Radicalism and extremism are tendencies and activities that may affect people from all walks of life. This includes university students who can be considered as a group of informed society due to knowledge they have and level of education, but may also be influenced by propaganda made by extremists. At the same time, Malaysia as an Islamic country has been perceived by the West as one of the countries that support radicalism and extremism. Hence, it is important for us to identify the status of radicalism and extremism among students and how classes at universities, especially Islamic universities help to reduce the influence of radicalism and extremism. This study conduct interviews with lecturers who teach Islamic courses in Malaysia to investigate how messages of de-radicalism are delivered in class at two universities namely Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). A total of six informants were interviewed to find out the status of radicalism and extremism at both universities. Secondly, this study also identifies teaching method or communication approach applied in class to examine the effectiveness to deliver anti radicalism and extremism messages. The study concludes that the status of radicalism and
extremism among university students is not worrying in Malaysia, hence there is no specific teaching method applied in class to share messages related to radicalism and extremism in class. However, we have identified approaches of teaching and learning among lecturers who involve in de-radicalism and those who are not. Mainly, lecturers who involve in de-radicalism share their knowledge and experience in “mass form” in class, while lecturers who don’t, share the messages in a more individual or interpersonal approach. In conclusion, although the status of radicalism and extremism is low among students in Malaysia, hence there is no specific teaching and learning method on this matter. However, there is a specific difference in terms of approach used by lecturers involved in radicalism and those who don’t.

Keywords: radicalism, extremism, Malaysia, status, teaching approach.

Abstrak

Radikalisme dan ekstremisme adalah kecenderungan dan aktiviti yang boleh mempengaruhi orang daripada semua lapisan masyarakat. Ini termasuklah pelajar universiti yang boleh dianggap sebagai kumpulan masyarakat yang berpengetahuan kerana memiliki ilmu pengetahuan dan tahap pendidikannya, namun ada kemungkinan yang mereka juga boleh dipengaruhi oleh propaganda puak pelamairu. Pada waktu yang sama, Malaysia sebagai negara Islam dianggap oleh barat sebagai salah sebuah negara yang menyokong radikalisme dan ekstremisme. Justeru, adalah penting bagi kita untuk mengenal pasti status radikalisme dan ekstremisme di kalangan pelajar dan bagaimana kelas di universiti khususnya universiti Islam membantu mengurangkan pengaruh radikalisme dan ekstremisme. Kajian ini telah menggunakan kaedah temu ramah dengan pensyarah yang mengajar kursus-kursus berasaskan Islam di Malaysia untuk mengkaji bagaimana mesej de-radikalisme disampaikan dalam kelas di dua buah universiti iaitu Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) dan Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM). Seramai enam informan ditemu ramah untuk mengetahui status
radikalisme dan ekstremisme di kedua-dua universiti tersebut. Keduanya, kajian ini juga mengenal pasti kaedah pengajaran atau pendekatan komunikasi yang diterapkan di kelas untuk mengkaji keberkesanan menyampaikan mesej anti radikalisme dan ekstremisme. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa status radikalisme dan ekstremisme di kalangan pelajar universiti tidak membimbangkan di Malaysia, oleh itu tidak ada satu kaedah pengajaran khusus yang diterapkan untuk berkongsi mesej yang berkaitan dengan radikalisme dan ekstremisme di kelas. Walau bagaimanapun, kami telah mengenal pasti pendekatan pengajaran dan pembelajaran di kalangan pensyarah yang terlibat dalam deradikalisme dan mereka yang tidak. Terutamanya, pensyarah yang terlibat dalam deradikalisme berkongsi pengetahuan dan pengalaman mereka dalam "bentuk massa" di kelas, sebaliknya pensyarah yang tidak, berkongsi mesej dengan pendekatan yang lebih individualistik atau interpersonal. Kesimpulannya, sungguhpun status radikalisme dan ekstremisme rendah di kalangan pelajar di Malaysia, tidak ada kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran khusus mengenai perkara ini. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat perbezaan khusus dari segi pendekatan yang digunakan oleh pensyarah yang terlibat dalam radikalisme dan mereka yang tidak.

Kata kunci: radikalisme, ekstremisme, Malaysia, status, pendekatan pengajaran.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is the official religion of Malaysia. According to Malaysia’s Article 3 of the constitution states that “Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions can also be practised safely and peacefully in any part of the Federation” (My Government Portal, 2016). As any other religion, Islam’s teaching and practices condemned radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. However, there is an escalation of extremism and radical understanding of Islam in Malaysia, which considerably threatens national security and citizens’ wellbeing. It is believed that this transmission and the readiness of the Malays to embrace such kind of thinking is a long
and gradual process, as Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid has stated that Malay Muslims are slowly but assuredly becoming more radicalised (Habib, 2016). Rising extremism in Malaysia thus cannot be ignored by the government and local society, as it may pose a substantial threat to the multi-racial society and national security (Elmira & Muhammad, 2020).

The tendencies and activities of radicalism and extremism affect people from all walks of life. This includes university students who can be considered as a group of informed society due to knowledge they have and level of education. But even then, students may also be influenced by propaganda made by extremists. Simultaneously, Malaysia being an Islamic country has been perceived by the west as a great supporter of radicalism and extremism. Hence, it is important for us to identify the status of radicalism and extremism among students and how classes at universities, especially Islamic universities help to reduce the influence of radicalism and extremism.

This paper explores radicalism and extremism among students in the local universities through interviews with lecturers who teach Islamic courses in Malaysia to investigate how messages of de-radicalism are delivered in class at two universities namely Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). Educational institutions are considered to be “the third force” in countering violent extremism and terrorism, alongside government agencies and the intelligence community (El-Muhammad, 2018). El-Muhammad (2018) also added that the higher learning institutions have multiples roles such as detector, educator, preventer, and producer of ideas in countering violent extremism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of extremists targeting educational institutions and the involvement of students in extremism is not a new phenomenon (Welch, 2015; El-Muhammad, 2018; Samuel, 2020). According to El-Muhammad (2018), the earliest involvement of Malaysian students in extremism can be traced back to Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) and the Afghan Civil War (1989-2001). The Malaysian students who were in Pakistan and Afghanistan during that time
have also participated in jihadi movements to fight against the Soviet occupation. This was then followed by the establishment of Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) upon their return to Malaysia (El-Muhammady, 2018; Muhammad Izzuddin & Akhmetova, 2020) including Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI) and various groups connected to the terrorist group such as Islamic State (Jani, 2017).

A study highlights that 59% of those who are involved in radicalism and extremism tend to lead terrorism-related activities are mostly youths including students in school and higher learning institutions (Idris Jusoh, 2017). Specifically, in Malaysia, students such as those from public and private universities are seen as easy targets to engage in radicalization and extremism (Idris Jusoh, 2017; El-Muhammady, 2018). What is also worrying is that terrorists and extremists have been exploiting higher learning institutions as sources for recruitment and support (Samuel, 2016; 2020). The condition is probably due to the reason that students are considered as ‘fragile and porous’ (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017:94) whose minds are easily influenced and exploited. Arguably, they are vulnerable to any socio-political ideas including extreme ideologies, and are easily persuaded and indoctrinated with extreme ideologies (Idris Jusoh, 2017; Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017).

In the context of educational institutions, students can be categorized as science stream and non-science stream students (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017). Mohd Mizan Aslam’s (2017) study found out that students who are categorized in science stream students are easily influenced compared to those in the non-science stream. He argues that science stream students tend to accept information objectively. Among other reasons students tend to involve in radicalism and extremism is because they are exploring and battling with what can be considered right and wrong.

Although the percentage of students involved in extremism is small, the status of radicalism and extremism in Malaysia is alarming. As argued by El-Muhamamdy (2018:97), “the presence of one extremist in a campus is sufficient reason for authorities to take preventive measures”. Since the beginning of the operation to curb extremism in 2013, 40 students from schools and higher
learning institutions have been arrested due to terrorism-related charges (El-Muhammady, 2018). Malaysian Police have also arrested more than 160 people who have suspected involved with Daesh in 2016 (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017). Evidence shows that Daesh has targeted Malaysian youth, specifically those in higher learning institutions (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017; El-Muhammady, 2018; Samuel, 2020). In the eyes of extremists, students are seen as a strategic target for recruitment and to build support as they have the potential to become leaders who can influence others (Samuel, 2020).

The emergence and growth of Daesh have significantly added threat to youths and students in learning institutions (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017; El-Muhammad, 2018). Daesh implements various modes of strategies ranging from using online platforms to *usrah* they deliver at schools, colleges, and universities to recruit people. Thus, it also includes approaching students by instilling their extreme ideology of jihad and the call to create an Islamic state (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017).

The availability of social networking platforms such as WhatsApp application and social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram have increased the possibility for students to become recruited. Mohd Mizan Aslam (2017: 95) discusses a case of a female university student who was recruited by and married to an ISIS fighter through the Skype platform. In another case, Syamimi Faiqah, 20 years old, who was a former student at the International Islamic University College of Selangor, informed she was persuaded to join Daesh through Facebook. Whereas a 22-year-old male student was arrested at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport due to his involvement in Daesh resulted from his feeling of sympathy after watching Daesh's propaganda video. Next is the case of Aishah Atam, a graduate student at Universiti Malaya. She was also a student to Dr. Mahmud, a lecturer who was detected with radical views (El-Muhammady, 2018; Muhd Imran Abd Razak et al. 2019). On the other hand, the case of Hafizi Jusoh, a school student, was detained by the counter-terrorism team due to possessing explosive devices, pipe bombs, and ball bearing including pictures, videos, and documents related to Daesh. He was charged due to his involvement in terrorism-related activities. All of the cases
demonstrate how university students can become the target of extremists.

The increasing number of students involved in extremism is also due to broken family backgrounds. Such reason reflects the vulnerability of individuals who can be easily influenced by extremists due to their disoriented minds and souls (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017; Samuel, 2020). Some students were also keened to join the extremist group because of their interest in political groups while some introverted students prefer to not mix around with other social groups and choose to keep their thought to themselves (Mohd Mizan Aslam, 2017). Samuel (2020) also highlights that financial crises experienced by students provide a chance for extremists to easily manipulated them in a way that they provide financial support and establish a relationship with the students. As result, the students made a promise such as through ‘Baiah’ and become the source to help to spread extremist ideology, propaganda, and rhetoric (Samuel, 2020).

THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS, TEACHING METHODS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educators play a prominent role in educational institutions as they hold a respectable position among students (El-Muhammady, 2018). Moreover, education is regarded as a ‘moral enterprise’ (Gosh et al., 2016: 37; Samuel, 2020: 185;) involving the body of knowledge, processes, practices, and experiences all of which may affect the hearts and minds of students and society at large. Radicalism and extremism cannot be merely tackled through hard approaches and security measures. As such, efforts through educating the youths and students may serve as the antidote. As argued by Jani (2017), effective counter-violent extremism efforts must not only be accompanied by legislation and rehabilitation, but also education.

For the education process to be effective, educators must acquire a certain level of knowledge not only to be respected by their students but also to make them receptive. Therefore, like extremist recruiters, university educators must also use the same method to fully utilize their capacity and university environment by engaging with students who have diverse social and family backgrounds (El-Muhammady, 2018). This also means that
educators must not only focus on Muslim students but must also to cater students with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds as radicalism and extremism know no religion and social backgrounds.

Educators should also be willing to listen to their students who are in the phase of searching, exploring, and learning for new ideas (Samuel, 2020) and seeking for social identity (Déri, 2021). In fact, Samuel (2020) further argues that youths have limited ability and experience when it comes to comparing belief systems and as consequence, they accept what they perceive as in black and white which indicates the lack of capacity in translating the danger of radical or extreme ideology. This is when the educators play their important role to help prevent violent extremism from happening by learning their cognitive and emotional dimensions including the ‘how’ and ‘why’ aspects students tend to get involved in such situations.

Through collective roles, educators and educational institutions may incorporate peace studies in teaching. Prominent concepts such as jihad and wasatiyyah can be implemented into usrah (Mohd Mizan bin Mohammad Aslam, 2017) and existing syllabi (El-Muhammady, 2018; Samuel, 2020) as an initiative of intervention programs to help extreme ideologies from spreading. Adding to the point, The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006: 4) also emphasizes the important role of education to cultivate and promote the teaching and learning of “culture of peace, justice and human development, ethnic, national and religious tolerance and respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs or cultures by establishing and encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programs involving all sectors of society”.

Therefore, classroom education should also consider developing a syllabus or university curriculum that covers relevant topics and issues on preventing radicalism and extremism. Teaching and learning should impart both knowledge and values (Gosh et al., 2016; Samuel, 2020). The way to do it is, by integrating prevention of violent extremism into university curriculum such as “academic subjects like history, ethics/moral education, philosophy, and religious studies; study of biographies of noted individuals as well as organizations; sports; extra-
curricular activities within uniformed bodies, clubs and societies; volunteerism; student exchange programs; and promoting better understanding and appreciation of differing cultures, practices, and religion” (Samuel, 2020: 190).

Nonetheless, university educators should not limit their job scope to merely teaching students in classrooms as they need to expand the role beyond that. More specifically, El-Muhammady (2018) has provided detailed recommendations of which educators can act in a strategic position to prevent radicalism and extremism by becoming detectors, preventers, planners, and producers of ideas to help prevent radicalism and extremism.

Educators are encouraged to proactively identify and acknowledge any potential element showed by their students that may lead to radicalism and extremism. Moreover, they should also conduct a background check on students who they suspect may tend to be radicalized or radicalizing other people. This effort will help prevent radical and extreme ideologies from spreading (Mohd Mizan bin Mohammad Aslam, 2017; El-Muhammady, 2018). Other than that, educators should proactively inform their respective educational institutions on early signs of radicalism and extremism showed by their students. Alongside teaching, educators should play a detective role to identify students who demonstrate extreme ideologies and/or actions (El-Muhammady, 2018).

Educators should encourage students to take part in counter-extremism programs and activities such as by establishing community associations and clubs (El-Muhammady, 2018; Samuel, 2020). The approach will help educators and students to connect with the wider community and various activities such as through workshops and discussions which can be implemented to help promote the narrative of peace, moderation, tolerance, and understanding. Recreational activities should continuously be implemented to distract students from joining radical and extreme outlets (Mohd Mizan bin Mohammad Aslam, 2017). Educators must also give specific attention to students with a low-income background as research on extremism shows that most detained suspects are residing in rural areas (El-Muhammady, 2018; Samuel, 2020). Therefore, educators should play part in engaging and educating the said group of students
with positive values and empowering them to repudiate radical and extreme ideologies.

As preventing radicalism and countering extremism requires a collective effort, educators with relevant experience can work together with experts from multidisciplinary fields to research counter-extremism (El-Muhammady, 2018). This also includes working with the government (Wan Ahmad Dahlan, Kamarulnizam, Jamaliah & Afzal Izzaz, 2021) and broadening teaching and learning through the assistance of experts and outsource such as sharing experiences of former victims of violent extremism, moderate religious scholars, content creators, and influencers (El-Muhammady, 2018; Samuel, 2020). This way will help educators to understand radicalism and extremism more holistically.

Educational institutions and educators should also work together with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations to conduct activities involving inter-faith and intra-faith dialogues, discussion of positive values, and countering extremism (The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 2006; El-Muhammady, 2018). This effort is important to build a more resilient community against the threat of extremism. For example, the #MahasiswaIslamTolakKeganasan (Muslim University Students Reject Terrorism), which was launched in 2015 by the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) as an initiative to allow students to unite and share their ideas on how to reject terrorism by addressing the misconception of jihad involving universities in Malaysia (Welch, 2015; Jani, 2017; Mohd Mizan Mohd Aslam 2017). The campaign initiative was conducted in the hope to encourage young Muslims at universities to propagate the real meaning of jihad (Welch, 2015; Jani, 2017).

**METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to identify the status of radicalism and extremism among students and how classes at universities, especially Islamic universities help to reduce the influence of radicalism and extremism. This study also identifies teaching method or communication approach applied in class to examine the effectiveness to deliver anti radicalism and extremism messages.
Qualitative interviews were carried out with lecturers who teach Islamic courses in Malaysia to investigate on how messages of de-radicalism are delivered in class at two universities namely Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). A total of six informants were interviewed to find out the status of radicalism and extremism at both universities.

Interviews are normally used in conducting qualitative research, whereby the researcher is interested in gathering “facts”, or gaining insights into or understanding of opinions, attitudes, experiences, processes, behaviours, or predictions. In-person interviews are the traditional form of generating data in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013). However, meeting participants in person is not feasible when they are geographically dispersed, unable or unwilling to travel, or research funding does not allow and when government imposed countrywide lockdown as a response to the coronavirus pandemic. As an alternative, video conferencing may provide researchers and participants with a cost effective and convenient way of handling interviews online.

Video conferencing software allows two or more people in different locations to communicate using audio and video imaging in real time (Gough & Rosenfeld, 2006). Video conferencing software programs may have different requirements, but generally will require access to specific software, hardware, and high-speed Internet access. The researchers and participants can connect to their chosen platform using their computer, mobile telephone, or tablet. Participants using video conferencing enjoy the flexibility and convenience of participating online (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Researchers who compared face-to-face versus online video conferencing interviews found the quality of the interviews did not differ from face-to-face interviews (Cabaroglu, Basaran, & Roberts, 2010; Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

This paper offers unique examples of lecturers' experiences taking part in a semi-structured interviews using video conferencing software such as Google meet, Teams and Zoom due to the lockdown conditions and therefore, no in-person interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interviews take on a variety of different forms, with varying numbers of questions, and varying
degrees of adaptation of questions and question order to accommodate the interviewee.

The interviews followed a semi-structured guide consisting of six questions, divided into two main components. First component consists of asking informants about the definitions of radicalism and extremism in the contexts of university, the factors contributes towards students’ involvement in both radicalism and extremism, impacts towards university and country when students involve in it. The other component is pertaining to the teaching methods or communication approach applied in class to examine the effectiveness to deliver anti radicalism and extremism messages. The questions in this component comprised of the name of courses, teaching methods to increase students understanding on radicalism and extremism, and ways that informants used to enhance the quality of teaching and to ascertain that the message about both radicalism and extremism received by students. The interviews ranged from an hour to one and a half hours.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
In findings and discussion, this paper addressed the status of radicalism and extremism among students in Malaysia, the reasons for participating in radical views, and also focused on teaching and learning strategies by lecturers who involve in de-radicalism and those who are not to increase awareness and understanding among students about radicalism and extremism.

STATUS OF RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM AMONG STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA
According to Informant 2, there are three stages namely radicalisation, extremism and terrorism or violence. When describing on radicalism and extremism in Malaysia, it is essential to see the relationship of these three stages; (1) First of all, in the form of ideology or at the thought level. For instance, university students might have thought in their mind of radical ideas either politically, religiously, culturally, economically, socially and so on. It is a kind of deviation from the mainstream and could threaten national security. It reveals in the form of thought and ideology. (2) Second, it appears in terms of the expression. Students may express their thinking, feeling, or opinion in conversations, write-
up, symbols, or anything on whatever platforms such as social media. It could be a communist symbol or NAZI symbol that have something to do with the terrorist groups. “So in the early stages of the beginning, which is the ideology or the expression. It doesn’t bring any harm to the society and the states. It is also called radical or extreme but non-violent” (Informant 2). (3) However, when it reaches the third stage, extremism can be violent. It finally appears in the form of actions, deeds, behaviour in a more physical form. The term used for now is violent extremism. Meaning, violence is based on extremist ideologies and manifested in the form of violence or violent action. Understanding these three stages is of great importance by which we can determine proper preventive, remedial and intervention measures (Informant 2).

The emergence of radicalism in Malaysia is still based on ideology and not transformed into violent actions (Informant 4). Yet, the situation can deteriorate when it associates religion and other factors. In some countries in the West, Muslims become the target of radical ideology and extreme acts due to the impact of Islamophobia. Meanwhile, the situation in Malaysia seems so complex. According to Informant 4, the rise of radical views in Malaysia in the early 70s was against educational policies of the government, social and political stances and not merely religion. In the 80s, the impact of religion on radicalism and extremism is noticeable to some groups of students whose radical views were due to controversial figures in certain countries. When they came back to Malaysia, the extreme views were outstanding, especially when joining a political party. The issues include the concept of jihad, Muslim and non-Muslims’ relationship, the status of kafir harbi, the arrival of the awaited Imam Mahdi and many more. “Therefore, if we discuss extremism in the context of Malaysian University, we can see a similar trend in their views which stem from this so-called religious mind set” (Informant 4).

Moreover, what is happening in the Muslim World can also trigger extremism in the society. According to Informant 2, based on his recent research, there are three types of extremism. (1) Politics and Ideology. It refers to groups that have very radical and extreme political ideologies. It includes such attempts set by the groups to either impose a communist ideology, abolish the monarchy system in the country or topple down the government
using weaponry or non-constitutional means (Informant 2). This group would attempt to relate their ideology with political leadership and statehood. As such, the concept of Imam Wal Amir is adamant as one of the obligatory acts (fardhu ain) to be accomplished. In the end, it can lead to extremism and violence (Informant 4).

The second is the belief system. It is of belief and ideology. It is not only referring to Islam but other religions as well. Religious extremism is dangerous as it equates religion with negative values and ideas (Informant 2). Besides, it has many elements that support the belief system. Thus, it is dominant and destructive (Informant 1).

“So, if we're going to say that people at the university aren't at risk of getting involved with extremism, it's not right. It is because experience shows that some students and lecturers get involved. Students experience a lot of ideologies and belief systems. Without proper guidance, they can also be among the victims (Informant 1).”

The unending political conflicts have also caused individuals to politicize religion. Unfortunately, religion becomes a tool for destructive ends. Nazrul Islam (2005) argues that; “An extremist, especially someone with strong, irrational religious or political feelings” (p.18). It is due to the misunderstanding and confusion about the principles (usul) and branches (furu’) in Islam. The impacts of this thought or movements are threatening to society as it produces generations of fanatics (al-Ifrat) on one hand and the liberals (al-tafrit) on the other hand (Informant 5). At University, students are very susceptible to radical movements such as Wahabi, Hizbul Tahrir, Shia and the Liberals. We can divide these radical and extreme groups into Far-Right Groups (Wahabi, Hizbul Tahrir, Shia, GIS, ISIS) and Far-Left Groups (the Liberals, Atheism, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animal,) (Informant 1).

The National Fatwa Council based on the decision of the 106th Muzakarah Fatwa Committee National Council of Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia which convened on 21-22 October 2014 has decided as follows: The Muzakarah warns the Malaysian Muslims who wish to support the ISIS or ISIL groups and to fight
in the name of Jihad. Their efforts are futile; the deaths will not be recognized as martyrs according to the Islamic Laws.

Thirdly, from a social perspective, someone can also become radical and extreme. Any ideology or way of life that is against local values can be considered extreme acts. For instance, the LGBT movement is harmful to Malaysian society because it threatens family institutions and weakens the social norms that bind people in Malaysia. Yet, this group attempt to get attention under the flagship of human rights (Informant 2).

Therefore, according to Informant 2, someone can become violent when it involves action. The process of transformation occurs from ideology, perception and into action. It is called radicalization. Radicalization is a process of change that affects one's mentality, emotion and belief. It can transform into cognitive or emotive oriented radicalization depending on someone’s anger or emotion. Therefore, a person can be so radicalized. And the third is called faith-oriented radicalization that depends on someone's understanding, faith or belief. The combination of this leads someone from a form of thinking, understanding to the level of action. Here the formation of radical concepts of extremists and terrorism is formed (Informant 2). Besides the three elements, the resources of a country such as legislation, religion and universal values are the keyword to determine the status of radicalism and extremism in Malaysia.

Moreover, the incident in 2017, a student from the local university was detained and it is an indication that lecturers have the tendency to recruit students to join so-called jihadi movement. Experts attempted to list down few criteria of students who are more likely to be the victims such as the introverted people, those with few friends, who are very silent in class and many more (Informant 4). It is in line with one study that suggests that individuals may disclose behaviour (due to thinking), low self-value, social attachment, whether individually or in groups (Hanina Halimatun Saadiah Hamsan & Sudirman Ahmad, 2019). The Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) could take action against individuals with extreme thoughts and not disclosing the attitude. Body language, virtual communication, direct interaction and physical behaviour are testament to his thinking (Mohd Mahzan
Awang, Abdul Razaq Ahmad & Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani, 2021).

The case also has been an eye opening that it can be detected or what we call early warning indicators of radicalization. “Of course, we could have detected from the beginning. However, it requires someone who has very high skills and understands this issue well. As I mentioned earlier, radicalism can appear in many forms” (Informant 2). The experts can tell from the students’ expression, the books they read, the places and figures they refer to, the term and the symbol they use in daily life. For instance, how he or she communicates on social media. We’ll be able to see the elements. It's just that so far, there hasn't been a single system (Informant 2). It is also an offence to affiliate oneself with terrorist ideology. Someone will get caught by owning any reading materials of a terrorist group, a symbol and a picture. Therefore, according to informant 2, it is incumbent to educate the students on the penalties to reveal how serious is this issue. Moreover, according to Informant 1and 2 if only we can detect early, we can protect the future of our students. It is unfortunate to see some students dragged to radical ideas and were not getting help from the lecturers or universities. Therefore, we need to work on the modules to examine the problem and to help them.

**REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING WITH RADICAL VIEWS**

Religion itself has never supported radicalism or extremism. The main reasons why some students are prone to radical views are because they disassociate themselves with the true teachings of the mainstream of *ahlis sunnah wal jamāah* (Informant 4). The tendency of students to comprehend arguments from one perspective that is narrow and wrong may have contributed to the emergence of radicalism and extremism. They would understand religious arguments with prejudice that is merely on their desire and rejecting other views. They refuse to accept scholars' views that are more accurate and in line with the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, the ferocity of young people could also evoke religious misunderstanding. It can also lead to a literal understanding of the concept of jihad. Besides, the sources of information that further fuel extremism are easily accessible
through the internet. Videos that incite violence, suicide bombings and wars are obtainable without any restrictions. (Informant 3).

However, according to Informant 1, the reasons can be divided into external and internal factors. The external factors may include politics, economics, social and others. Meanwhile, he asserts that the internal factors are very prevailing. It is dominant because someone commits crimes following what he believes in himself. It contradicts other physical crimes that have no association with such principles. The crimes include cursing and nullifying one’s religion as heretics or pagans, justifying people’s blood as halal, blaming and cursing the government and Muslim leaders, declaring jihad to the non-Muslims and Muslims alike, seeking false martyrdom, and build an Islamic state (daulah Islāmiyyah) (Informant 1).

Informant 5 also elaborates on these characteristics of the extreme and radical group. He examines that fourteen centuries ago, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had predicted the existence of a radical and extreme movement that would be born in the Islamic world named Khawarij. The Prophet SAW warns the characteristics of these people as being ignorant and narrow-minded thinking (Sahih Bukahari, no: 3342). He also elaborates that there are at least five contributing factors towards radical views and violence. (1) considering the practices of others as Bidcāh (Tabdič), denying the acts of others (Taḍhīl), cursing others as fasiq (Tafsīq), dismissing others as infidels (Takfīr), and in the end, threatening the lives of others by being violent / terror (irhāb).

On the other hand, Informant 4 and 6 agree that based on a study in 2017, the number of students recorded to have kind of radical views is still not alarming in Malaysia. Yet, we cannot be too pleasant as we have discussed from the beginning that radicalism and extremism have many stages and dimensions. Informant 4 also explains that few students were dissatisfied with the current situation and thus resorted to radical thought. But, the study also affirms that they were not up to violent acts. Moreover, based on the interviews with the informants, many agree that students in USIM did ask about DAESH, IS, ISIS, and other contemporary thoughts in the class. Yet, their questions remain for the sake of knowledge. Informant 4 and 6 also agree that it is too challenging to identify the early inclination of students towards
radical views based on their experiences in class unless there are particular devices or modules to determine it.

Although the situation is under control, there is a need for collective efforts between religious institutions, higher learning institutions, security institutions (Mohd Roslan, 2015). These two acts of the Security Offences Bill (SOSMA) and Anti-Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA) have contributed to stopping the violence in the country (Informant 6). Attention given to the students of higher learning institutions is of great importance as this is the place for them to embark on success. Educated people with proper guidance will become good agents in the future to deliver messages to the public (Mohd Roslan, 2015). Administrators of higher learning institutions should also be aware of current developments and the need to create a syllabus that can address misunderstandings of concepts in religion (Informant 2).

**Informant 7 also discusses the importance to educate people.**

“The Malaysian Constitution recognizes Islam as the official religion of the State and at the same time acknowledges other religions in Malaysia. So, all members must conform to their belief systems and the authenticity of their religions. According to Informant 7, the idea of rahmatan lil ֽcālāmin in Malaysia is to elevate Islam as the official religion and at the same time acknowledge the existence of other religious groups to live in love and harmony. Any acts that are harmful to religious ideas and values should be deemed extreme and violate the core values of Malaysian society.”

Islam is a moderate religion (wasatiyyah) and repudiates any extreme acts. The Qur'an itself emphasizes the characteristics of a balanced society. As Allah SWT says in the Qur’an:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have
caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful. (Al-Baqarah: 143).

And the hadith of the Prophet SAW states that:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ فَإِنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ

And beware of going to extremes in religious matters, for those who came before you were destroyed because of going to extremes in religious matters." (Ibnu Majah, no: 3020).

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG STUDENTS ABOUT RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM

From the research finding, it can be concluded that there is no specific teaching and learning strategies to inculcate awareness among university students in Malaysia. Besides that, the findings also suggest that there are two types of lecturers and this influences the way awareness about radicalism and extremism is delivered. First is a lecturer who directly involve in de-radicalism and second, who does not involve but teach courses which can be related to radicalism and extremism (or they don’t involve directly with de-radicalism and teach Islamic courses). Lecturers who involve in de-radicalism involve interpersonal communication skill or initiate interpersonal approach in class to open up students to talk about radicalism and extremism. It is from there that the students able to understand and engage with the message, and relate with their past experiences. This suggests that, messages are share at a mass level (in class) and each student process the messages received at a more individual level. On the other hand, lecturers who do not involve in de-radicalism also use the strength of interpersonal communication such as consultations and small group discussions. This is to suggests that the way messages about radicalism and extremism is shared at individual level then only move to a different level (in class discussions etc.).

Therefore, most informants agreed that there is no specific teaching and learning strategies to inculcate awareness among students at Malaysian universities as stated by Informant 1.
“There is no specific teaching and learning strategies to inculcate awareness among students so far. What I do is, I always remind my students whenever there is free time, but not in all my classes. What I do is, when I introduce myself, I will say, “I am one of the de-radicalism panels of the Home Ministry. Do you know what is de-radicalism panel?” So during the introduction, I will also share about thoughts related to extremism. For example, when I conduct studies of 40 hadith, I include that. In our faculty, we also organize muamalat discussion and we discuss current issues, Turath studies, Matan and Tuja’. In the tutorials of these sessions, we take this advantage to include radicalism and extremism in the discussions. There are also [students] who involve in believe issue. So I always remind students to hold on Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah, Malaysian framework, asya’irah, sifat 20. We follow our Shafie school of thoughts. These are some of my strategies. (Informant 1)’’

In addition, Informant 4 added that highlights on aqidah must be explained in class in detail.

“When they (lecturers) teach elements related to religiosity, they have to highlight some elements like religion, aqidah and tasawwuf the best they can. They have to define aqidah, definition of people with aqidah, how to have correct faith and make them (students) understand. So this is how the real believers of Sunnah wal jamaah, from the prophet Muhammad until now. The most important one that we have to understand, radicalism and extremism starts with the (misunderstanding) of the basics of religion. The prophets never teach us to be radical, nor extremist. So why (a Muslim) can involve in such activities? We have never been taught that. For me, teaching fardhu ain and fardhy kifayah will open up students’ minds to understand the exact contexts of Islam to avoid themselves to be radical or extreme (Informant 4).”

**LECTURERS WHO INVOLVE IN DE-RADICALISM**

Informant 2 shared how he handled classes and how discussions and by including real life stories help his students to understand radicalism and extremism. Real stories are shared in class in an informal approach of communication.

“This (sharing real life stories) make the discussion in the classroom interesting and they will learn a lot actually from that discussion. The intention actually, for me, to share what I do
especially on the students’ vulnerability to recruitment. I always tell the student that in most cases, the students always become the victim of recruitment for the extremist group and I will give example of a student being recruited like Siti Aisyah, Afiqah from one college in Semenyih, Selangor, there is one student from there and the schoolboy in Kelantan and including UIA itself. We have cases that students were recruited (Informant 2).”

“I will teach them how to detect the early warning or signs of radicalization by telling them we have to listen to what people say, to whom that they referred to and what they say and is there any sign of accepting violence in their conversation. So, by empowering students like this, I meant not only that we can create an awareness among the students. We also create a kind of detectors on the ground. We can teach them skill how to detect this. Among them, among their peers, colleagues, friends, roommates, classmates. So, whenever they have cases they will tell me like, “You know, Sir, I think my classmate, he or she has this kind of thinking. What do you think if I bring her to meet you? (Informant 2).”

“If you should, you can bring her to meet me (Informant 2).” We have cases like these. They will bring their friend and we will have discussion and she will tell me, “I used to have friend before in school (Informant 2).”

The findings suggest that lecturers play an important role to understand radicalism and share it with the students for their understanding and to avoid joining, and a more flexible approach to teaching and learning is useful to engage with the topics discuss and to be more open about discussing radicalism and extremism with an open mind. This facilitates more engagement with the students that enable more stories to be shared.

“I teach Islamic subject, Understanding Islam for example. I’m teaching Creative Thinking and teaching Political Science, Research Methodology, Writing Skills. These basics skills for the matriculation students and I engage with very young students who just finished schooling. Therefore, engaging with them is very useful. It’s useful for me in terms of they will inform me about the current trend of the teenagers at this time. So I can learn a lot from them actually. Music that they like, the games that they like, the culture, the fashion, the movies, the memes and all these kind of things. They are a very good
source of information. They also learn something from me too as a lecturer definitely. So, I find the engagement is very useful (Informant 2).”

These findings suggest that messages are sent in a mass form to the students, and some methods in teaching and learning are used to ensure the sharing is interesting and engaging.

**LECTURERS WHO DO NOT INVOLVE IN DERADICALISM**

On the other hand, lecturers who do not involve in de-radicalism approach students in a more interpersonal way which is through consultation and small group discussions. It is from here that they hope the students will engage more with the topic and create awareness and understanding among them. The effect of such process is inferred to be in twofold: 1) students share the message with other students and 2) students talk and discuss about radicalism and extremism more openly with the lecturers. The effects can be both at interpersonal and a larger group communication levels.

Informant 5 for example admitted it is so important to have good interpersonal communication skills with the students in inculcating awareness and understanding about radicalism and extremism among students. Based on his experience, many students are not open to share about radicalism and extremism, and even some, do not realize that they have the potential to involve in such activities. Hence, he ensures open academic discussions with some interpersonal engagement and interpersonal communication with the students are important to ensure openness among students to understand and to share their thoughts about these issues. Consultation with the lecturers is crucial, thus readiness of the lecturers in this topic and engaging themselves in discussing such topics is equally pertinent.

To conclude, from the findings we can infer that there is no specific teaching method applied by lecturers to increase awareness and understanding about radicalism and extremism in class. However, there is a major difference in terms of the approach taken by lecturers who involve in de-radicalism with lecturers who don’t. lecturers who involve in de-radicalism seems to approach the students with a mass approach rather than the lecturers who
do not. They share with the students in a more individual way, and include interpersonal communication as a pertinent approach.

CONCLUSION
The study concludes that the status of radicalism and extremism among university students is not worrying in Malaysia, hence there is no specific teaching method applied in class to share messages related to radicalism and extremism in class. However, we should not be complacent and take for granted about the involvement of students from higher institution in radicalism and extremism because there is a saying in Malay language, “api dalam sekam”, which literally translated as “fire in the husk”, which means that the fire that is burning, will be visible flames and warn of danger so as not to be approached. However, if the "warmth" is hidden, then it is like an invisible "threat" which is more dangerous. It is like crimes committed in secret. Therefore, it is important for universities to be proactive in handling radicalism and extremism before it “burned” the future of the students who are manipulated by the extremists.

Universities and schools have strategic positions and unique functions in countering and preventing violent extremism (CPVE) in society. According to El-Muhammady, (2018), educational institutions, primarily universities, colleges and schools, have a lot to improve on in order to function as the “third force” in countering and preventing violent extremism in Malaysia.

Based on this study, we have identified approaches of teaching and learning among lecturers who involve in de-radicalism and those who are not. Mainly, lecturers who involve in de-radicalism share their knowledge and experience in a “mass form” in class, while lecturers who don’t, share the messages in a more individual or interpersonal approach. In conclusion, although the status of radicalism and extremism is low among students in Malaysia, hence there is no specific teaching and learning method on this matter. However, there is a specific difference in terms of approach used by lecturers involved in radicalism and those who don’t.
In closing, universities need to be more proactive in countering and preventing the wave of radicalism and extremism. If there are cases where lecturers or students had connection with radical and extremist groups, then universities should not apply “sweep under the carpet” approach in dealing them. The radicalism and extremism threats already penetrated among the students. The cases of Dr. Mahmud, Aishah, Hafizi and others should be a wake-up call for university and school communities, especially its administrators, that a “wait-and-see” policy and lukewarm attitude is hazardous to students and institutions (El-Muhammady, 2018).

Since this problem is based on the incorrect understanding of religious principles, the paper suggests that students should be given the proper tools of religious education, based on the principles of peaceful cohesion, moderation and social respect since the early stages of public education. The basic teachings of Islam promoting peace and human dignity shall be highlighted, as it is stated in the Qur’an (16:90) that, “God commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy, and oppressive. He teaches you so that you may take heed.” (Elmira & Muhammad, 2020).

REFERENCES:


