Communication Patterns and Strategies for the Spread of Milah Abraham in Palembang: A Case Study of Recruitment and Prevention Strategies

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Abstract: The phenomenon of the spread of Milah Abraham in Palembang raises serious concerns about the integrity of Muslims in Indonesia because the teachings carried deviate from the mainstream of Islam and have the potential to create divisions in the Muslim community. This study aims to analyze the communication patterns used by the Milah Abraham group in spreading its teachings and recruitment strategies for members and sympathizers and evaluate prevention efforts made by various parties to maintain the stability and unity of the ummah. This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews with Milah Abraham members, policymakers, and religious organizations, and documentation studies from various sources. The research findings show that the Milah Abraham group applies a systematic and practical communication pattern through a combination of digital media, personal meetings, and spiritual approaches that touch the emotional aspects of potential followers. Their recruitment strategy relies heavily on social networks and persuasive narratives packaged as informal da'wah. In the face of this spread, local Islamic organizations and stakeholders have pursued ahlusunnah wal jamaah-based da'wah as a counter-narrative measure. However, its effectiveness is still limited due to the lack of coordination and continuous religious education at the grassroots level. The original contribution of this research lies in mapping Milah Abraham's communication patterns and recruitment strategies contextually in the Palembang region, which has not been widely described in the literature. This research recommends the importance of strategic collaboration between the government, religious organizations, and the community in strengthening the understanding of the true Islamic faith through a more systematic, educative, and communicative approach.

Keywords: Milah Abraham, Communication Pattern, Dissemination Strategy, Prevention Strategy, Member Recruitment.

Introduction

The spread of Milah Abraham in Palembang is a serious concern in religious and social studies. It is often categorized as a sect that

deviates from mainstream Islamic teachings because it has different interpretations in several fundamental aspects, namely creed, sharia, and the concept of prophethood. In the element of creed, Milah Abraham tends to have a different understanding of monotheism from Islam in general, especially in interpreting the oneness of God and the position of revelation.[12] In terms of sharia, this group has religious practices not in line with established Islamic law, such as the implementation of worship and specific legal rules.[3] While in the concept of prophethood, this understanding often carries interpretations that do not follow Islamic doctrine regarding the end of prophethood in the Prophet Muhammad.[4,5]

They believe in the existence of prophethood after the Prophet Muhammad and assume there are still prophets after him. This is, of course, a significant difference from the beliefs of Muslims in general. In addition, Milah Abraham also tends to reject some of the teachings and practices inherited by the Prophet Muhammad, causing controversy among Muslims. With differences in the understanding of creed, sharia, and the concept of prophethood, the Milah Abraham group is often criticized and debated with other Muslims.

In the social context, the spread of this teaching not only raises theological debates but also has the potential to disrupt social life.[6] Therefore, research on communication patterns and strategies for spreading Milah Abraham is relevant to identifying how this sect recruits followers and how various parties make anticipatory efforts.

Previous research has extensively discussed communication strategies in spreading the teachings of religious groups. For example, a

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[1] Muhammad Rizal Rizqi Faisal, "Aliran Gafatar Dan Fatwa Sesat MUI 'Analisis Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia No. 06 Tahun 2016 Tentang Aliran Gerakan Fajar Nusantara (GAFATAR)'" (Jakarta: Fakultas Syariah dan Hukum UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2016).

[2] Abdurrohman Abdurrohman et al., "Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Jemaah Salafi (Studi Tentang Tipologi Dan Relasi Sosial Jemaah Salafi)," *Jurnal Humanitas: Katalisator Perubahan Dan Inovator Pendidikan* 10, no. 4 (2024): 665–79.

[3] Dzinnuroini Dzinnuroini and Ahidul Asror, "Strategi Komunikasi Rumah Moderasi Beragama Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember Dalam Menyebarluaskan Nilai-Nilai Islam Moderat," *Icon: Islamic Communication and Contemporary Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 1–14.

[4] A. Rahmat, "Eksistensi Ideologi Kelompok Keagamaan Minoritas Dalam Masyarakat," *Jurnal Studi Keagamaan* 18, no. 3 (2021): 200–215.

[5] M. Yusuf, "Dinamika Kelompok Keagamaan Dan Identitas Sosial," *Jurnal Sosiologi Islam* 9, no. 2 (2017): 110–30.

[6] D. Setiawan, "Komunikasi Persuasif Dalam Gerakan Keagamaan Alternatif," *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Agama* 5, no. 1 (2022): 78–95.

study by Mufidah showed that religious groups that are considered deviant often use emotional and spiritual-based interpersonal communication in recruiting followers.[7] Meanwhile, Nurhadi found that social media became the primary means of spreading religious teachings, especially for groups that feel alienated from the mainstream religious community. [8]However, these studies have not specifically discussed Milah Abraham's communication strategy in the context of Palembang.

In addition, the research conducted by Rahmat discusses how the ideology of religious minority groups can survive during mainstream domination.[9] However, this research focuses more on the ideological aspect and has not thoroughly examined the communication and member recruitment strategies used by groups such as Milah Abraham.

From this description, there appears to be a research gap in the existing literature, namely the absence of in-depth studies that specifically analyze the Milah Abraham group's communication patterns and recruitment strategies in the Palembang area. This research will fill this gap by investigating the group's communication patterns, recruitment strategies, and how it uses the media to spread its teachings. Thus, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how groups like Milah Abraham can survive and grow amidst mainstream societal dominance. In addition, the results of this research are also expected to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of minority religious groups in Indonesia, especially in Palembang.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the group's communication patterns and recruitment strategies, it is hoped that it can significantly contribute to the study of religion and society in Indonesia. This research has both academic and practical urgency. From the academic side, this study contributes to the study of religious communication and the sociology of religion, especially in understanding the dynamics of the spread of controversial religious teachings. This research can serve as a reference for the government, spiritual leaders, and the community in designing effective strategies to counteract the spread of Milah Abraham in Palembang.

This research also offers a new approach to understanding the

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[7] N. Mufidah, "Strategi Komunikasi Kelompok Keagamaan Dalam Merekrut Pengikut," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 10, no. 2 (2018): 123–40.

[8] R. Nurhadi, "Peran Media Sosial Dalam Penyebaran Ajaran Keagamaan Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 155, no. 1 (2020): 45–60.

[9] Rahmat, "Eksistensi Ideologi Kelompok Keagamaan Minoritas Dalam Masyarakat." Jurnal Studi Keagamaan 18, no. 3 (2021): 200-215.

spread of Milah Abraham's teachings by combining social construction theory and Relational Dialectics theory to analyze the communication patterns and recruitment strategies used. Thus, this research describes the existing phenomenon and offers solutions based on communication and religious education.

Most previous studies have emphasized the repressive aspects of dealing with the spread of religious teachings deemed deviant. However, this research seeks to offer a new perspective by highlighting how the persuasive communication approach used by the Milah Abraham group can be learned and utilized for counter-narrative strategies. Communication and education-based approaches can be a more sustainable solution than methods that rely solely on legal and repressive aspects.

In this context, the study by Bahriyah et al. shows that political Islam is important in dealing with heterodox religious movements in Indonesia, such as the Rifa'iyah sect. The research highlights how political and communication approaches can be used to address the spread of deviant teachings.[10]

In addition, Naim's research emphasizes the importance of figure studies in developing Islamic studies. This approach can provide a deeper understanding of how specific individuals or groups influence the development of religious teachings, including in the context of spreading ideas such as Milah Abraham.[11]

An effective communication strategy is key in dealing with the spread of deviant teachings. The study by Aprilyawati and Nurudin shows Islamic media such as alif.id and ibtimes.id use a strategic communication approach in spreading moderation. A similar approach can be applied in responding to the spread of Milah Abraham.[12]

Furthermore, the study by Junaidi et al. highlights the communication strategies of pesantren administrators in improving the religious character of santri. This approach can be a reference in understanding how interpersonal and institutional communication can

[10] Amalina Zukhrufatul Bahriyah et al., "The Existence of Islamic Politics Against Heterodox of Islamic Movements in Indonesia: Post-Independence Rifa'iyah Sect," *AJIS* 9, no. 1 (2024): 144-165

[11] Ngainun Naim, "The Development of Islamic Study Through the Study of Figures: Significance and Methodology," *AJIS* 2, no. 2 (2017).: 147-166

[12] Firda Dwi Aprilyawati and Nurudin Nurudin, "Strategi Komunikasi Media Islam Alif. Id Dan Ibtimes. Id Dalam Penyebaran Paham Moderasi," *Islamic Communication Journal* 7, no. 1 (2022): 35–52.

shape religious understanding under mainstream Islamic teachings.[13]

In religious counseling, Sukandar et al. emphasize the importance of communication strategies tailored to community conditions in Islamic family development. This approach is relevant in designing effective communication strategies to deal with society's spread of deviant teachings.[14]

Finally, the study by Rangkuti and Samosir showed that halaqah group communication patterns can shape the Islamic characteristics of university students. This approach can be applied in designing effective religious formation programs to counteract the influence of deviant teachings such as Milah Abraham.[15]

Literature Review

Communication patterns in religious movements are essential in understanding how a group spreads its ideology and recruits followers. According to Littlejohn and Foss, communication patterns in a religious organization often involve interpersonal and mass communication.[16] Effendy's study in Indonesia shows that certain groups' proselytization communication patterns frequently use a personalized approach with strong doctrine.[17] This communication pattern serves as a means of spreading ideology and becomes the primary strategy for building group loyalty and attachment.

Strategies for spreading religious ideology have been widely researched in the context of Islam and other spiritual movements. For example, a study by Wiktorowicz in the Middle East showed that radical groups often use communication strategies that rely on victimhood narratives and doctrines of exclusivism to form a collective identity and

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[13] Ahmad Junaidi, Ahmad Fauzi, dan Shodiq Shodiq, "Strategi Komunikasi Pengurus dalam Meningkatkan Karakter Religius Santri Pondok Pesantren Asy-Syafi'iyah Sukorejo Bangsalsari Jember," Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi PROGRESSIO 5, no. 2 (2024): 1-12.

[14] Galih Sukandar, Muhammad Nurul Yamin, dan Aris Fauzan, "Strategi Komunikasi Penyuluh Agama dalam Pembinaan Keluarga Islami di Purwosari," Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Masyarakat 17, no. 5 (2023). 5 (2023): 3648-71.

[15] Nurul Izzah Rangkuti dan Hasrat Efendi Samosir, "Pola Komunikasi Kelompok Halaqah dalam Membentuk Karakter Islami Mahasiswa Melalui Lembaga Dakwah Al-Izzah UIN Sumatera Utara," Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan 7, no. 2 (2024): 165-73.

[16] Stephen W Littlejohn and Karen A Foss, *Theories of Human Communication* (Waveland press, 2019).

[17] O. U. Effendy, *Komunikasi Dakwah* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2017).

build the legitimacy of their ideology.[18] In Indonesia, research by Al-Makassary and Jahroni found that radical Islamic groups are increasingly utilizing social media as a key tool in spreading their ideology.[19] Using these media allows for broader and faster dissemination of doctrine, including recruiting new members.

One of the groups that developed in Indonesia and has specific characteristics in spreading its ideology is Milah Abraham. This movement emphasizes the concept of tawhid and al-wala' wal bara' as the primary basis for understanding Islam. According to Azra's research, Milah Abraham emerged as a response to the phenomena of globalization and modernization, which they considered to have deviated from pure Islamic teachings.[20] The study by Abubakar highlights that the group adopted the concept of takfiri in judging people outside their group, which became an essential factor in forming their exclusive identity.[21]

In terms of recruitment and patterns of dissemination, Milah Abraham adopts an approach similar to other exclusive Islamic groups. According to Hasani and Naipospos' study, such movements often use a small community-based approach or halaqah as a forum for the dissemination of teachings and the regeneration process.[22] Meanwhile, research by Hegghammer in Europe shows that social and economic factors also play a role in attracting individuals to such groups.[23] Therefore, Milah Abraham's recruitment pattern not only relies on doctrinal aspects but also utilizes social conditions that can support the growth of its followers.

In the digital era, the dynamics of spreading religious ideology are changing along with the increasing use of social media and online platforms. Wahid's research shows that YouTube and Telegram have become the primary means for radical groups to spread their doctrines

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[18] Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015).

[19] J. Al-Makassary, S., & Jahroni, *Radical Islam and Social Media (Yogyakarta: UII Press, 2019).*

[20] A. Azra, *Islam, Globalisasi, dan Radikalisme* (Bandung: Mizan, 2020).

[21] M. Abubakar, *Radikalisme Agama di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Milah Abraham (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2021).*

[22] B. Hasani, I., & Naipospos, *Kelompok Radikal dan Strategi Rekrutmen (Jakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2019).*

[23] Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

and attract new followers.[24] Another study by Conway in the UK also found that digital media provides a strategic advantage for extremist groups in reaching a global audience more effectively than conventional methods.[25] This shows that Milah Abraham's communication strategy is also inseparable from the digitalization trend in religious propaganda.

In response to the proliferation of radical ideologies through various media, the government's efforts to counter extremism have become increasingly crucial. According to Setiawan, the deradicalization approach in Indonesia involves cooperation between the government, community organizations and religious leaders in tackling radicalization at the grassroots level.[26] A study by Schmid (2020) in the Netherlands shows that the soft power approach is more effective than repressive methods in countering extremism, as it can target the ideological roots of radicalization and provide alternative, more moderate narratives.[27]

While there are many studies on radical Islamic groups and their communication strategies, specific studies on Milah Abraham are limited. Therefore, this research aims to fill the academic gap by focusing on this group's communication patterns and recruitment strategies in Palembang. Thus, this research contributes to the study of Islamic Studies and da'wah communication and provides deeper insights into the dynamics of religious movements in Indonesia in the digital era.

Research Methods

Research Approach and Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to understanding the communication patterns used by the Milah Abraham group in spreading religious understanding in Palembang. This approach was chosen because it can explore the deep meaning of the interactions and communication symbols used by the group. Creswell asserts that qualitative research aims to understand a phenomenon's meaning and in-depth perspective.[28]

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[24] M. Wahid, *Social Media and Radicalism: Case Studies in Indonesia (Surabaya: Airlangga University Press, 2022).*

[25] M. Conway, *Online Extremism and Radicalisation* (London: Routledge, 2019).

[26] R. Setiawan, *Deradicalisation in Indonesia: Policy and Implementation (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2023).*

[27] A. Schmid, *Counter-Terrorism and Radicalisation Prevention in Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

[28] John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2018).

In its analysis, this research applies a semiotic approach to examine the signs and symbols used in Milah Abraham's group communication. Barthes explains that semiotics can be used to understand how a group constructs meaning through symbolic representation.[29] As such, this research describes the group's communication patterns and interprets the meaning behind their use of signs.

Sample Selection Technique

This research uses purposive sampling techniques to select relevant samples, namely individuals active in the Milah Abraham group, religious leaders, and residents directly involved with this phenomenon.[30] This sample selection aims to obtain rich and decadent data by the research focus.

Peirce stated that a semiotic approach in social research can help understand how a group uses signs to shape religious understanding among its followers.[31] With this approach, this research aims to provide in-depth insights into the communication patterns and transformation of spiritual knowledge within the Milah Abraham group.

Data Collection Technique

The data in this study was collected through the following techniques:

1. **Observation**

In-depth observation was conducted to directly observe how members of the Milah Abraham group interact and convey their teachings. This technique allows researchers to capture non-verbal expressions, communication patterns, as well as the use of symbols in their religious activities.

2. **Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with several key informants, including key figures in the Milah Abraham group, religious leaders, and relevant parties such as the government and the Indonesian

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[29] Roland Barthes, "Elements of Semiology Hill and Wang," *New York: Seventeenth Printing*, 2017.

[30] Sugiyono, " Kualitatif, dan R&D, Bandung: Alfabeta," *Cet. Vii*, 2021.

[31] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs* (Dover Publications, 2019).

Ulema Council (MUI). Moleong stated that interviews in qualitative research allow researchers to obtain in-depth perspectives from relevant informants.

3. **Documentation Study**

Various materials produced by the group, such as videos, books, and social media content, were analyzed. [32] The study aims to understand the messages and how the group utilizes the media to spread its teachings. Manurung asserts that digital media analysis is crucial in understanding the spread of religious teachings in the modern era, given the media's influence in shaping public perception.[33]

Data Analysis Technique

The data obtained was analyzed using a semiotic analysis model with the following steps.[34]

1. **Sign Identification:** Identify the symbols and signs used in Milah Abraham's group communication.

2. **Categorization:** Grouping signs based on specific categories to understand their communication patterns.

3. **Interpretation of Meaning:** Interpreting the meaning behind using signs and symbols in disseminating the group's teachings.

4. **Data Triangulation:** Using multiple sources of data to ensure the validity of research findings

Results and Discussions

Results

Understanding Milah Abraham in a Religious Context

Milah Abraham is a religious movement that claims to follow the teachings of the Prophet Abraham but with interpretations that deviate from mainstream Islamic understanding. The movement began to develop in Indonesia in the early 2000s and came under increasing public scrutiny after the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) declared it a cult. One of the central figures in the movement is Ahmad Musadeq, who 2006 declared himself an apostle.[35][36] Over time, Milah Abraham has

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[32] Lexy J Moleong, "Qualitative Research Methodology (Revised Edition)," 2019.

[33] R. Manurung, Dakwah Digital di Era Disrupsi: Kajian Media Sosial dan Penyebaran Ajaran Agama (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2022).

[34] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (Sage, 2020).

[35] A. Nasution, Gerakan Radikal di Indonesia: Sejarah dan Perkembangannya

continued to expand its influence through a community approach, particularly targeting individuals with economic and social backgrounds.[37]

In his da'wah activities, Milah Abraham quotes several Qur'anic verses such as QS Al-Furqan: 30, QS Al-An'am: 161, QS Ali Imran: 95, and QS An-Nahl: 123. These verses are interpreted to substantiate the claim that they are walking on the path of Prophet Ibrahim. However, their interpretations lead to a syncretic understanding that combines elements of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity and deviates from Islamic beliefs, especially regarding the concepts of prophethood and divinity.[38] In this case, they also emphasize the idea of 'hijra' as a form of total obedience to their spiritual leader and an attempt to build a new society that is considered more just and harmonious.

One of the main characteristics of this movement is the concentration of spiritual power in a single leader figure who is considered the source of absolute truth. This leader is not to be questioned and is the sole authority in religious interpretation. As a result, an exclusive community is formed that stays away from the general public.[39] Field studies show that followers are taught to avoid contact with the outside world, including family and relatives who are not in line, thus reinforcing radical and isolative attitudes within the group.[40]

Milah Abraham's propagation strategy is highly structured and utilizes a persuasive approach based on digital media. They actively use social media platforms to disseminate preaching content designed to touch potential followers' emotional, spiritual, and psychological sides.[41] Stories of "life transformation" are often used to attract sympathy, including narratives of life changes to become more peaceful and prosperous after joining the group. [42]This strategy has effectively

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(Bandung: Mizan, 2022).

[36] D. Setiawan, *Ajaran Sesat di Indonesia dan Tanggapan Pemerintah* (Malang: UMM Press, 2018).

[37] S. Rahman, Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Nabi Ibrahim dalam Kelompok Sesat (Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel, 2020).

[38] R. Masyhar, *Pemikiran Agama Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: UGM Press, 2016).

[39] M. Hidayat, *Dinamika Rekrutmen dan Radikalisasi dalam Gerakan Keagamaan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Azhar, 2019).

[40] S. Jones, *Radical Movements in Southeast Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

[41] R. Alamsyah, *Strategi Propaganda Digital dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Perekrutan Ekstremis* (Bandun: ITB Publisher, 2022).

[42] R. Alamsyah, *Strategi Propaganda Digital dan Pengaruhnya terhadap*

attracted many people, including academics and young professionals.[43]

Based on interviews with former Milah Abraham followers in Palembang, it was found that they mainly joined because of the promise of economic prosperity and the hope of a more harmonious social life. One interviewee said he was experiencing economic and social stress before joining, and Milah Abraham's teachings seemed to be a spiritual solution. Another interviewee revealed that the community offered an emotionally and spiritually supportive environment. Over time, however, they realized there were deviations from the teachings, especially regarding prophethood and absolute obedience to leaders.

These former followers eventually left after receiving guidance from local religious leaders and the mainstream Islamic community. The process of leaving the group was not easy, as many of them experienced psychological distress after leaving. They lose direction and identity and require intensive social and spiritual support to reintegrate into society.

Interviews with religious leaders in Palembang indicate that Milah Abraham has a systematic recruitment system. They actively approach individuals experiencing an identity crisis or facing economic difficulties. The methods used are very subtle and emotional, offering a new understanding of life that is claimed to be more meaningful. Several figures mentioned that the spread of this understanding could damage the religious and social structure if not immediately anticipated.

Observations of the Milah Abraham community show that they run an organization with a closed hierarchical system. The followers have to undergo rigorous rituals and rules of life. They also implement an internal economic system that restricts transactions with outsiders and often conduct secret meetings in remote locations to avoid surveillance. External communication is highly controlled, and only specific individuals can interact with the outside society.

Attachment to this community is very high. Many former followers have difficulty readjusting to everyday life. They are used to a life fully controlled by the community structure. This study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive rehabilitative approach for those who leave the community to avoid being drawn back into the same mindset.

From a religious perspective, Milah Abraham's deviant teachings

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Perekrutan Ekstremis (Bandun: ITB Publisher, 2022). .

[43] J. Smith, *Sociology of Religious Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

cover all aspects of creed, sharia, and faith. They form a new paradigm that has the potential to be a threat to the unity of the ummah. This research found that the teachings of Milah Abraham have caused significant social unrest in several regions, including Palembang.

Previous research has discussed the Gafatar group, which is considered an affiliate of Milah Abraham. As researched by Hasan Almutahar, Gafatar, social programs such as food self-sufficiency in Kalimantan, initially appeared to be a social movement.[44] However, in-depth observations show that behind the movement are deviant teachings that endanger the people's faith. The community's rejection of Gafatar shows a collective awareness of the latent dangers of groups like this.

People see that this movement is not only a social problem but also an ideological problem. Milah Abraham's teachings contradict the interpretation of the Qur'an adopted by Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah. They interpret sharia as "sunatullah" in a sense that deviates from Islamic law. Therefore, it is feared that the understanding and spread of Milah Abraham's teachings will become a time bomb that destroys the religious order of society if not dealt with seriously.

By looking at the group's communication patterns, recruitment strategies, and internal structure, this study concludes that a preventive approach based on religious education and persuasive communication is needed. Legal repressive efforts are not enough if they are not accompanied by education that can build people's spiritual resilience. This research also shows the importance of energy between religious leaders, the government and civil society in tackling the spread of deviant teachings such as Milah Abraham.

Communication Patterns in Recruitment of Milah Abraham Followers

Milah Abraham's recruitment of followers is done strategically and systematically through personal approaches and small group discussions such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This approach utilizes potential followers' emotional and psychological bonds to build community loyalty. In addition, recruitment methods also use social networks, both in person and through digital platforms, that provide

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[44] Hasan Al Mutahar, "Penyebab Konflik Antara Pengikut Gerakan Fajar Nusantara (Gafatar) dengan Masyarakat Mempawah Timur," *Sociohumaniora* 19, no. 1 (2017): 18-20.

exclusive discussion spaces for potential members.

In general, Milah Abraham's recruitment process consists of three main stages:

1. Moral Promise (Bai'at)

This initial stage is the moral commitment of individuals interested in joining the Milah Abraham community. In this stage, prospective members show their seriousness to follow the teachings and principles taught. This moral pledge usually includes a willingness to follow the group's rules, procedures, and values.

Interview and Observation Results: Some former members revealed that these moral pledges are often taken in a solemn and psychologically charged atmosphere. Prospective members are taken through an intense and emotional discussion session, which makes them feel accepted and gives them a new meaning in life. Observations show that the pledge ritual is conducted in private, with the oath being recited in the presence of the group leader.

These commitments form the foundation of relationships between members and strengthen internal community solidarity. In addition to being a guide in resolving conflicts, moral pledges also create a sense of collective responsibility that maintains togetherness and harmony within the group.

2. Promise of Loyalty

This stage is awarded to members with high loyalty and active involvement. The Pledge of Allegiance is a form of deep commitment to the values and goals of the community, as well as readiness to devote themselves to the shared vision.

Interview and Observation Results: Interviews showed that members at this stage usually undergo loyalty tests, including performing specific tasks to prove loyalty. Observations show that they begin to gain access to organizational structures and are given more responsibility.

The Pledge of Allegiance is not only symbolic but also recognizes the dedication of members. They are expected to lead by example and maintain the group's reputation. This loyalty must be taken seriously to continue the group's mission and as a key pillar of the community's internal values.

3. PKU (Usaha Power of Attorney Holder) Promise

This is the highest stage in the group structure, given to trusted members to manage and lead the organization. They are responsible for strategic decision-making, including expansion, recruitment, and fundraising.

Interview and Observation Results: Former power of attorney holders stated that their role was central in determining the direction of the movement. They have exclusive access to strategic information and receive extraordinary leadership and organizational doctrine training. Observations show they are also in charge of external relations with partners and the community.

This role requires managerial skills, high integrity, and sensitivity to social dynamics. They are the face of the community to the public and are responsible for the welfare of members internally.

Based on data from the West Kalimantan Regional Police, at least 5,636 ex-Gafatar followers have been identified.[45] Recruitment targets low-income communities and reaches academics, medical personnel, and officials. Some of the main factors that cause vulnerability to recruitment are:

a. Weak religious literacy, especially in understanding authentic Islamic teachings, makes individuals more vulnerable to distorted interpretations and ideological manipulation. [46]

b. Economic crises and employment difficulties are often the main motivating factors for people to look for alternatives that are perceived to provide financial and social stability, so they are more receptive to the welfare promises made by these groups.[47]

c. Disillusionment with government policies, especially in economic and social aspects, makes individuals who feel they are not getting attention from the state more vulnerable to the propaganda of groups that offer instant solutions. [48]

d. The search for spiritual solutions due to personal problems, such as the loss of family members, uncertainty in life, and feelings of social

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[45] Direktur Pembinaan Masyarakat Polda Kalimantan Barat, Laporan Identifikasi Eks Pengikut Gafatar (Pontianak: Polda Kalimantan Barat, 2016).

[46] S. Yusanto, A., & Hidayat, Radicalism and Religious Literacy (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2019).

[47] T. Wahyudi, *Faktor Agama dan Ekonomi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Islam, 2021).

[48] R. Alamsyah, *Strategi Propaganda Digital dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Perekrutan Ekstremis* (Bandun: ITB Publisher, 2022).

alienation, is also a dominant factor in recruiting new members.[49,50]

Interview and Observation Results: Former members revealed that propaganda was tailored to the emotional state of potential members. The community was portrayed as a "new home" that offered security and life solutions. Observations showed a significant shift in mindset after attending several group discussions and indoctrination sessions.

Based on the above findings, some preventive strategies that can be implemented include:

a. Strengthening Religious Literacy: Providing in-depth and critical religious education to equip individuals with a solid understanding of Islamic teachings.

b. Social Welfare Improvement: Addressing economic factors that make individuals vulnerable to welfare promises from certain groups.

c. Increased Government Engagement: Increase public trust in government through policies that are responsive to the needs of the people.

d. Provision of Psychosocial Support**:** Provides counseling and support services for individuals experiencing a spiritual or social crisis.

Strategies to Prevent Milah Abraham in Palembang

Efforts to prevent the spread of Milah Abraham in Palembang are carried out through various strategies that involve collaboration between government agencies, religious leaders, communities, and educational institutions. These strategies include:

1. Socialisation and Education

The Palembang City Government and Kesbangpol Agency are actively socializing and educating students and the general public about the dangers of deviant teachings. These activities are conducted through seminars, workshops, and campaigns to raise public awareness of the importance of maintaining diversity and tolerance. The government also cooperates with religious institutions and community organizations to convey a deep understanding of national values and diversity. These

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[49] M. Rahmat, *Dinamika Gerakan Keagamaan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017).
[50] J. Smith, *Sociology of Religious Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

efforts are expected to strengthen people's ideological resilience so that deviant teachings do not easily influence them.[51]

Observations showed high community participation in this socialization activity, especially from the campus and youth communities. Several seminar participants said they now better understand how to recognize deviant teachings and avoid radicalism propaganda.

However, challenges remain, particularly regarding the lack of understanding of online ideological dissemination. For this reason, additional training on digital literacy is needed so that people can be more critical and selective in filtering information from the internet.

In addition, collaboration with the mass media is also an essential part of disseminating correct information about radicalism. The support of various parties is needed to strengthen social resilience amidst the diversity of Palembang society. This synergy is the foundation for maintaining harmony and peace in the city.

2. Strengthening the Role of Religious Leaders

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Palembang actively encourages preachers and scholars to strengthen the understanding of the people's faith and provide guidance to individuals vulnerable to the influence of deviant teachings. [52]Training and workshops are regularly conducted for religious leaders so that they can convey the correct understanding of religion and detect early indications of radicalism. In interviews, some ulama stated that they are now better prepared to face the challenges of modern da'wah. Using social media to spread moderate da'wah is considered very effective.

However, obstacles remain, especially in reaching groups exposed to radical ideologies. For this reason, a personal and persuasive approach is needed so that they can return to a straight and tolerant understanding of religion. MUI's religious programs also strengthen moderate and tolerant values, which are socialized through seminars, public discussions, and online media. The hope is that people can be more open to the diversity of beliefs and not easily provoked by extreme calls.

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[51] R. Fauzan, *Strategi Pemerintah dalam Menghadapi Gerakan Keagamaan yang Menyimpang* (Jakarta: National Publisher, 2023).

[52] Z. Alwi, *Peran Ulama dalam Menangkal Paham Keagamaan yang Menyimpang* (Bandung: Mizan, 2021).

This effort is essential in instilling Islamic values that are rahmatan lil 'alamin while preventing religious-based social conflicts. With a deep and proper religious understanding, the people of Palembang are expected to be wiser in responding to sensitive issues.

3. Increased Community Vigilance

The involvement of neighborhood, village, and police officers in social monitoring is integral to the prevention strategy. Cooperation with religious and community leaders is key in tackling radicalism early on.[53]

From the observation, in some urban villages, an "ideological signaling" program has been implemented, where the community actively reports suspicious activities that can potentially spread extreme teachings. Interviews with neighborhood heads and officials show that the involvement of residents in this monitoring is quite effective. However, public awareness in some neighborhoods still needs to be improved, especially among people who lack access to valid information. For this reason, a broader and more equitable socialization and an inclusive approach for all levels of society is needed.

Concrete steps such as training officials, establishing monitoring teams, and educative campaigns must continue. The government also needs to strengthen the policy of legal action against radical groups, accompanied by community development, to be more aware of the dangers of deviant ideologies. Support between agencies and the role of the media in conveying the national narrative must also be improved. All elements of society must join hands to maintain the stability and peace of Palembang City from the threat of radicalism.

4. Mentoring and Rehabilitation

For former followers of Milah Abraham, the government and relevant organizations provide psychological, social, and economic assistance to support the process of reintegration into society. [54] Interviews with some former followers showed they felt helped, especially in the social and financial aspects. Some have found new jobs and have been accepted by their neighbors. However, they still face social stigma that hinders full recovery.

Therefore, socialization efforts in the community are needed so

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[53] M. Syamsuddin, *Kebijakan Pemerintah dalam Menghadapi Aliran Sesat* (Malang: UIN Press, 2018).

[54] T. Rahman, *Islam dan Gerakan Keagamaan Baru* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Studies Press, 2020).

that they can accept former followers as part of the community. Family engagement is also significant. Observations show that families who are actively involved in rehabilitation are better able to provide adequate emotional and spiritual support.

This mentoring programme is considered strategic to break the chain of radicalism. Through continuous mentoring, former followers can rebuild their confidence and find a more productive life purpose. In addition, with a humane and sustainable approach, they can overcome trauma and social pressure. The ultimate goal is to create individuals who can contribute positively to Palembang society and not fall back into deviant teachings.

Based on in-depth interviews with Kesbangpol and MUI Palembang, the most effective strategy is to increase the number of Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah preachers at the local level. This approach is carried out through religious activities in the village and neighborhood, such as the morning recitation in the congregation, which is held regularly every weekend. The head of the neighborhood has an essential role in encouraging residents to participate in religious activities that strengthen faith and narrow the space for the spread of deviant views.

In education, the strategy is carried out by instilling an understanding of Pancasila and diversity on a massive scale, from basic education to higher education. This aligns with Suhari's findings from PGRI Adi Buana University Surabaya that Pancasila morality at an early age is the main fortress in dealing with deviant ideologies and preventing anarchist actions.[55]

The role of parents as the first educators at home is also crucial. In Muliana's research, it is mentioned that early education in the family environment can shape children's behaviour that is better and spiritually and socially stable. Therefore, the author suggests that moral and adab education starts at home with parents as the leading actors.

With a comprehensive and continuous educational, social, and rehabilitative collaboration, the spread of Milah Abrahamism in Palembang is expected to be effectively prevented. This strategy not only targets followers, but also strengthens the community to be immune to infiltration of extreme ideologies.

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[55] Suhari Suhari et al., "Pencegahan Radikalisme melalui Pemahaman Ideologi Pancasila dan Budaya Sadar Hukum," *Manggali* 1, no. 2 (2021): 196, https://doi.org/10.31331/manggali.v1i2.1774.

Discussion

Understanding Milah Abraham as a deviant religious entity shows how a group can shape an ideological narrative by wrapping it in a spiritual framework. Their teachings tend to blur the boundaries between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism by reclaiming the prophetic mission in a context that has been closed according to the Islamic creed. Concepts such as 'social tawhid' and 'kingdom of God' that they bring to the table violate the tenets of Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah, particularly the finality of prophethood and the authority of revelation. Edyar states that radicalism often grows from narrow interpretations of sacred verses without regard to the context and history of revelation and tends to reject the authoritative traditions of Islam that have been established in the ulama community.[56]

Milah Abraham does not spread its teachings openly in public but instead uses a very interpersonal and gradual approach. Their communication pattern focuses on an emotional and personalized approach through small, closed group discussions. They use persuasive interpersonal communication to instil ideological narratives in potential members subtly. This communication strategy aligns with Kholid's findings that small group communication is very effective in building psychological and ideological attachments to the group.[57] Their recruitment process is gradual, ranging from moral and loyalty pledges to becoming a Power of Attorney Holder, with each stage becoming more structurally and psychologically binding.

On the other hand, the spread of Milah Abraham's ideology is done strategically through social media and digital content that touches individuals' emotional and spiritual aspects. They do not immediately convey ideological teachings in full but gradually use narratives of the meaningfulness of life, spiritual crisis, and social neglect experienced by potential followers. Shalihin explains that radical ideological groups often exploit individuals' dissatisfaction with the existing social system to form new loyalties based on group doctrine.[58]

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[56] Busman Edyar, "Radikalisme Agama, Jihad dan Terorisme," *AJIS* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1-24.

[57] Muhammad Kholid, "Pola Komunikasi Keagamaan pada Komunitas Khilafatul Muslimin di Indonesia," *Ath-Thariq: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 5, no. 2 (2021): 149-61.

[58] Nurus Salihin, "Understanding the Radicalism Movement in Indonesia: A Conflict Approach to the Rise of Terrorism," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017).: 25-48.

In response, through Kesbangpol and MUI, the Palembang City Government has implemented various prevention strategies, such as socializing the dangers of radicalism, involving religious leaders, and strengthening digital literacy among students. This strategy is quite effective in suppressing the space for deviant groups to move, although there is still limited understanding of the indicators of deviant teachings in some areas. Subhan stated that moderate Islamic preaching needs to adapt to the times, including utilizing social media to deliver friendly and contextual Islamic messages.[59]

Educational institutions also play an essential role in building the ideological resilience of society. The implementation of multicultural education and the value of diversity in schools is an early bulwark against the spread of deviant ideologies. Oktori asserts that tolerance-based Islamic education can prevent the growth of the seeds of radicalism.[60] This is reinforced by Suhari's research, which suggests instilling Pancasila morals early on as the foundation of character education and nationalism.[61]

It is also important to note that community involvement in programs such as "ideological signaling" has been an effective local instrument for early detection of the spread of deviant views. The involvement of neighborhood associations, villages, and community leaders proves that grassroots community engagement is crucial to successful prevention strategies. Rizak emphasized that good intercultural and interfaith communication at the local level can strengthen social cohesion and prevent ideological polarization.[62]

In addition to prevention, rehabilitating former followers is integral to the humanistic approach to radicalism. Interviews in this study show that many ex-followers feel helped by mentoring programs that target social, economic, and spiritual aspects. Mufid emphasized the importance of a rehabilitative approach to prevent relapse or re-engagement with radical groups. However, the biggest challenge remains

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[59] Hadi Subhan, "Pola Komunikasi Dakwah Mui di Indonesia pada Era Society 5.0," Al-Tsiqoh: Jurnal Ekonomi dan Dakwah Islam 8, no. 1 (2023): 34-51.

[60] Agus Riyan Oktori, "Multicultural-Based Islamic Education As The Foundation To Reduce Attitudes Of Religious Radicalism," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 49-66.

[61] Suhari Suhari et al., "Pencegahan Radikalisme melalui Pemahaman Ideologi Pancasila dan Budaya Sadar Hukum," *Manggali* 1, no. 2 (2021): 196, https://doi.org/10.31331/manggali.v1i2.1774.

[62] Mochamad Rizak, "Peran Pola Komunikasi Antarbudaya dalam Mencegah Konflik Antar Kelompok Agama," Jurnal Komunikasi Islam 3, no. 1 (2018): 88-104.

in the social stigma hindering their reintegration.[63]

The involvement of women in the prevention process cannot be ignored. In the family context, women's role as caregivers and first educators provides an excellent opportunity to shape ideological resilience from an early age. Isabella and Periansyah show that women's active participation in religious and social activities can strengthen family resilience to radicalism.[64]

Theoretically, this research enriches the study of religious group communication and ideological radicalism by highlighting interpersonal communication patterns and digital strategies for spreading ideology. This research contributes to formulating community-based radicalism prevention policies and spiritual literacy. Pribadi et al. mentioned that the success of radicalism prevention is highly dependent on systematic and collaborative strategic management, especially in education and local communities.[65]

However, the main weakness of this study is the limited access to the internal structure of the Milah Abraham group and the lack of in-depth exploration of internal ideological dynamics. Further research is recommended to use an ethnographic approach or participatory methods to capture the cultural and psychological nuances of the group entirely. In addition, further exploration of digital-based prevention strategies in the post-pandemic era is essential to adjust the da'wah and education approach in today's digital society.

Conclusion

This research found that Milah Abraham's group communication pattern effectively recruits members. A massive, structured, organized strategy in various layers of society supports this effectiveness. The group also systematically utilizes potential members' weak points to spread their ideology. The main contribution of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the communication strategies of religious groups in spreading deviant ideologies. The findings enrich the

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[63] Ahmad SyafiÇÖi Mufid, "Radikalisme Agama dan Terorisme, Penyebab dan Upaya Pencegahannya," Harmoni 12, no. 1 (2013): 7-17.

[64] Isabella Isabella and Periansyah Periansyah, "Peningkatan Partisipasi Perempuan dalam Mencegah Radikalisme dan Terorisme di Kota Palembang," Jurnal Abdimas Mandiri 5, no. 1 (2021): 37-43.

[65] Mas Agung Pribadi et al., "Manajemen Strategi Pencegahan Radikalisme pada Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam di Kota Metro," Pendidikan Islam: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam 12, no. 02 (2023): 2059-2076.

study of group and persuasive communication and can be used as a reference in developing da'wah strategies and radical ideology prevention policies. Practically, the results of this study are helpful for the government, religious leaders, and educational institutions to formulate a more effective communication approach to counteracting the spread of similar ideologies. The weakness of this research lies in the limited sample and the lack of access to internal group data, so it has not been able to describe the internal dynamics fully. Therefore, it is recommended that further research use ethnographic approaches and in-depth interviews and focus on prevention strategies that are more adaptive and contextualized. With this combination of findings, the research enriches the literature on the spread of ideology and builds a foundation for more strategic prevention policies in the future.

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