship between *kyai*, pesantren, and society has existed since before Indonesia's independence. Some social values and local wisdom are often the results of the application of a moderate Islamic paradigm developed by *kyai* from pesantren.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it can be said that pesantren have played significant roles in shaping moderate character and culture in society.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the intensive collaboration of government and pesantren can be an excellent effort to face the issue of terrorism.

### **The Challenges of Collaboration**

Although collaboration efforts have been made between the government and pesantren in facing terrorism, they are



proven to be not optimal. Some challenges still occur during the process, such as:

*First*, sectoral ego. Between the government and the pesantren, sometimes barriers appear, preventing intensive communication between one another. Both parties might have the same enthusiasm to face the threat of terrorism, but their understanding and views are different. When this condition is not appropriately managed, the difference would likely create new problems such as increasing violence on behalf of actors claiming that they are affiliated with pesantren.

Institutionally, there is no problem between the government and the pesantren. Essentially, pesantren is one part of civil society that must be protected by the state. However, concerning individuals, sometimes negative views emerge from the government towards certain pesantren. This might affect the policies taken by the government and as a result, it inflicts the ego of the pesantren.

Besides, the collaboration with pesantren of different movement backgrounds also needs to be paid more attention. Pesantren are varied in characteristics, both ideologically and in terms of networks and movements. Some Indonesian pesantren adhere to the traditional system, while others have developed into modern pesantren. From modern pesantren, there are also several pesantren that are closely connected with foreign groups, of which they are vulnerable to the exposure of radicalism. These kinds of pesantren are considered to have strong potential to produce alumni affiliated with terrorism networks. Moreover, the leaders of pesantren with different social, cultural, and political experiences would influence the ambiance within pesantren, either they are connected with terrorism groups or not.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the efforts to build ideal communication patterns need to be worked on. Each party needs to have mutual interests and concerns in their collaboration, leading to an excellent atmosphere

towards exchanging information and discussing related views on issues and efforts to solve problems.<sup>21</sup> The pattern of collaboration remains based on the interests of the nation and state, which are interpreted by the government. This means that the government becomes an instrument of state to ensure the security of all people, including from the threat of terrorism. In this context, the government has the flexibility to intervene against various non-state actors on specific issues and cases.<sup>22</sup>

However, state intervention should reflect democratic values and not absolute. If the intervention is inappropriate, the government's efforts can be counterproductive in countering the terrorism issue. If pesantren groups or other Islamic groups feel they are not being treated fairly, in some cases, state intervention against religious institutions can increase the threat of terrorism.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the government's efforts to deal with the issue of terrorism could limit the space for people's freedom.<sup>24</sup>

In this case, mutual trust and good communication between government actors and the pesantren are needed. They need to collaborate on things that could minimize the potential for conflict.<sup>25</sup> If this pattern has worked, the collaboration can be developed to face various other strategic issues.

*Second*, the politicization of terrorism issues. This problem is a significant obstacle for the government and pesantren collaboration to face the issue of terrorism. Sometimes, opinions convey that terrorism is only used as a tool to divert issues by the government when they have published unpopular policies. It is assumed that terrorism is part of a setting intended to strengthen government legitimacy.

In one of the interviews, an informant said that he had a very enthusiastic friend inviting other people to join Islamic preaching. Later on, the preaching that he directed was considered

by some people to be connected to radical networks. Finally, there was a bomb explosion at the location of their study. The government handled the issue quickly and arrested the management of the mosque, where the preaching was conducted. In its development, the problem was realized that the explosion was not caused by a bomb but only from a firecracker. However, the news has spread that this study group had a connection with terrorism links. This condition was considered to discredit Islam.

There is a view that Islam is the ideology behind terrorism. At the same time, Islam is a religion that teaches peace. In some cases, indeed, there might be a small number of Muslims lacking in religious understanding and have high enthusiasm to fall into extreme attitudes. They reject and are unable to adapt to developments in modern times.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, they claim that their main reason to choose their path is religious reasons. However, this should not be generalized because it can create new conflicts within society. Even the collaboration between the government and the pesantren can be disrupted.

### **The Need for Improvement**

Based on the ongoing development of collaboration between the government and pesantren, and after considering the challenges, the growing problem of terrorism issue has to be solved together. At least several essential things need to be considered to formulate a more optimal model of collaboration between the government and pesantren in dealing with the issue of terrorism. Among these are the following:

*First*, both parties must understand the root causes and the development of the terrorism movement. In finding a solution together, it has to be begun by building common perception in looking at the root of the issue. In this case, the government

and pesantren must understand the meaning and causes of terrorism. With this common understanding, communication to find solutions to problems will relatively be more focused.

According to Jakana Thomas, terrorism is violence perpetrated by non-state actors to force policy changes on the government by carrying out attacks towards targets in a non-war environment.<sup>27</sup> This understanding is in line with the viewpoint of the United States Department of Defense, which explains that terrorism is “unlawful use of force or violence against individuals or property to coerce and intimidate governments to accept political, religious or ideological objectives.”<sup>28</sup>

Politically, terrorist groups carry out attacks because their interests have not been achieved yet, for example, poverty that causes life difficulties or attempts to show resistance to authoritarian government. By carrying out the attack, they hope to get the public’s attention to pressure the government to do something or to issue policies that the terrorist group wants. Therefore, the existence of religion does not automatically become the sole cause for the development of the terrorism movement. The marginalization of society, poverty, and feelings of being mistreated are important causes from a political point of view regarding the emergence of the terrorism movement.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, to deal with terrorism, it is necessary to strengthen the legitimacy and the role of the government in solving national problems that directly impact society. The government, with its various elements like pesantren and mass media, needs to work hand in hand to find the solution to various problems that occur. This way, the terrorism issue could be solved from the root of the problem.

In the context of religion or ideology, terrorists often believe that the government in a country with a nation-state system

needs to be destroyed. For them, the government is an extension of the *kafir* system, which divides and exploits Muslim people.

In the Indonesian context, this understanding, based on political and religious interests, had its strong roots in history. For example, it could be seen from the effort to establish Daulah Islam/Islamic State of Indonesia (DI/NII) at the beginning of independence, led by Imam Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo.<sup>30</sup> Based on this history, terrorist groups justify their action to continue the struggle of their predecessors by seizing power and trying to change the political system and government to a more Islamic pattern according to their interpretation.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, among radical groups, the most visible point of view is from those who reject the nation-state system or the legitimate government in power. For them, the government, like the police and other apparatus, is nothing more than an extension of the western arm, which weakens Muslims. Because of this, they often show rejection toward state and government power by not respecting the flag or by refusing to sing the national anthem. It is not a rare sight to see them fight against the government's wishes. As a result, the existence of this terrorist group disrupts the stability of society and the nation.<sup>32</sup>

Related to the movement model, terrorism has grown intensively by using various online media. However, their movements are substantially the same. Previously, only men were involved in the movement, and recently it turned out that children and women have been involved too. Previously, the movements were mostly hidden, but today they start showing their existence in public. It goes further to their preaching events, which are no longer held exclusively, but more inclusive to attract sympathy and cadre candidates. These public preachings contain materials that resemble regular preaching. However, sometimes they would include contents of criticism towards government.

Based on the data obtained in the field, several informants said that terrorism exists in Malang, Indonesia. Among the prominent figures of the terrorism movement was Salim Bin Mubarak Attamimi, who was killed in Syria several years ago. The Attamimi network still exists today. Most of their networks consist of young people who are passionate about Islam but have narrow Islamic understanding. Some of them even went to Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

Therefore, because this religious or ideological motive is closely related to religious understanding, the government needs to delegate more roles to pesantren to synergize with the government's deradicalization program.

*Second*, job sharing as an ideal model of collaboration should be optimized. As previously explained, deradicalization is a complex problem that requires multi-actors from multi-levels. Those actors need to carry out healthy and synergistic collaboration with one another.

Theoretically, the collaboration between institutions will work well when it meets several conditions. Among them is the formation of open communication between the collaborating actors, the existence of honesty, mutual understanding and respect, mutual commitment, and confidence in their ability to achieve common goals in collaboration.<sup>33</sup> Under these conditions, the sharing of information related to problems and solutions will run well and get an adequate response, including how to prevent the emergence of new problems.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, various reports made by the government need to be communicated with other related parties such as pesantren. The issue of terrorism should not discredit pesantren just because of one or two pesantren involved in terrorist networks, or one or two alumni are connected to the terrorism movement. Misleading

statements from the government can cause a significant impact because the media would create it as public opinion.<sup>35</sup>

Hence, in this collaboration, the government needs to ensure that they are committed to its duties to build public security and public trust.<sup>36</sup> In this case, a smooth and effective communication pattern is a fundamental matter. The government should provide sufficient information to pesantren and vice versa. For example, concerning the curriculum in pesantren, the Ministry of Religion needs to sit together with the leaders of the pesantren so that the policies could be implemented without any serious constraint.

This collaboration process is necessary, considering some pesantren have different curriculum compared to those from the government. The condition has become increasingly difficult because the communication space is not wide open.<sup>37</sup> One example of the need for collaboration between government and pesantren is when the government conducts a deradicalization program that needs pesantren alumni who are moderate and not exposed to radicalism. Thus, in its implementation, the government can request pesantren to play their roles actively in it.

Meanwhile, the government provides regulatory guidance and assistance in the form of funding. Of course, this pattern must be regulated by clear laws and be implemented professionally to avoid any problems, such as corruption.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the government can also collaborate with pesantren to turn the former terror convicts to be agents of deradicalization. Regarding efforts to deal with actors who are still active in the terrorist movement, the government also needs to communicate with religious leaders, including those from pesantren. So far, it is often thought that government policies and actions are laden with political content since terrorist suspects were executed on the spot. As a result, more in-depth investigations related to networks and radical thoughts of terrorist groups cannot be carried out

optimally. It even ignites attacks from sites other terrorist networks that are still active, especially against government officials and the police, as an attempt to take revenge.<sup>39</sup>

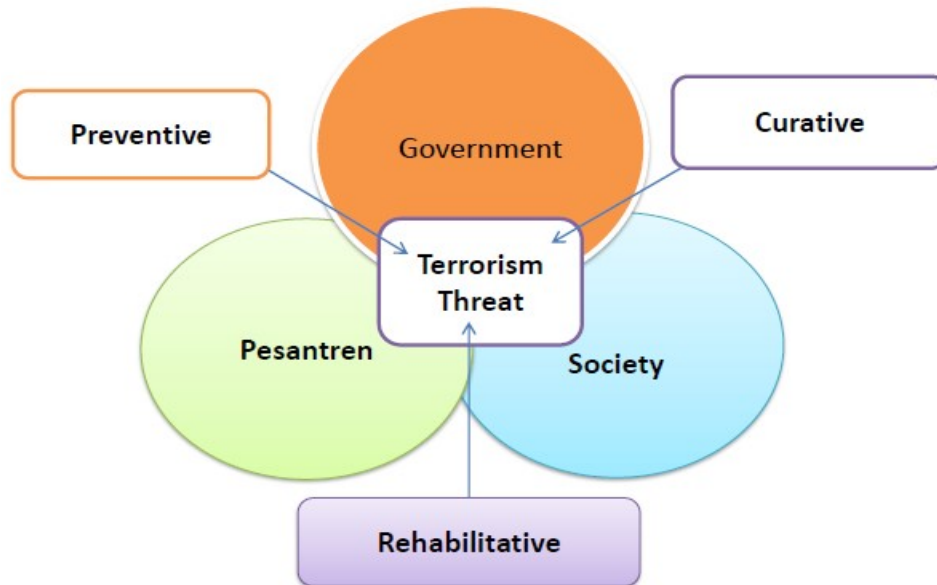
In essence, the collaboration between the government and pesantren in dealing with terrorism should not only be top-down but must also be communicative. The communication patterns conveyed by the government need to incite enthusiasm for the emergence of citizen participation and responsibility in solving issues. In the Indonesian context, especially in Malang, this pattern has begun to be built in the Community Early Awareness Forum (FKDM). However, the real implementation of the FKDM programs needs to be improved.

Several informants in the study stated that they expect the government and pesantren to optimize their collaboration through various regular events. They believe that good communication will be useful to reduce or even to eliminate misunderstandings, as well as to facilitate government and pesantren to act quickly, responding to various developing issues. Moreover, with good communication, the government policies to arrest the terrorists will not raise suspicion or criticism from the public.<sup>40</sup>

Simply put, this collaboration between the government and pesantren is declared successful if it successfully meets several indicators. Among the indicators is the existence of good communication between collaborating actors, long-term relationships, success in achieving common goals such as preventing the development of terror in the community, or even carrying out the arrest of several terrorist members.<sup>41</sup> This collaboration pattern can be illustrated in figure 1.



Figure 1. Model of Job Sharing



Without good collaboration, all of these goals will be difficult to achieve because the war against terrorists is not easy. Even with collaboration, penetration into terrorism groups, it is still challenging to do. However, with good collaboration, the potential to minimize the number of attacks is even more tremendous.<sup>42</sup> It needs to be concerned that the number of terrorist networks in Indonesia is still more than a thousand people.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the collaboration between government and pesantren in dealing with the issue of terrorism has not been implemented systematically and programmatically. It is only limited to incidental activities, and it tends to be informal, even though the two actors have prominent modalities to face the issue of terrorism in Indonesia.

The government has the formal legal power to deal with the issue of terrorism, both legally, institutionally, and in activities. The pesantren has prominent modalities with its existence as an educational institution that also has a social function.

Therefore, the various challenges in building collaboration between the two actors need to be resolved to shape an ideal model to deal with terrorism. Some of these challenges are sectoral ego and politicization of the issue of terrorism with various interests, including from the media. Therefore, the authors offer a model of job sharing based on effective communication between the government, pesantren, and the community. In the author's view, effective communication will lead to a complete understanding of the root causes of terrorism so that the best solution can be found.

### **Acknowledgments**

This article is supported by the Ministry of Research and Technology/Head of National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia, and University of Muhammadiyah Malang, under the grant of PDUPT (Penelitian Dasar Unggulan Perguruan Tinggi).

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## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jensen, "National Responses to Transnational Terrorism: Intelligence and Counterterrorism Provision," in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 60, No. 3, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Miftahuddin Marzuki and Mukhamad Murdiono, "Multicultural Education in Salaf Pesantren and Prevention of Religious Radicalism in Indonesia," in *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2020, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Malik, "Stigmatization of Islamic School: Pesantren, Radicalism and Terrorism in Bima," in *Ulumuna*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2017, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Kosim, "Pesantren on the Frame of Government Policies," in *KARSA: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Keislaman*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2015, p. 222.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222-23.

<sup>6</sup> Gonda Yumitro, *et al.*, "The Modalities and Roles of Pesantren To Face the Issues of Terrorism in the Region of Malang," in *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2019, p. 99.

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