



Current Research in Psychology and Behavioral Science (CRPBS)

Volume 3, Issue 2, 2022

Article Information

Received date : 26 February, 2022

Published date: 09 March, 2022

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Key Words

Radicalism scale; Religious radicalism; Ideology; Terrorism; Extremism; Intolerance

Abbreviations

ReadS: Religious Radicalism Scale; JASP: Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program; CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

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The Construction of Religious Radicalism Scale (ReadS)

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Abstract

Religious radicalism has become an issue in Indonesia due to its link to terrorism acts. The government raised the need to conduct an assessment on radicalism. This study aims to develop the Religious Radicalism Scale (ReadS). The study was arranged into four general phases: 1) Defining religious radicalism, 2) Identifying indicators of religious radicalism, 3) Developing scale, and 4) Identifying psychometric properties. The study applied quantitative method of analysis to examine the instrument's reliability (alpha Cronbach and omega McDonald) and content-related validity. It involved 31 multidisciplinary scholars and professionals in identifying indicators of religious radicalism, followed by 64 participants from two contrasted groups to define psychometric properties. The findings demonstrate the efficacy of ReadS' items in detecting religious radicalism. Moreover, ReadS achieves satisfactory reliability $\alpha=0.97$ and $\omega=0.97$; hence, the instrument can be applied in investigating religious radicalism. The study may help academics and practitioners in scientifically examining religious radicalism.

Introduction

The world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia is concerned about religious radicalism due to its connection to terrorist acts in the country [1,2]. Many scholars and practitioners argue that radicalism is signified by intolerance toward the outgroup [3,4]. Although the National Ministry of Religious Affairs published that Indonesia's Religious Tolerance Index indicates an improvement [5], still, Indonesia would not want any risk of religious radicalism leading to terrorism, such as what happened in Bali in 2002 and 2005. Therefore, the Indonesian government publicly announces their programs in countering religious radicalism such as by applying religious radicalism screening at government offices and schools [3,6]. The mechanism aims to distinguish radical workers/students from the majority of the population prior to performing an intervention [7,8]. Nevertheless, as the definition of religious radicalism is unclear [3], Human Rights activists stated their concern if this screening system could potentially lead to government's abuse of power such as labelling or even discharging non-radical students/workers from working/educational institutions [3]. Against this background, this study was conducted. It was aimed to develop the Religious Radicalism Scale (ReadS). The study was organized into four phases. The first phase was to define religious radicalism. The second phase was to identify indicators of religious radicalism. This phase was conducted by involving social studies practitioners and counterradicalism experts. The third phase was to develop a religious radicalism scale. Lastly, the fourth phase was to identify ReadS' psychometric properties. This phase involved two contrasted groups (terrorist and non-terrorist group members). The study may assist practitioners and academics in scientifically examining religious radicalism.

Religious radicalism

'Radicalism' comes from 'radix' ('root') [9,10,11]. Hornby 11 defines radicalism as 'belief in radical ideas and principles'. Bötticher [12] also explains that "Radicalism as an ideological mindset tends to be very critical of the existing status quo, pursuing the objective of restructuring and/or overthrowing outdated political structures". She then describes that "Radical narratives contain utopian ideological elements, but they do not glorify a distant past. Although unwilling to compromise their ideals, radicals are open to rational arguments as to the means to achieve their goals. Unlike extremists, radicals are not necessarily extreme in their choice of means to achieve their goals. Unlike extremists who reject the extremist label, radicals also self-define themselves as radicals. Extremists glorify violence as a conflict resolution mechanism and are opposed to the constitutional state, majority-based democracy, the rule of law, and human rights for all" [12]. Furthermore, radicalism is a continuum or situational state where the borderline between a 'moderate' and 'radical' is unclear [13]. Religious radicalism and extremism are demonstrated in the three psychological domains: levels of belief (cognition), feeling (affection), and behaviour (psychomotor) [14] in which extremism is more into the use of violence (in psychomotor) as the only method to achieve goals, while radicalism is open to other ways [10]. These terms (radicalism and extremism) are sometimes mixed or reversed in meaning. Radicalization occurs at the primary "stage" of extremism. In other words, extremism is the result of radicalization [14].

The critical dissimilarities between radicalism and extremism are: 1. Radical movements apply political violence selectively, whereas extremist movements see violence against enemies as mandatory method of political action; 2. Extremism is against the principles of universal human rights; 3. Extremism has a strong drive in re-creating a golden past, whereas radicalism is driven by golden future; 4. Extremism is anti-democratic; 5. Radicalism in a political movement is against the status quo, while extremism is against anyone who is not accepting dogmatic values; 6. Extremists try to limit options to reach goals (against the status quo), while radicals do not always use violence; 7. When statistically weak, radicals might isolate themselves or withdraw from society, whereas extremists still provoke violent acts against the establishment; 8. Extremism is associated with authoritarian, while radicalism is more egalitarian; 9. Radicalism is strongly associated with the power of reason, while extremism is related to an irrational and fanatical belief system which involves a monopoly of truth; and 10. Extremism is more into selective morality (only for members), whereas radicalism tries to have a universal morality [12]. Therefore, religious extremism would include radicalism, while radicalism does not necessarily include extremism, so 'religious extremists are radicals, but not all religious radicals are extremists' [10].

In Indonesia, the label 'radical' to any part of the majority of the population (Muslims) needs careful use [13], as it contains stigmatization, is sensitive, and could make the general population feel uncomfortable. In makro/group level, Fealy [13] describes that radical religious groups in Indonesia have some characteristics: 1) They believe that Islam needs to be applied in its total and literal form as stated in the sacred texts, 2) They tend to be sensitive, reactive, and confrontational against what they perceive to be 'enemies', 3) They are associated with fanaticism or fundamentalism [15] and aggressive movement against the establishment

[13]. Moreover, Jamhari and Jahroni [16] explain some characteristics of religious radical groups: they often show violence (towards themselves, at least), favour punishment than peace in practising religion, demonstrate anti-establishment, place physical struggle as definitive proof of highest/true faith, and show prejudice towards the outgroups.

Indicators of religious radicalism

At a micro level, individuals with religious radicalism demonstrate some characteristics. The first characteristic is totalitarian in character which demands religious laws, regulations, and rituals explicitly shown at state level [10,17-20]. They believe that only God who can formulate systems, laws, and social orders [22-24] and any law created by humans (e.g., national constitutions) is false and should not be followed [2,22,25-29]. The second characteristic lies in the literal understanding of the religious sacred texts [19,21,30] which manifest in blunt devotion and literal practices as stated in these texts. Any improvisation, contextual review, or logical analysis of holy texts are strongly avoided [19]. The third is the symbolic religious belief that an individual focuses on religious symbols (including physical appearances) rather than wisdom and philosophy [19,21,31,32]. This manifests in simplification of the thinking process, which shortens the complicated reality, for example, by linking a symbol to a specific concept (i.e., ‘the Blacks are evil’, ‘the Whites are supremacists’, ‘prayer beads are holy’) [19].

The fourth characteristic mentioned by scholars is the black-and-white way of thinking in which an individual often separates the world into two simple categories, such as ‘right vs wrong’, ‘hell vs heaven’, ‘angle vs evil’, and ‘holy vs sinful’, without acknowledging grey or neutral areas [33,34]. The dichotomy simplifies options, and the complex dilemmas generally happen in life [19,35,36]. The fifth is to reach purification, which includes exclusiveness [37,38]. The exclusiveness focuses the discrete between ‘we’ and ‘you’ [21,26,39]. They avoid the outgroup, the existing system, or the established order as it is interpreted as a ‘contamination’ [21,28].

The sixth characteristic of religious radicalism is narrow-mindedness (one-sidedness) which includes the refusal to external/the outgroups’ ideas, prejudice, and valuing physical appearance (e.g., a specific style of dress, physical struggles) [10]. The physical identifiers the radicals value refers to the sacred texts [19, 38]. This characteristic explains why certain radical Islamists understand the concept of jihad as a physical fight rather than any good deeds to gain God’s blessing, since the radicals are into a literal and symbolic approach of thinking. The final characteristic is favouring, even imposing, revolutionary changes against the established order, even though this does not necessarily involve physical violence [21,26]. The imposing behaviour on others is possible in Indonesia after they are numerically strong [4,40]. Religious radicalism consists of seven characteristics that become aspects measured in ReadS. The factors include three domains: cognition, attitude, and actions [41-45]; thus, the instrument will encompass the three domains.

Methods

Design

The construction of ReadS was arranged into detailed steps: 1) Identifying religious radicalism and its aspects, 2) Finding behaviour indicators of religious radicalism, 3) Formulating items for scale, 4) Conducting items’ readability test, 5) Performing pilot study, 6) Performing statistical analysis, and 7) Performing second phase of statistical analysis for practical use of ReadS. Quantitative method was applied in this study.

Step 1-Identifying religious radicalism and its aspects: For a construct, religious radicalism assessed in this study consists of seven aspects: 1) Totalitarian in character, 2) Literal approach to sacred texts, 3) Symbolic religious belief, 4) Dichotomic thinking, 5) Attempts for purification, 6) One-sidedness, and 7) Imposing revolutionary changes. The aspects were collected from the previous literature review.

Step 2-Finding behaviour indicators of religious radicalism: At this step, religious radicalisms aspects were broken down into behaviour indicators in which expert judgement was held. The expert judgment involved scholars and professionals of social science, religious studies, and security (i.e., security analysts, psychologists, clinicians, anthropologists) to validate the behaviour indicators. The expert judgment reaches ≥81% agreement for these indicators of ReadS (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample of validated behavior indicators of religious radicalism in expert judgement.

No.	Aspects of Religious Radicalism	Behavior Indicators	Agreement Before Modification (%)	Agreement After Modification (%)
1	Totalitarian in character	Beliefs that humans cannot create any law/regulations (cognition)	81	84
		Negative emotions towards the established order (affection)	90	94
		Non-citizenship behaviours (psychomotor)	84	90
5	Attempts for purification	Prejudices towards the outgroup (cognition)	90	90
		Negative emotions towards the outgroups (affection)	84	97
		Exclusiveness (psychomotor)	90	90

Step 3-Formulating items for scale: After indicators were validated, items for the scale were formulated. At this step, the researcher developed items for ReadS. The total number of items made were 98, in which each behaviour aspect was represented by ±14 items.

Step 4-Conducting items’ readability test: At this step, the researcher held an online meeting with five counter-radicalism practitioners and a psychometrician to review the formulated items. These people review the readability of items, which is to detect if each item is clear or ambiguous. Criticized items were modified to meet the request of the item’s reviewers.

Step 5-Performing pilot study: A pilot study was held by recruiting people from two contrasted groups (terrorist vs non-terrorist group members) to fill the scale with consent. The initial suspicion by the candidates of participants were unavoidable; hence, the researcher explained that the scale was not used for forensic evidence nor causing any legal consequences and will be kept anonymous (in this case, the participants did not need to put their real names, only initials) to assure their confidentiality. The researcher conducted purposive sampling due to its convenience in the pandemic era. Thirty three participants linked to terrorist groups (i.e., ISIS, Al Qaeda, and their affiliations) and thirty one participants who never get involved with any terrorist groups were examined with the 98 raw items of ReadS.

Step 6-Performing statistical analysis (1st phase): At this step, quantitative analysis was held to examine each item and evaluate the reliability of ReadS. Statistical analysis used JASP (Jeffreys’s Amazing Statistics Program) to determine the loading factor of each item and the internal consistency of the scale. This review process also involved a psychometry expert in valuing the quantitative efficacy of each item. An item with a loading factor below 0,50 was dropped from the scale.

Step 7-Performing 2nd phase of statistical analysis: For practical use of ReadS, which is in employees’ mapping, screening, selection, placement, and promotion, the second phase of analysis was conducted to review the efficacy of each item of ReadS in separating responses of two contrasted groups (terrorist vs non-terrorist group members).

Participants

Thirty-one scholars and professionals from social science, security, and religious studies were involved in this study for administering Step 2 (expert judgement) to validate behaviour indicators of ReadS. They were two anthropologists, two religious leaders/icons, two psychometricians, four religious studies scholars, four counter-terrorism practitioners, five clinical psychologists, six security analysts, and six forensic psychologists, between the age of 30 to 58 (twenty three females, eight males). Later some of these participants were also involved in the readability test of items. In the readability test of items (Step 4), the study involved a psychometrician and five counter-terrorism practitioners. In identifying psychometry properties (Step 5), this study involved 64 people from two contrasted groups: 33 terrorist and 31 terrorist group members. They came from different



cities in Indonesia such as Bandung, Bekasi, Bima, Bogor, Depok, Jakarta, Lamongan, Padang, Poso, Riau, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya, Tasikmalaya, Tuban, and Yogyakarta. Their ages were ranged between 17 and 59 (17 females, 47 males). The 33 terrorist group members were related to Jamaah Islamiyah/JI, Al Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliations (i.e., Mujahidin Indonesia Timur/MIT, Darul Islam/DI). Their educations were run from high school to doctoral programs. Their occupations were varied, such as public servants, entrepreneurs, technicians, drivers, police officers, and lecturers.

Results

Items of ReadS

The finding of this study identifies 42 (of 98) items of ReadS which have acceptable loading factors (satisfactory). (Table 2) describes both satisfactory and unsatisfactory (eliminated) items.

Table 2: ReadS' items.

Table with 4 columns: Aspects of Religious Radicalism, Before Internal Structure with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Loading Factors, and Discrimination Test between Two Contrasted Groups: Terrorist vs Non-Terrorist Group Members (Rasch). Rows include categories like Totalitarian in character, Literal approach to sacred texts, Symbolic religious belief, Dichotomic thinking, and Attempts for purification.

Table with 4 columns: Item number, Loading Factor, and Bias status. Rows include items 71-82 under 'One-sidedness' and items 85-96 under 'Imposing revolutionary changes'.

The administration and scoring of ReadS

Applying the Likert scale ("strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree"), ReadS consists of 42 items to examine seven aspects of religious radicalism in an individual. For each item's response, the lowest option is scored as "1" while the highest is "4" (Table 3). In terms of the norm, (Table 4) shows total scores and their categories. The range of 42 to 74 is categorized into a "zero" level of religious radicalism, whereas 75 to 105 is "low", 106 to 137 is "medium", and 138 to 168 is "high". This norm is based on the instrument (possible scores of respondents/future subjects) rather than the scores derived from the pilot study (Step 5).

Table 3: ReadS' scoring.

Table with 2 columns: Options and Scores. Options include Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree (1).

Table 4: ReadS' norm.

Table with 2 columns: Categories of Religious Radicalism and Range of scores. Categories include Null (42-74), Low (75-105), Medium (106-137), and High (138-168).

Reliability

The internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega were applied to identify ReadS' reliability. The findings demonstrate that the statistical investigation of ReadS' reliability (N=64) is alpha=0.97 and omega=0.97 (Table 5). The reliability coefficients prove that ReadS is reliable in assessing religious radicalism. As described by De Vaus [46], a reliability coefficient is satisfactory when it achieves 0.70.

Table 5: ReadS' reliability.

Table with 3 columns: Scale Reliability Statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and McDonald's omega. Shows values of 0.97 for both alpha and omega.

Validity

The findings have shown ReadS' content-related validity in expert judgements (Step 2 and Step 4). Interrater judgement in examining behaviour indicators for religious radicalism has reached >=81% agreement. Furthermore, the items' readability test by six reviewers (a psychometrician and five counter-radicalism practitioners) was conducted to ensure the qualitative efficacy of each item.



The use of scale for screening purpose

For practical use of ReadS (such as in employees' screening, mapping, selection, placement, and promotion), the findings show that 29 items can separate responses of two contrasted groups (the radicals vs non-radicals). However, an item (Item 14) does not have a satisfactory loading factor at the second phase of internal structure analysis. (Table 6) demonstrates 28 items with acceptable loading factors.

Table 6: ReadS' efficacy for practical use.

Table with 5 columns: Aspects of Religious Radicalism, Effective Items in Distinguishing Two Contrasted Groups, Frequency Parameter (Mann Whitney), Independent Sample Two-Test, and Loading Factors After Second Phase of CFA. It lists 28 items across categories like Totalitarian in character, Literal approach to sacred texts, etc.

Conclusion

The world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia, expresses its concern about religious radicalism due to its link to past terrorism acts (i.e., Bali Bombing I and II); hence, the government publicly declares the need to implement religious radicalism screening to students and workers. Nevertheless, the definition of religious radicalism is unclear nor the tools to measure the construct. Furthermore, the concept of 'radicalism' is often mixed with another term, 'extremism'. Against this background, this study was conducted. This study was aimed to formulate the Religious Radicalism Scale (called 'ReadS'). Using quantitative study design, this work was organized into four phases to examine: 1) Religious radicalism, 2) Behaviour indicators, 3) Religious radicalism scale, and 4) The scale's psychometric properties. Religious radicalism is identified as a religious, political belief/doctrine linked to radical principles that demonstrate very critical views against an established system aim to restructure political orders and believe in utopian

religious ideas and a variety of means to achieve religious goals. Radicalism is a spectrum where the borderline between a 'moderate' and 'radical' is indistinct. The distinctions between radicalism and extremism are explained, in the three psychological domains: cognition, affection, and psychomotor in which extremism is more into the use of physical violence as the only means to achieve goals (psychomotor) radicalism is still open to other methods. Religious extremism includes radicalism, not vice versa, so that religious extremists are radicals, but not all religious radicals are extremists. For a construct, religious radicalism assessed in this study consists of seven aspects: 1) Attempts for purification, 2) One-sidedness, 3) Totalitarian in character, 4) Symbolic religious belief, 5) Literal approach to sacred texts, 6) Dichotomic thinking, and 7) Imposing revolutionary changes (even though it does not necessarily involve physical violence).

This study involved 31 multidisciplinary scholars and professionals (i.e., anthropologists, psychologists, security analysts, religious studies scholars, and counter-terrorism practitioners) for interrater expert judgement on behaviour indicators and items of ReadS. Furthermore, the study involved 64 people from two contrasted groups: 33 terrorist and 31 terrorist group members to define its psychometric properties. These participants came from more than 15 different cities in Indonesia. The 33 terrorist group members were linked with Al Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliations. The findings of this study formulate satisfactory 42 items of ReadS. These items have acceptable loading factors (≥0.50). ReadS applies Likert scale in which the lowest option is counted as "1", while the highest is "4". In terms of the norm, the participant's total score is categorized as "zero" level of religious radicalism if it is between 42 to 74, "low" from 75 to 105, "medium" from 106 to 137, and "high" from 138 to 168. This norm is based on the possible scores of respondents. In terms of psychometry properties, ReadS' reliability (N=64) is α=0.97 and ω=0.97. The findings also show satisfactory content-related validity in which expert judgements on indicators in the scale gained ≥81% agreement. Moreover, the items' readability test by a psychometrician and five counter-radicalism practitioners (six reviewers) ensures the qualitative efficacy of each item. Further, for practical use such as in employees' screening, selection, mapping, and promotion, the findings generate 29 items effective in separating responses of two contrasted groups: the radicals and non-radicals.

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In terms of psychometry properties, ReadS' reliability (N=64) is α=0.97 and ω=0.97. The findings also show satisfactory content-related validity in which expert judgements on scale indicators gained ≥81% agreement. Moreover, the items' readability test by a psychometrician and five counter-radicalism practitioners (six reviewers) ensures the qualitative efficacy of each item. Further, for practical use such as in employees' screening, selection, mapping, and promotion, the findings generate 29 items effective in separating responses of two contrasted groups: the radicals and non-radicals.

Ethical Approval

This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by the author. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.



Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

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