Effective Communication in Deradicalization of Ex-Terrorism Convict

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Abstract

Terrorism always creates social, economic, and political chaos. Acts of terrorism in Indonesia are generally caused by religious beliefs and radical understandings held by the perpetrators. Terrorist convicts still maintain this belief, so a special approach is needed to run the deradicalization process effectively. Therefore, this research discusses issues regarding applying effective communication in the deradicalization process for terrorism convicts. An effective communication approach is positioned to support apparatus programs in the deradicalization process. This study uses a phenomenological approach to understand better the views and experiences of terrorism convicts undergoing the deradicalization process. The aim is to find and analyze effective forms of communication in the deradicalization process for terrorism convicts. The results of this study indicate that effective communication in the deradicalization process for terrorism convicts can be achieved through an approach that involves real and continuous attention, dialogue that is very careful about religious understanding, avoiding the act of extracting information about terrorist networks from the Police and BNPT; as well as people involved in handling terrorism; and applying an empathetic communication approach in embracing terrorism convicts, so that they do not return to the same environment and get a decent life. This approach also aims to ensure that former terrorism convicts feel cared for and valued by society.

Keywords: Effective Communication; Deradicalization; Terrorism Convicts.

Introduction

Terrorism is violence to cause fear in the public to achieve goals (especially political goals) (Drafting Team, 1995). Terrorism is designed and directed against civilians, including security and military personnel, occurs in peaceful conditions, and is carried out by secret agents for the psychological purpose of publicizing political, religious, and intimidation or coercion issues against the government based on the religious ideology it follows, political, criminal, or idiosyncratic reasons form the basis of terror movements (Ismed, 2021). The selection of targets in terrorist attacks is carried out randomly (targets of opportunity) or chosen as symbols (symbolic targets or representatives). Terrorism is taken of certain interests based on certain ideologies and political sentiments by using violence as part of the judgment of a certain policy or way of protest that causes insecurity in society (Senathalia et al., 2021; Syahputra & Sukabdi, 2021).

Acts of terrorism worldwide, especially in Indonesia, depart from the identical pattern; due to radical understanding in
certain individuals, groups, or organizations. Meanwhile, the definition of radicalism from the BNPT's perspective is a movement that yearns for total change and is revolutionary by drastically changing existing values through violence and extreme actions. Characteristics of radical attitudes and understandings, specifically: 1) intolerant (unwilling to respect the opinions and beliefs of others), 2) fanatical (always self-righteous; consider others wrong), 3) exclusive (distinguish themselves from Muslims in general), and 4) revolutionary (tend to use violent means to achieve goals) (Widyaningsih, 2019; Supriadi et al., 2020).

Terrorism cases in Indonesia are still common, although the pattern fluctuates. However, Police manage to arrest hundreds of people every year. Based on the National Police Headquarters, in 2021, there were around 370 suspects presumed to be involved in terrorist acts, both that year and before. In 2020, the number of suspects involved in terrorism or assisting terrorism reached 232 people. Despite the increase, terrorism cases decreased by 7, or 53.8%, last year. In detail, there were 13 terror cases recorded in 2020, while there were only six terrorism cases in 2021 (Hadi, 2018; Hidayat et al., 2022).

Based on data from the Indonesian Presidential Staff, in the last 21 years, there have been 26 cases of terrorist attacks every year or two attacks every month. Perpetrators of terrorism consist of new individuals and involve those who have previously been arrested by the Police and served prison punishments. Unfortunately, after they were released from prison, they again embarked on acts of terror (Rid Septianto, 2019). With the various cases of repeated radicalism, it is crucial for a deradicalization program for ex-terrorism convicts to prevent and reduce terrorism cases in Indonesia (A.N.T., 2015).

In 2015, the National Police’s Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror Team arrested 82 suspected terrorists. Then in 2016, Police arrested 170 suspected terrorists. In 2019, as many as 275 perpetrators of terrorism crimes were arrested. Of that number, as many as two perpetrators have been convicted, 42 people are in the trial process, 220 are in the investigation process, and three have died. There are 80 former Napiter who returned to carry out their terror acts until 2019, even though they have been imprisoned, gaining an understanding of deradicalization (Ismed, 2021).

In 2019, Densus 88 managed to detain a terrorist named Wahyu Nugroho alias Uceng at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport when he was about to flee to Syria via Iran. Previously, Wahyu Nugroho had been involved in a group calledJI (Jamaah Islamiyah) and was arrested twice for terrorism. After his release or imprisonment, he became involved again with one of the ISIS members who encouraged him to go to Syria immediately, providing 30 million rupiahs allegedly used to finance terror acts. According to data released by the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) in September 2020, 94 former terrorism convicts are again involved in terror acts. Of the 94 former terrorist convicts arrested, this number shows that around 10-11 percent were reinvolved in terror acts (I. Hadi, 2018; Prasetyo, 2016).

Terrorism is carried out for various reasons, including inflexible and inappropriate religious understandings, intending to control the government or even the state to provide fear or terror to the community and government by developing and spreading
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Propaganda to recruit new members in the name of religion (Jerry Indrawa, 2019).

Acts of terror also try to impose the will to get attention and control the situation, including controlling the course of the government. Accordingly, they carry out acts of terror considered strategic, many people and vital objects of the state (Salas & Anwar, 2021).

Deradicalization steps are needed to implement changes to radicalism. Deradicalization is a process that aims to change individual belief systems, reject extremist ideologies, and reinforce mainstream values of society. The deradicalization process works at the ideological level to change the doctrine and interpretation of religious understanding used by terrorist groups (Adi, 2020).

Meanwhile, according to the National Counter-terrorism Agency (BNPT), deradicalization is all efforts to neutralize radical ideas through interdisciplinary approaches, such as law, psychology, religion, and socio-culture, for those who are influenced or exposed to radical and pro-violence (Fauzi, 2021).

Deradicalization measures are needed to change radical understandings, thoughts, and ideologies to be more tolerant and able to accept differences and circumstances to overcome superficial religious beliefs or fight terror (Hidayat et al., 2022). Deradicalization in this context becomes a medium for converting ideology from what was originally "fundamentalism Islam" to "gracious Islam."

Deradicalization is implemented in three (3) different stages (Widyaningsih, 2019). The first stage occurs at the time of arrest by security forces or during the investigation process. The officer will invite the perpetrator of terror to discuss and ask why the terror action was committed. Furthermore, dialogue was conducted to improve understanding of religious teachings and other aspects. The second stage of deradicalization occurs when the perpetrators of terror are in community institutions (prisons). The third stage after which the offender is free and serves his sentence. Until the end of 2018, around 800 terrorism convicts had undergone a deradicalization program by BNPT. Six hundred thirty former terrorism convicts have been released from prison, and 325 have participated in deradicalization programs intending to prevent a repeat of their actions (Muhtadi & Rasid, 2023).

Deradicalization is also a series of efforts to reduce or eliminate radical perceptions through an interdisciplinary approach involving law, psychology, religion, and socio-culture. The effort is aimed at individuals affected by radical or pro-violent ideas. The Police, especially the Prevention and Intelligence Fields of Densus 88 Anti-Terror, have carried out deradicalization through certain stages. The first stage is the identification of the perpetrators suspected of being involved in acts of terror and successfully arrested. Furthermore, in-depth information is extracted regarding the origins of terrorist networks, terrorist groups, and their affiliation with pre-existing terror networks, perhaps even related to new networks (Maulidyawanto & Sambas, 2023).

In the next stage, after interrogation, rehabilitation is carried out as an approach for terrorists to realize the act's effect. Despite these struggles, some terror perpetrators continue to carry out acts of terror, as occurred in the Sarinah Bombing incident by Sunakim. After the judge's ruling, the convicts will be admitted to prison, and the Police will...
conduct re-education through the approach and provide education and understanding of the state, religion, and laws (Widyaningsih & Kuntarto, 2018). The final stage is re-socialization. The Police guide ex-terrorism convicts after they get out of prison. Re-socialization aims to prevent repeat mistakes and avoid becoming recidivists (Hadi, 2018).

Several research approaches to deradicalization programs have been carried out, including individual treatment (Y. Yuliyanto et al., 2021) and through the approach of the noble values of Pancasila (Isnawan, 2017, 2018). In addition, soft approach and rethinking deradicalization models have also been carried out (Idris et al., 2017; Indrawan & Aji, 2019; Khamdan, 2015). Deradicalization using a religious perspective has also been implemented (Qodir, 2013), including the role of pesantren salaf as a model of terrorism deradicalization education (Kholis, 2017).

This study aims to provide the idea of deradicalization using an effective communication approach toward prisoners. This approach has not been practiced by researchers before. The results of this research will also be addressed to stakeholders such as the Police, the National Counter-terrorism Agency (BNPT), the State Intelligence Agency (BIN), community institutions, and any group that is concerned about deradicalization efforts as a preventive and repressive effort (Hardiago & Syafrinaldi, 2022) which is expected to minimize or even eliminate radical ideas in society.

The previous research exclusively focused on certain aspects, such as religious awareness development programs, national and state awareness, legal awareness, and psychological counseling (D. M. Yuliyanto & Utami, 2022). This research investigates the communication methods for ex-terrorist convicts so that the personal deradicalization process can run effectively.

Method

This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach through observation and interviews with research objects. The phenomenological method refers to the Truth Theory of knowledge that appears in consciousness and science and describes the understanding of individuals in their consciousness and experience. Phenomenology is a philosophical study that involves the process of meaning through continuous senses and experience. These sensory experiences, which initially have no meaning, arise when connected with previous experiences and through interaction with others (I. et al., 2020; Wita & Mursa, 2022).

Phenomenology explores knowledge about the actions, observations, and experiences of ex-terrorism convicts or prisoners (Wita & Mursa, 2022). The main objective is to find effective communication in deradicalization efforts that consider the personal needs of terrorism prisoners themselves.

Results and Discussion

Wartoyo founded the ex-terrorist Convicts Podomoro group in 2019. Wartoyo’s involvement with radical groups began when he attended religious recitation/activities led by Santhanam, which introduced various issues covering Muslim problems in Indonesia and the world, such as the fate of Muslims in Palestine, Mindanao, the Philippines, and other places facing oppression for Muslims. Santhanam’s statements and provocations were the motivating factors that led Wartoyo
to become interested and engaged in radical groups.

In 2011, a radical group led by Wartoyo planned an "amaliyah" (action) as revenge for the hurt feelings of oppressed Muslims. They plan various attacks or terror against the Police, according to the group's capabilities. Their initial plan was to attack a suicide bombing or blow up the police post headquarters. However, these attacks were deemed ineffective and failed. Finally, it was decided to attack police personnel using poison (Fabriane, 2013).

The Police found several pen-model firearms, eight homemade firearms, and five bullets belonging to Wartoyo's terrorist network. In addition, toluene, methanol, benzene, ethyl benzene, trimethyl benzene, p-xylene, phosphire (PH3), arsenic were found. These chemicals are classified as chemical solvents and toxic chemicals. Wartoyo was finally convicted and punished to 4 years in prison.

While undergoing the trial process until his detention period 2017, Wartoyo said that he increasingly hated the Police and the Indonesian government. Wartoyo ascertained the conflict because he comprehended that police officers had come to deliver contrary Islam thoughts (Ismanto & Maujuhan Syah, 2021).

After the trial, Wartoyo was punished for four years and admitted to Class 1 Prison in Cirebon. In this prison, Wartoyo's religious beliefs are still harsh and radical. One night, he was hungry and then hit the prison wall to communicate with the residents of the neighboring cell. Wartoyo asked for food and cigarettes. The neighbor of the cell gave him five packs of instant noodles, a pack of cigarettes, and a lighter. The next day Wartoyo was curious about a figure who gave him food. After the cell was opened for morning activities, he found out that the residents of the neighboring cell gave instant noodles to Wartoyo, is Indonesian citizen of Chinese descent.

From this occurrence, he realized that kindness could come from anyone, and he realized the potential for kindness from others outside his group. Furthermore, there is an awareness of respecting differences, including differences in religious thoughts or cults (Isnawan, 2018). 2018 after finishing his sentence, Wartoyo returned to his wife's hometown with his brother-in-law's loan capital of Rp. 5 million. Wartoyo opened a motorcycle repair shop in Pandansari Village, Kaligua, Brebes. His workshop business grew, with an average daily income of Rp. 200 thousand-Rp. 300 thousand.

One year into the motorcycle repair shop business, he often gets visits from BNPT officers and provides a correct understanding of religious thought. In addition, Wartoyo also received training from several non-governmental organizations on the insights of the Republic of Indonesia (Nasution, 2015).

Feeling guilty, he wanted to make amends by frequently visiting prisoners serving sentences to provide awareness about radicalism. Several prisons in the western part of Central Java, including prisons on Nusakambangan Island Cilacap, were visited by Wartoyo. The goal is to invite them back to society by starting a new life with moderate ideology. The journey to spread moderate and peaceful ideology for prisoners are challenging. Wartoyo repeatedly receives insults and death threats from groups or prisoners who refuse his mission. However, he continues to support the national counter-
terrorism agency's deradicalization program (Indrawan & Aji, 2019).

Wartoyo's struggles to help the government's deradicalization program fully support the BNPT and the Police, especially the National Police Headquarters. Wartoyo also established Paguyuban Podomoro (ex-terrorist community) in 2019 to accommodate the activities of former prisoners. Until the end of 2021, Wartoyo has succeeded in getting ex-terrorist convicts to support the ideology of Pancasila as the state ideology.

Wartoyo explained some characteristics of ex-terrorist convicts who intend to deradicalize and support the Republic of Indonesia's ideology. These characteristics include; No longer disbelieving groups outside their group, being willing to accept authority visits, and accepting rights as prisoners such as remission, clemency, judicial review, etc. However, if a prisoner does not want to accept these rights, it is usually due to his presumption that the state system is in an infidel condition. Thus, their rights and obligations as citizens are considered forbidden for them.

As an ex-terrorist convict, Wartoyo stated that law enforcement officers, both from BNPT and the Police, should comprehend and practice sufficiently 1) Approach patiently; 2) Try to touch the heart of the prisoner by talking about his family; 3) Give real and continuous attention; 4) Conduct a heart-to-heart dialogue on religious beliefs; 5) Not in hurry to seek information about its terrorist network; 6) Can provide alternative jobs for post-release prisoners.

Effective communication in the deradicalization process also depends on several factors, including communicator factors or those who give a message of peace (Zulfikar & Aminah, 2020). This effective communication can provide by the Police and national counter-terrorism agency or law enforcement officers.

Good communicators can understand prisoners, not regard they understand religious ideology best. Ex-prisoners who have received training or become educators, their advice is more acceptable than the repression approach with its authority.

However, Wartoyo reminded the need for caution for communicators in the deradicalization process. It is not simply to avoid offending former prisoners but because they have abilities in persuasion and brainwashing. Therefore, ensuring that the initial deradicalization plan continues beyond accepting acts of terror is important.

In the study of effective communication, there are three message types: informative, persuasive, and educative. The nature of an informational message is to explain something to another person. This type of information message is divided into actual and general information. Furthermore, persuasive messages propose that the source receives a result for his message to the communicant. Changes in the communicant become its priority scale. Third is an educative message. The essence of this type of message model is on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor elements (Safii, 2020; Yunus, 2023).

To keep ex-convicts from returning to terror networks, Wartoyo highlighted several important points: assistance when prisoners leave prison and financial assistance, skills, and decent work for ex-prisoners and their families. The ex-prisoners need jobs that meet their living needs, and they often find it difficult to be accepted back by society.
The last stage is regularly maintaining fellowships between deradicalization officers and ex-prisoners. The public often distrusts ex-terrorist convicts. Prejudice towards them does not easily disappear, making it difficult for them to adapt to society or open businesses for survival. Society and family are key in preventing ex-prisoners from being involved in terror acts again. Community support and guidance are also crucial so ex-prisoners reintegrate into community life. The role of religious and community leaders is also vital because it can help ex-prisoners have an optimistic attitude.

Conclusion

To achieve effective communication in deradicalizing terrorism convicts, a heart-to-heart approach that embraces ex-prisoners is needed. In addition, providing a decent livelihood is also important so that ex-prisoners feel valued and not considered the refuse of society.

This research concludes several steps to achieve effective communication for ex-terrorist convict are: 1) provide assistance and meetings with ex-prisoners with patience; 2) invite them to talk about family matters and another touching heart topic, not specifically about religious thought; 3) provide real and sustained attention; 4) conduct a heart-to-heart dialogue on religious beliefs; 5) avoid extracting information about its terrorist networks; 6) Provide advice or solutions for ex-prisoners who have left radicalism ideology. Furthermore, it is also important to provide assistance when prisoners leave prison and provide understanding to the surrounding environment that they are ready to be accepted and no longer commit acts of terror.

Reference


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33–43.


