

# Social media as a medium for preventing radicalization (A case study of an Indonesian youth community's counter-radicalization initiatives on Instagram)

Ridwan Effendi, Vidi Sukmayadi,  
Andi Alimuddin Unde, and Triyanto

## Abstract

This paper explores how an Indonesian national youth community uses social media as a radicalization prevention medium. In this paper, the Indonesian youth community's applied online interventions are explored and evaluated through a mixed-method approach, using a qualitative case study and visual content analysis. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews and analyzed visual content outputs, focusing on the social media strategy enacted to create counter-radicalization narratives, and measuring social media engagement rates as a means of evaluating that strategy. This paper extends existing counter-radicalization studies by adding insights on how youth community-based social media initiatives could contribute as a non-coercive approach in combating radicalization.

Keywords: Counter-radicalization, Duta Damai, Indonesia, Social Media, Youth Community

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## Introduction

Religious-based radicalization has been regarded as a global threat in the past two decades (Affan, 2018; Ghosh et al., 2016; Kfir, 2008). A review of metadata on radicalization indicated that more than 5000 scholarly studies have been published since 2015 (CrossRef, 2020). This issue has become a persistent problem worldwide, since the propagation of terror and radical ideas seems relentless. In fact, based on Statista records (2019), over 144,278 religious-driven (Islam fundamentalist) terrorist attacks were carried out globally, and an average of 21,000 people per year was killed by acts of terrorism between 2006 and 2019 (Statista, 2019). Moreover, a study by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2018) reported that despite ISIS's heavy losses in 2017 in Iraq and Syria, at least 120 other Islamic extremist groups remain active to incite and orchestrate attacks around the world.

As the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is also struggling to solve the problem of religion-inspired radical movements and the growing risk of radicalism. Among the aftereffects of the 1998 Post-Reformation period—characterized by political conflict, instability, and socio-economic deprivation—was the emergence of hard-liner and radical Muslim groups, which then became a striking phenomenon in Indonesia (Arifianto, 2018; Muzakki, 2004). The rise of the hard-liner Islamic fundamentalist groups is continuous, and their influence is increasing. They have continued to orchestrate hostile acts to show their existence in the years after the 1998 Indonesian reformation (Suzuki, 2017). Hence, Indonesia has worked with other countries, including the United States and Australia, to prosecute perpetrators of terrorism and to counter radicalization.

Clearly, the determined war against terror initiated by the United States and its allied countries has resulted in the elimination or arrests of prominent extremist group leaders, dismantling the logistical infrastructures and disabling its financial networks, among others (Kruglanski et al., 2014). The Indonesian government has implemented a similar effort by assembling “Detachment 88” as the Indonesian counter-terrorism squad. The squad was established after the 2002 Bali bombing, and the unit has had considerable success against the regional radicalization network and the act of terrors within the country.

However, in spite of these accomplishments, numerous scholars are not in agreement as to whether the threat of radicalization is over, and extremism with religious motives seems far from subsiding (Mignot-Mahdavi, 2019; Taddeo, 2010). Other approaches, rather than physical war, are needed to support the fight against radicalization. At this stage, the real challenge for us is to counter radicalization and prevent its seeds. In combating a hidden network of violent political extremists, repressive forces cannot be seen

as the only solution. There is a push for counter-radicalization initiatives to become less violent and more focused on preventive measures. As Arie Kruglanski et al. (2014) described, countering radicalization represents efforts to reduce commitment to the focal fundamentalist points or the touted means (such as violence and terrorism) of achieving ideological goals. For example, a person who is exposed to counter-radicalization content may think twice and grow disenchanted with the actions of one's leaders or the group's companions, so that the person will begin to doubt that the organization's activities and recognize that their ideology is not actually aligned with the core religious and political goals they are meant to represent.

Countering radicalization is known as soft power or non-coercive activities that are separate from more repressive, intelligence-based, and law enforcement-based approaches which concentrate on removing content, suspending accounts, or even prosecutions (Waldman & Verga, 2016). Many Islamic states and Muslim-majority countries have implemented non-repressive radicalization prevention measures. Those countries have implemented programs and policies designed to reduce the phenomenon of extremism through educational schemes and social campaigns.

In the case of Indonesian, the government expanded its social campaign effort by implementing an initiative to establish a youth community under the Indonesian counter-terrorism agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme or abbreviated as BNPT) to prevent radicalization on social media actively. This youth community is known as "Duta Damai" or Peace Ambassadors. The Duta Damai community was formed because today's social media platforms are playing an increasingly significant part in spreading religious-based radicalization. In response to this threat, governments are designing interventions to detect, understand, and counteract the impact of violent extremist recruitment materials on social media and other internet channels (Waldman & Verga, 2016).

An intervention in the form of Indonesian youth initiatives conducted by the Duta Damai community has become a model of preventing radicalization in the Southeast Asian region (Barton, 2018; Media Indonesia, 2019). As explained by the Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) deputy, adolescents are at an age when they are still figuring out their identity and ideological beliefs. Since they are digital natives, cyberspace has become their main path of seeking their self-identity. If, in the process, they are often exposed to violent narratives online, it will cause what is called "cyberspace self-radicalization" (Lubis as cited in Media Indonesia, 2019).

The Indonesian government realizes the importance of an online initiative to provide comparative narratives in cyberspace with positive

content and a message of peace in countering the seeds of radicalization. Thus, in 2016, the BNPT initiated the Duta Damai community to focus on spreading counter-radicalization narratives among the members of the younger generation by utilizing social media as the core medium. These initiatives have been widely studied by a number of scholars; however, this topic needs further investigation as the previous studies focused more on exploring the youths' role as peace ambassadors in the Duta Damai initiative (Achsin, 2020; Aisy et al., 2019; Yudhanto, 2018). To the authors' knowledge, very little work has been undertaken to focus on Duta Damai's social media content strategy and measure the online engagement rates as a point of reference and evaluation of the applied strategy.

Based on the rationale of the research needs and gap above, it is essential to profoundly understand social media intervention's implementation to counter radicalization narratives and ensure national security. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to explore the applied social media interventions of the Duta Damai community and to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness in terms of its online engagement rates to the audience. Then, to distill the research problem, the authors formulated the following research questions as the study guidelines:

- (1) What are the motives behind the establishment of the Duta Damai youth community?
- (2) In what ways do the members of the youth community implement their social media campaign?
- (3) How strong is the level of the community's social media engagement rates?

In answering these three research questions, a qualitative case study and visual content analysis were utilized as the methods of the study. It is expected that the findings can be the basis of recommendations for policymakers and researchers who are focusing on the role of the youth in utilizing social media platforms to sustain counter-radicalization narratives.

## **Literature Review**

### **Religious-based Radicalization and the Stigmatized Association with Islam**

A number of authors have defined radicalization. In brief, radicalization is a mechanism in which people establish radical beliefs and ideologies (Borum, 2011). Pete Lentini (2008) defines radicalization as a mechanism through which an individual or group adopts increasingly radical perspectives against a political, social, or religious status quo. In a more

technical definition, Alex Schmid (2013) conceptualized radicalization as a cycle of political and collective requiring the resignation of dialogue, tolerance, and agreement from polarized political actors and organizations. Then, they use either non-violent threats and coercion and various forms of political violence, including violent extremism such as war crimes and terrorism.

This is in line with the work of Gusfield Joseph (1972), who documented the history of religious-based radicalism in America and Europe in the early 20th century. His findings indicated that radical understandings of religious value were mostly consolidated through social and religious activism in organized movements and resulted in extremism or terrorism as the radicalism process's pinnacle. Terrorism or acts of violence as a result of radicalization are often associated with religious belief because religion has a power that exceeds even political, social, and cultural power (Rodin, 2016).

In the last two decades, radicalization and terrorism narratives are frequently framed and conflated with Islam. Initially, this framing was heavily influenced by the Al Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center tower on September 9, 2001, in the United States. Henceforth, the Western world's perspective toward the Muslim world has been eroded (Utami & Mudji, 2003). This situation worsened when other Islamic radical groups orchestrated multiple acts of terror in the following years, and continues to deteriorate to this day. Militant extremist groups such as ISIS (Syria), Boko Haram (Nigeria), Taliban (Afghanistan), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Southeast Asia), and Jamaah Islamiyah (Southeast Asia) have infamously become the main actors in provoking a state of terror among the public.

Unfortunately, in the aftermath of those terrorist attacks, global media played a role in framing religiously motivated radicalism as something closely related to Islam, resulting in a distorted perception of Islamic values (Norton, 2015). Consequently, the link between Islam, radicalization, and terrorism has become a global stigma and inevitably has a damaging impact on the image of Muslim-majority countries worldwide, including Indonesia.

## **The Roots of Radicalism in Indonesia**

Many scholars believe that the rise of radicalism in Indonesia started after the fall of the Indonesian new order era in 1998. The reformation era in 1998 opened the faucet of democratization in the country and became a fertile ground for the growth of radical Islamic groups (Fealy, 2004; Ummah, 2012). In addition, as an aftermath of the reformation era, there were two leading powers of Islam in Indonesia; liberal-moderate Islamic society and radical or fundamental Islamic society.

In the pre-reformation era, scholars and journalists were in agreement that Muslims in Indonesia are among the most tolerant and peaceful in the Islamic world. Even if Indonesia had Islamic radical groups, the authoritarian regimes of President Soekarno (1959-1966) and Soeharto (1966-1998) would keep them under strict monitoring (Nuryani, 2020). Stories, press coverage, or even images that suggest any involvement of Islamic extremists engaging in intimidating or violent activities were seldom found.

However, things have drastically changed since 1998. Strict government restrictions and prohibitions were lifted. The loose limitations on media freedom and the right to organize had led to a rapid multiplication of radical groups and growth of media (books, magazines, websites, and or social media) under the control of Islamic political or social activists who sought to reform the current state by practicing their ideological perspective of Islam. As described by Ariel Heryanto (2005), the emergence of radical groups resulted from the “state terrorism” practiced during the Indonesian New Order Era (1966-1998). A breath of air from decades of oppression has given Islamic radical groups the chance to fight for their believed causes.

The post-reformation era (after 1998) marked the rise of Islamic Populism in Indonesia, spearheaded by Islamic community organizations of which the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) become the most prominent. Populism, in this sense, is the use of religious values as justification for socio-political activism and identity politics in Indonesia (Mietzner, 2018). Moreover, the building of grassroots movements became one of the main strategies of the Islamic populists. Islamic Populism does not directly connect with religious-based terrorism, but its influence could become a trajectory for radicalization within the society (Jati, 2013). The influence and power of such movements are rooted in and mobilized from the grassroots level of society, primarily Indonesian blue collar workers and the Indonesian youth sector.

Concerning the youth and radicalization exposure, national security analyst Alto Labetubun (as cited in Deutsche Welle, 2018) argued that a prominent Indonesian religious-based political party had been nationally known for its penetration in Indonesian campuses to introduce their ideology to the students. In fact, Indonesian national intelligence Chief Budi Gunawan stated that 40 percent of Indonesian university students had been exposed to radical organizations (Nur Arifah, 2019). As a result, campuses are prone to become a haven for promoting religious-based radicalization among the youth.

Generally, there is nothing wrong with religion or being religious. As clarified by Sun Choirul Ummah (2012), radicalism is a movement initiated by individuals or groups dissatisfied by particular socio-political or socio-

historical phenomena. Thus, even though radical groups and Islamic populists have commodified and weaponized religious values, it is more precise to consider radicalism as a socio-political rather than religious phenomenon.

For the purpose of this study, the authors define “Islamic radicalization” as a form of interconnected traits as synthesized from the previous studies (Fealy, 2004; Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018; Ummah, 2012). Firstly, radicalization means that Islam must be enforced entirely and in its literal form as written in the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad’s examples (sunnah) without any compromise. The radical Islamic group will usually emphasize some specific part or verse in the Qur’an, explicitly addressing social affairs, devotions, and criminal penalties and stating that those must be implemented to the letter (Rahman et al., 2016). Secondly, radical groups are reactive toward forces that heavily secular, materialist, or deviationist. Their reactions are often loud, harsh, and, on occasions, lead to acts of intimidation. They tend to be hostile towards the status quo and see Islam’s fundamental teachings as providing the basis and the panacea for rebuilding both the society and government.

Fealy (2004) added that the term “radical” in Indonesia is a continuum, and the borderline between “radical Islam” and the nominally contiguous “moderate Islam” is blurred. Thus, it is suggested that the term “radical” and “radicalization” can be used in analyzing phenomena and developments in Islam. However, it should not be applied by disregarding individual differences or uncommon circumstances.

### **Indonesian Duta Damai Youth Community as a Response to Radicalization**

Radicalism is considered a threat to Indonesian national security. The government was motivated to react to this phenomenon by forming the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) as a non-governmental institution in 2010 following presidential direction number 46 in the year 2002. The establishment of the BNPT was a response to the Bali Bombing incident in Indonesia and the expansion of the elite counter-terrorism squad known as Detachment 88 (BNPT, 2010). The BNPT is an embodiment of the Indonesian police and military’s synergy in facing the threat of terrorism and radicalism, with both parties cooperating under the coordination of the BNPT to handle the threats. Aside from involving the Indonesian Police and Military, the BNPT also aims to educate and prepare the Indonesian youth to work together to counter radicalization.

It is known worldwide that within the last decade, the global rise of religious-based radicalization, particularly prevalent among young adults,

is now considered to be a fast-growing problem and a serious threat to the peace and security of the global community (Siegel et al., 2019; Verkuyten, 2018). As further illustrated in a study by Adrian Cherney (2020), Muslim youth (aged 12 to 19) have been implicated in Western terrorist plots. In the Indonesian setting, a national survey conducted by BNPT indicated that 37% of Indonesian youth agreed with jihad as a means of waging war against non-believers (Kumalasari, 2020). Those examples indicate that radical groups have been especially adept at recruiting the youth, appealing to a sense of solidarity and belonging in order to draw new members.

As a response to this threat, the Indonesian government has begun to reach out by setting up a youth community movement against radicalization known as Duta Damai (Achsin, 2020). In the era of continuous change, Duta Damai was formed as a way for the BNPT to spread counter-radicalization narratives in a way that will be accepted among the younger generation.

BNPT initiated the community in 2016. Duta Damai is a non-government community aimed mainly at reaching out to the Indonesian youth to provide them with peace education and awareness about radicalization threats. As recorded on one of their websites, currently, the community is spread across 13 provinces and has more than 800 peace ambassadors (Rohamna, 2018). The primary activities of Duta Damai are: conducting social media campaigns, advocating for peace, and spreading counter-radicalization narratives. In Indonesia, there is a high hope that this participatory approach toward the Indonesian youth can empower and actively contribute to preventing radicalization.

### **Youth, Social Media, and Their Role in Countering Radicalization**

In the context of the vulnerability of the youth, social media plays a significant role in recruiting new members and promoting radicalization (Cherney et al., 2020; Hafez & Mullins, 2015; Putra, 2017). Some examples of radicalization can be seen in Anna Erelle's (2015), Raessah Cachalia's (2016), and Santi Dwi Putri's (2019) reports on how ISIS uses Skype, Twitter, Facebook, and online messenger platforms to recruit disaffected youth worldwide. The same phenomenon happens in Indonesia, where radical group recruitments and propaganda were conducted via social media platforms. For example, online messenger apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram were exclusively used by radical groups to teach their new members how to make bombs and assign them to certain roles in the group.

Previous studies indicated that youth are more likely to engage with social media and other online platforms in comparison to adults charged with terrorism (Gill & Corner, 2015). In line with this, a study from Solahudin (2017), who interviewed 75 convicted terrorists, found that social media

played a catalytic role in the radicalization process during their adolescent life. The threat of online youth radicalization is becoming more imminent, given the growing role that social media now plays in establishing social ties and bonds with others, which has the potential to influence youth behaviors and attitudes (Cherney et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2020).

This situation forces policymakers to devise strategies to track, understand, and combat radicalism exposure on social media and the Internet. The high possibility of radical ideology spreading on social media should be handled and prevented by advocating counter-narratives on the same media (Ferguson, 2016).

Previous studies have shown how social media can be influential in tackling the threat. A study by Karen Greenberg (2016) described the United States initiative to prevent terrorism through social media by forming the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC). The institution was focused on detecting and countering provocations by Al-Qaeda and ISIS on social media. Social media interventions to counter radicalism have attracted numerous scholars to study the implementation of such measures in South Asia (Rashid, 2017), Southeast Asia (Hamidi, 2016) Malaysia has put in place its policy against terrorism and at the same time has passed two related legislations namely the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA, Northern America (Waldman & Verga, 2016), and East Africa (Avis, 2016). The involvement of youths and social media intervention is considered as an apposite preventive activity to counteract the exposure to violent extremist ideologies to create grassroots resistance to radical narratives (Waldman & Verga, 2016)

Previous works in this area are extensive but are primarily concerned with government-related policies and actions. In this regard, this paper can enrich the previous studies by focusing on exploring the youth community-based online initiative in preventing radicalization. This youth community (Duta Damai) is considered a pioneer in the region due to its initiation of a similar online initiative in Southeast Asia. Duta Damai formulated a framework for the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extreme (“RI Prakarsai Pertemuan ASEAN Cegah Radikalisasi dan Ekstremisme,” 2019). This case is a novelty within the region, as the youth created a nationwide community to carry counter-radicalization missions via social media.

## **Methodology**

This paper employs a mixed-methodological approach comprised of case studies (Yin, 2018), qualitative interview protocols (Brooks et al., 1996), visual content analysis, and social media engagement measurements

(Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). This approach combines both qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain more comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective data. As described by John Creswell (2013) “Mixed-method research occurs when the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study to gain a more comprehensive analysis” (p. 40).

The study focused on a case of online initiatives using social media designed by a government agency to counter radicalization in Indonesia. The case study explored the online counter-radicalization strategy initiated by the Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme) through the establishment of the Duta Damai Instagram campaign (@dutadamai.id).

### **Data Collection**

In collecting the data, the authors performed two steps. Firstly, the authors conducted qualitative interview protocols to explore the strategic online initiatives that the youth community has used. The data were gathered from five relevant informants based on homogeneous purposive sampling techniques, where the authors selected relevant individuals who share similar traits and expertise on the topic. Deddy Mulyana (2001) stated that purposive sampling’s main objective is not relying on quantity and generalization but focusing more on particular individuals that are of interest, which will best enable the researchers to answer the study questions.

Hence, two informants who serve as the leading content creators of the Duta Damai online campaign were interviewed. The next interviewees were the community’s senior figures involved in establishing the Duta Damai online initiative. As a form of data triangulation, the authors also interviewed an expert informant from the academic field related to deradicalization who can confirm or disconfirm the findings to ensure data validity. Each of the interviews took approximately one hour, and the process was audio recorded. The authors focused the interview questions on the following aspects of strategic communication: (1) determining the communication purposes, (2) studying the available resources to achieve the online campaign goals, and (3) finding out the evaluation process of the conducted strategy. These aspects were inspired and formulated based on Paul Argenti’s (2009) effective communication strategy aspects. The authors then continued to gather all of the data and elaborated them to the point of data saturation.

In the second phase of the data collection, the authors conducted visual content analysis to investigate how the counter-terrorism values are projected

via social media. Theo van Leeuwen (2004) described that images could be seen as representation sources and thus will display culturally produced messages. Furthermore, images can fulfill communicative functions as language does and are able to represent the existing social relationships between the images, content creators, and the audience (Serafineli, 2017). Subsequently, the authors analyzed all of the visual materials posted by the Duta Damai Instagram account from January to June 2020. Having a combination of interviews and social media materials provided the authors with rich and comprehensive data as a basis for analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the authors adapted case study data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for the interview materials and visual content data analysis (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004) for the social media content materials. The qualitative interview data were analyzed using interpretive qualitative analysis adapted from Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (1996), consisting of data reduction, data display, and verified conclusions. This analysis method offers the authors the opportunity to investigate and link the informants' insights and experiences regarding the online strategies they have practiced. The authors transcribed the result of the interviews, coded them, and categorized the codes into broader conceptual themes. These themes were then narrowed and organized chronologically according to the order in which they emerged.

Once the transcripts were coded and themes were identified, the authors moved on to the visual content analysis. The authors collected the visual data from the @dutadamai.id Instagram account. The gathered materials were then sorted and coded to identify the Instagram content's type and structure. As the next step, the author identified the frequency and type of denotative and connotative elements that emerged in both visual and written features of the Instagram visual composition. To assist the data analysis, the authors utilized MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software in the process of documenting, coding, categorizing, and analyzing the data.

Finally, to evaluate the "Duta Media" Instagram postings engagement among their audience, the authors measured the social media engagement rates by calculating the total approval actions and the total account followers to get the applause rate percentage. The measurement of the engagement rate is based on the following formula:

$$\text{total engagements on each post} / \text{total followers} * 100 \text{ (Mee, 2019)}$$

In ensuring the data's reliability, the authors established the inter-rater reliability (IRR) method by involving multiple coders to rate the authors' coding results. In this paper, the authors used the inter-rater measurement as formulated by Miles and Huberman (1994):

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Number of Agreements} + \text{Disagreements}}$$

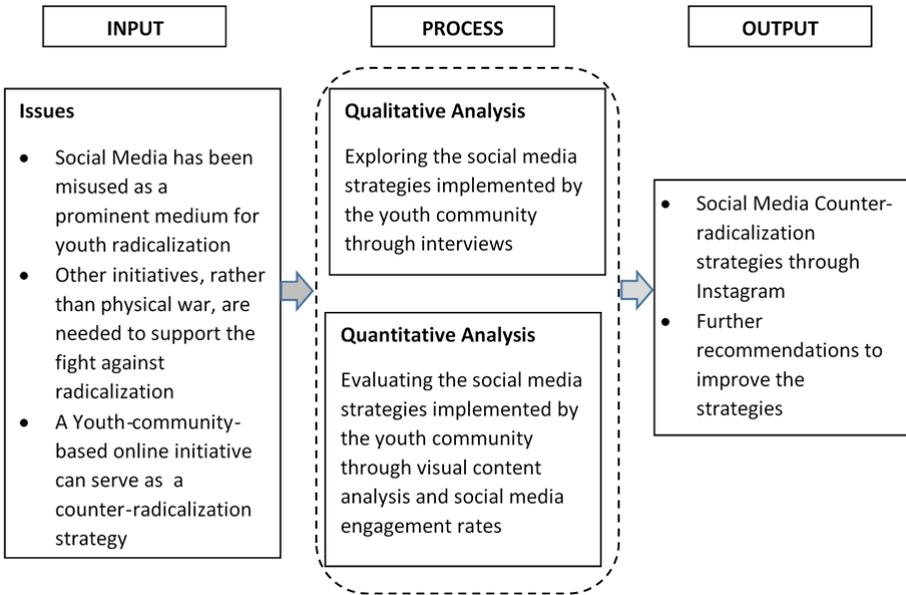
**Figure 1.** Inter-rater Reliability Formula

As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), an IRR of 80% agreement between coders on 95% of the resulted codes is considered as a sufficient agreement to mitigate the interpretative bias. In this study, the percentage of IRR for the coded categories agreement was 86%, which means it is considered suitable and can be used for further analysis.

Based on the description of the data analysis above, the authors used data source triangulation by converging various data sources to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The study findings were triangulated, beginning with cross-checking the Duta Damai's Instagram account, followed by measuring its Instagram engagement rates. Finally, researchers consulted with a national expert in the deradicalization field regarding the interview and measurement results, to evaluate the findings and strengthen data validity.

In terms of ethical considerations, the authors used the researchers' code of ethics issued by the Indonesian Researchers' Association (2019). The interviews and visual data gathering were conducted with all the necessary consent. During the interviews, the respected informants were informed of their rights as informants. Their anonymity was and is guaranteed. In this case, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form to guarantee their information safety and privacy.

In summary, the overall process and concept of the study are formulated in a conceptual framework (see Figure 2, below). The process illustrated is not intended to be prescriptive but, instead, to serve as guiding steps for the authors in achieving the study objectives.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Framework

## Findings and Discussions

In this section, the paper presents key findings from the semi-structured interviews and the social media engagement rates related to the Duta Damai Instagram initiatives as the case study. The analysis is structured in three parts. First, the analysis focuses on the community's foundational motivation to start their campaign to respond to radicalization threats. Secondly, it describes how the Duta Damai youth community formulated their counter-radicalization narratives on their Instagram account. Finally, it evaluates their Instagram postings to see how high the level of engagement rates toward the community's online audience.

### Motivations behind the Duta Damai establishment and its Instagram movement as a counter-radicalization initiative.

The study identified two essential motivations for starting their online counter-radicalization campaign based on the interviews with the central figures of the Duta Damai community. First, since social media can be misused as a medium of radicalization, the youth as the digital natives need to be prepared to face the threats. As stated by RR as the community's chief, Indonesian youths are prone to radicalization narratives on social media. Hence, initiating a nationwide youth community was considered the appropriate step to prepare them to influence other youths with the knowledge to set up a mental "firewall" against radicalization narratives.

Matters concerning radicalization are of great concern to everyone, and those in the youth sector are among the most targeted and the most vulnerable. In any case, younger generations are often at the center of conflicts within society, including those pertaining to radicalization issues. The targeting of youths by radicalization movements (Sidik, 2019) has become the main trigger of the Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Agency to reach out to the youth to enable them to protect as well as educate themselves and their peers.

The interview with the community advisor from the Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) showed that the agency reached out to the youth so they can be the promoters of radicalization prevention in a way that is acceptable and effective for the Indonesian younger generation. BA, an informant narrates:

It would've been better if the youth become the main promoter of the initiative. They (the youth) know what they are doing, and they are very familiar with the digital world. That makes them the right persons to spread the words in a way that can be accepted by the audience of their generation. That is why we gave them full responsibility and the belief to do the online initiatives' strategic implementation. The agency just set the general framework, and let the Duta Damai do their job with their own way.

The statement was also supported by the leading social media content creator of Duta Damai as the study's key informant. HS as the content creator stated that Duta Damai has full responsibility for the operation and has its own independent work plan to prevent radicalization. This responsibility becomes their form of active participation in the prevention of radicalization and the promotion of peace.

Furthermore, the concept of "grassroots resistance" arose in discussions with the key informants as the other motivation for starting the youth initiatives. The positioning of young people in society as future leaders affects their role in building resistance toward external threats such as radicalization. The coordinator for Duta Damai proposed that the youth could contribute to social peace and tolerance narratives to audiences of their own age groups. As added by BA, Such a community would be the foundation for the youth to ensure that peace and tolerance can be internalized within the Indonesian society, allowing grassroots resistance will grow stronger against radicalization threats.

In relation to the BA's statement, The United Nations Statistics on World Population Prospects calculate that globally there are 1.3 billion

young people between the ages of 15-24 years old, and approximately 80% of them live in developing countries where conflicts and acts of terror are more likely to occur (Alpaslan, 2016; The United Nations, 2019). Hence, the BNPT strategy in reaching out to youth and preparing them to be the promoters of peace and tolerance is considered a process of building a grassroots resistance for the current and future Indonesian society.

In supporting the cause, the Duta Damai community uses social media platforms, particularly Instagram, to highlight their actual fieldwork and to help convey their counter-radicalization narratives to the world. The informant described the use of Instagram as “go[ing] with the flow,” since Instagram is known as the fastest growing social media in Indonesia and has become the most popular platform for Indonesian millennials (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020; Purwaningtyas & Alicya, 2020). Since almost every Indonesian adolescent is connected through the platform, we can use it to mitigate the potential process of radicalization. For that reason, Instagram was chosen by the Duta Damai community as the forefront medium in implementing the social media campaign to the Indonesian youth.

The Duta Damai community believes that social media platforms can be used to facilitate peace by encouraging valuable online dialogues and spreading messages to people from different religious, ethnic, and political backgrounds. As Waldman and Verga (2016) described, online discussions and messages of peace can change perceptions, alter attitudes, encourage tolerance and mutual understanding between multicultural social media users. In other words, when social media is used appropriately, it can be used with great potential in terms of promoting counter-radicalization narratives. (For a summary of these findings, see Table 1.)

**Table 1.** Motivations Led to Duta Damai Social Media Campaign

<b>Motivations Led to Duta Damai Social Media Campaign</b>	
<b>Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
Motivations for setting up the youth community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online radicalization is a growing threat for the youth</li> <li>• Building “grassroots resistance” as the reason for starting the youth initiatives</li> <li>• The youth as digital natives need to start involved as the initiator and the leading promoter of peace and tolerance</li> </ul>
Motivations for empowering the social media campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Media can expand the reach of spreading counter-radicalization narratives</li> <li>• Social Media considered as an acceptable and effective way to educate The Indonesian youth in setting their “mental firewall” against radicalization</li> </ul>

Motivations for using Instagram as the mediating instrument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instagram is the most popular social media for the Indonesian youth</li> <li>• The visual features of Instagram help to mitigate the potential process of radicalization</li> </ul>
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### Implementing the Instagram Preventing-Radicalization Campaign

The study findings demonstrate that social media, particularly Instagram, is a significant strategic platform that goes beyond borders and targets specific audiences according to the audience’s needs as an information dissemination tool. More than one billion people are currently using Instagram and sharing an average of 95 million photos and videos a day (Newberry, 2020). Hence this platform can be used to magnify the radicalization prevention narratives.

Based on the data analysis, the authors have identified four primary strategic communication efforts implemented by the Duta Damai youth community:

- 1) *Online Direct Engagement.* The community performed the engagement by actively asking their members and the audience to send their writings and opinions about certain topics such as tolerance, moderate, critical thinking, and media literacy. As confirmed by the community’s content creator, Duta Damai has been posting their online articles frequently on Instagram and including hyperlinks it to their website. It is known that frequent posting on social media serves as one of the strategies for maintaining brand awareness (Ramakhrisnan, 2020). Doing direct engagement could open up a social networking capability that facilitates audience interaction with the community brand (Bolos et al., 2016). The community also publishes posts relevant to current issues, engaging in the online discussion of such topics in order to stay updated and connected with their followers.
- 2) *The visual storytelling of radicalization prevention narratives.* Of the content posted by Duta Damai, 80% are in the form of infographics, motion graphics, and visual notes. Based on the Interviews and visual analysis, the details of the published narratives on Instagram can be seen in the following table:

**Table 2.** Description of Duta Damai Instagram Content

Categories	Frequency (%)	Description
Current Issues	31.90	This category refers to content related to actual news or issues that happened in Indonesia or internationally. This strategy is used to attract the audience with novel information and to indicate that the community is active on social media.

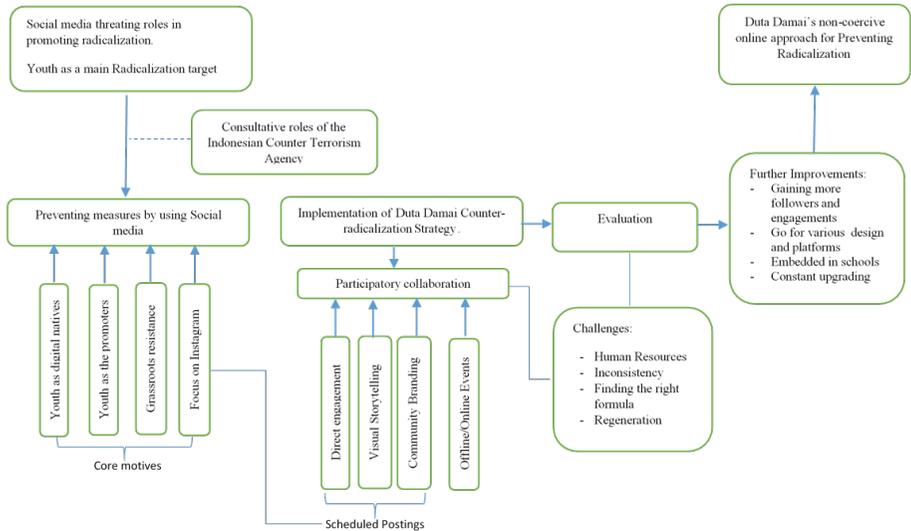
Promoting Tolerance and Diversity	22.38	This category includes quotes, videos, and jargon regarding the importance of tolerance and maintaining diversity in Indonesia.
Community Activities	20.48	This category includes the community's online and offline activities. This strategy is used to strengthen the community's online presence as well as to build audience engagement. Some example of this strategy are: daily community activities, offline meeting invitations, online seminars, giveaways, writing, and video competitions.
Awareness on Radicalization	17.62	Awareness of radicalization was introduced by displaying examples of radicalization narratives. They then educated the audience on how to respond to this threat. A "war against fake news" (fact-checking content) is also displayed here since fake news and disinformation are known as one of the approaches used by radical groups in influencing their target audience.
Nationalism	7.62	Content pertaining to Indonesian history, patriotism quotes, commemoration of national days, and quick facts were used as the core content in promoting nationalism.

The community's content creator, QK, explained that Indonesian youths are interested in seeing postings with aesthetic visuals and concise, which is why visual storytelling values are often incorporated in their posts (QK, Personal Communication, 2020). Another beneficial feature of implementing visual storytelling in social media postings is that it can draw greater attention from a wider audience. The visual depiction in the form of infographics has heuristic appeal to those with less interest and those who are less conscious of the information included, so that it can contribute to a more favorable assessment of the information (Lee & Kim, 2016).

- 3) *Community Branding*. Since Duta Damai is considered a newly formed youth community, promoting its brand becomes part of its campaign. By frequently posting their events and organizational activities and the counter-radicalization narratives, the community tries to build a growing audience by projecting their fundamental values and allowing the audience (followers) to participate in these values. In line with this, studies by Vukasovič (2013) and Yahya (2019) have indicated that social media users spend more time and stay up-to-date on the postings of an account due to its significant brand promoting content and audience engagement.
- 4) *The integration of online and offline publicity*. In creating more engagement and strengthening the Duta Damai presence, the community adds offline events to their online activities. The study

informant stated, “If you want to get more people into your social media, highlight the experience!” (QK, Personal Communication, 2020). Members of the community visit schools and organize events involving public attendance. Hence, this strategy could expand social exposure and help to increase the community brand’s online visibility.

In essence, the operational implementation of Duta Damai’s Instagram initiative is illustrated in the following diagram:



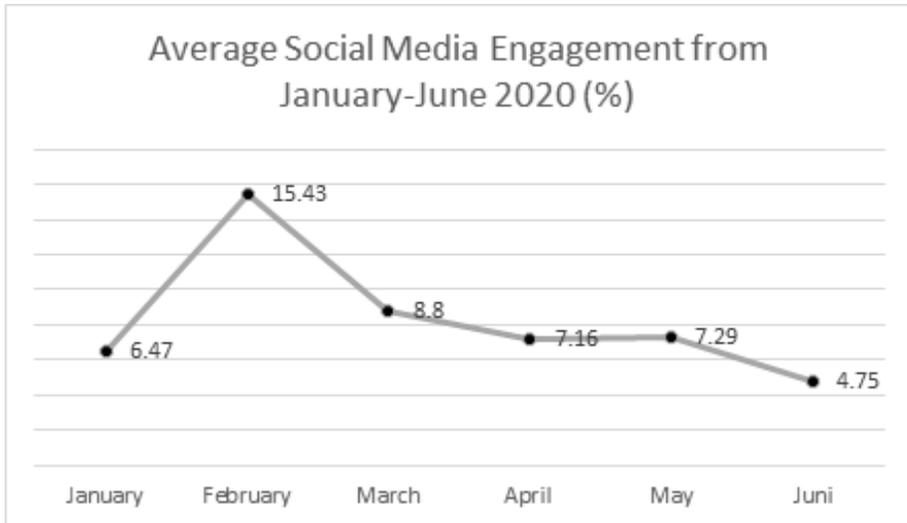
**Figure 3.** Duta Damai’s Instagram counter-radicalization Campaign

Based on the interviews, in applying the campaign, the community is still facing challenges such as lack of funding, understaffing, and schedule inconsistencies—in general, they are still looking for the right formula to be more influential. Despite these challenges, the community will keep thriving by evaluating its strategy regularly and reaching out to various youth communities to work together to prevent radicalization.

### Evaluating Duta Damai Instagram engagement rates

The authors evaluated Duta Damai’s social media strategies by measuring the engagement rates of the Instagram content produced by the community. Improving social media engagement rates means so much more than just receiving comments, likes, or gaining new followers. Instead, it is a measurement of how many people are paying attention to and interacting with the community brand and content on a daily basis. By focusing on building social media engagement, a brand will benefit from a better promotion reach and greater brand awareness, and arguably will have a more significant impact on the audience. Thus, the authors analyzed how

the community's Instagram posting strategy affected viewer engagement, as described in the following line graph.



**Figure 4.** @dutadamaijabar Social Media Engagement (citation?).

The graph above shows that the average social media engagement from January until June 2020 was 8.31% (citation?). The data also indicates that the Instagram account @dutadamaijabar experienced the highest average social media engagement in February, which accounts for 15.43% of audience engagement. Although since February, the Instagram account experienced a declining trend in social media engagement, interestingly, the average rate remains above 3%.

Based on social media industry standards, the average rate for good social media engagement is generally between 1-3%. An average social media engagement rate that exceeds 3% indicates that the audience is highly engaged with the published content (Mee, 2019). Thus, the Duta Damai community maintained their engagement adequately during their first years of existence and amidst the pandemic in early 2020.

## Conclusion

This exploratory study attempted to identify as well as evaluate the strategy of an Indonesian youth community in using social media as a medium for preventing radicalization toward the youth. In relation to radicalization, the social media environment raises a series of challenges and opportunities. However, the Duta Damai community was able to use social media to engage in a non-coercive initiative for preventing radicalization. Participatory

collaboration in creating counter-narrative content is salient in protecting the community's fundamental values while building a community brand to reach a wider audience.

Further studies on the effectiveness of the Instagram initiative, whether online or offline, should be enacted to see how significantly the initiative could affect the audience's understanding and awareness of the risk of radicalization. It is expected that the community activities could be embedded in schools as part of the school program in supporting radicalization prevention efforts throughout the country. It is undeniable that the digital environment will continue to change for years to come. However, one thing remains clear: online and offline social engagement will always be an essential component to direct media consumers' impressions and ideas based on values projected by content creators on social media platforms.

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## About the Authors

**RIDWAN EFFENDI** is an associate professor of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (Indonesia University of Education). He is currently the Head of the Communications Department in the university. His research interest is in Civic Communication and Media. He can be contacted at: reffendi09@upi.edu

**VIDI SUKMAYADI** is a faculty member at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and his research interests are in media literacy, media education, and social media studies. He is currently taking his Doctorate degree at Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia. (corresponding author: vsukmayadi@upi.edu)

**ANDI ALIMUDDIN UNDE** is a Professor at Universitas Hasanuddin, Indonesia and his research interests are in Mass Media and political economy. He is currently the Director of Research Centre and Community Services at Universitas Hasanuddin, Indonesia. He can be contacted at: undealimuddin@yahoo.co.id

**TRİYANTO** is Faculty Member at Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia and his research interests are in Civic Education. He can be contacted at: try\_uns@yahoo.com

