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# Tracing the Sociological Roots of Terrorism in Indonesia: The Role of Family Dysfunction in the Perspective of Islamic Family Law

# Herniwati<sup>1⊠</sup>, Kurniati<sup>2</sup>, Zulhas'ari Mustafa<sup>3</sup>

UIN Alauddin Makassar<sup>1,2,3</sup> e-mail: watiherni526@gmail.com

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# **ABSTRACT**

The phenomenon of family involvement in acts of terrorism in Indonesia indicates a shift in the pattern of radicalization from the public sphere to the private sphere. This research aims to trace the sociological roots of terrorism by emphasizing the role of family dysfunction and reviewing the relevance of Islamic family law principles in preventing the radicalization process early on. The method used is qualitative with a case study approach, through document analysis, literature study, and in-depth interviews with relevant resource persons, such as former terrorists, sociology experts, and Islamic law experts. The results show that most terrorists come from dysfunctional families, characterized by a lack of communication, neglectful or harsh parenting, and the absence of moderate spiritual role models. The radicalization process takes place within the home, through closed recitations, digital extreme content, and internal indoctrination. These findings indicate the nonimplementation of maqashid sharia principles in family life, such as the protection of the soul, mind and offspring. Therefore, the de-radicalization approach must be multidisciplinary by integrating the perspectives of sociology, Islamic law and family education. Islamic family law not only functions as a legal-formal norm, but also as an ethical and practical guideline in building family resilience as the first bulwark against violent ideologies.

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Indonesia has faced serious challenges related to the continuation of terrorism that not only threatens national security, but also damages the social fabric of society (Agni et al., 2025). Although law enforcement officials have successfully foiled a number of attack plans, data from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) shows that acts of terrorism continue to show a consistent pattern, even experiencing a more complex form of change (Sofyan & Priyanto, 2025). One striking development is the increasing involvement of nuclear family members, including women and children, in terrorism networks (Ahdash, 2024). This phenomenon reflects a shift in

the recruitment pattern of terrorists, from an external militant network system to infiltration strategies in domestic and family spaces. This fact shows that families are no longer just victims, but can also be the birthplace of violent ideology, especially when there is dysfunction in parenting and value cultivation. Therefore, understanding the sociological roots of terrorism in the family context is important to formulate a more comprehensive preventive approach (Zych & Nasaescu, 2022), including through an Islamic family law approach that emphasizes the central role of the family in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation (Abdullahi Maidugu & Adamu Tanko Isah, 2024).

Sociologically, terrorism is not only understood as an extreme act, but as a manifestation of certain social conditions that trigger behavioral deviations (Farhan Ahmad et al., 2025). Some sociological theories, such as relative deprivation theory, reveal that the disparity between socio-economic expectations and realities can drive individuals to collective frustration that leads to radical action (Pilkington, 2023). Meanwhile, social disorganization theory highlights how the collapse of social structures, such as weak social control in the surrounding environment, also creates space for violent ideologies to flourish (Borg & Holder, 2025). In addition, the concept of social alienation explains that individuals who feel alienated from communities and social systems tend to seek new affiliations and meanings, which are sometimes found in radical groups (Mølmen & Ravndal, 2023). In this context, the family as a microenvironment plays a vital role in the process of value socialization and identity formation (Thacker Darrow et al., 2025). When the family fails to fulfill its social and moral functions, children become vulnerable to deviant doctrines (Bogdanova et al., 2022). Therefore, vulnerability to radicalism often stems from dysfunction within the family unit, which should be the first and foremost place for the formation of values of justice, compassion and tolerance.

Family dysfunction refers to a condition where the basic structure and functions of the family are not working properly, thus failing to fulfill the emotional, psychological, and social needs of its members (Ozturk & Erdogan, 2021). These forms of dysfunction can include broken homes due to divorce or prolonged conflict, the practice of domestic violence, authoritarian or even permissive and neglectful parenting patterns, to affection poverty that makes children feel emotionally neglected (Kganyago Mphaphuli, 2023). These conditions disrupt children's character formation, making them vulnerable to identity crises, pent-up anger, and a search for meaning outside of the family structure. In many cases, this vulnerability is exploited by radical groups who offer a sense of belonging, purpose, and a false heroic narrative to young individuals from dysfunctional families. Research conducted by LIPI and BNPT, for example, shows that a number of perpetrators of terrorism in Indonesia have troubled family backgrounds in terms of parent-child relationships, economic pressures, and social alienation (Sirry, 2024). This fact underscores the importance of early intervention in the family sphere as the frontline in preventing the spread of radicalism, as well as the urgency of re-strengthening the role of the family as a moral and spiritual institution, in line with the principles in Islamic family law.

In the perspective of Islamic Family Law, the family is not merely seen as a biological or social institution, but as a spiritual place that has a central role in shaping a noble generation. The basic principles in Islamic family law are rooted in maqashid sharia, the objectives of Islamic law, which include the protection of religion (hifz aldin), soul (hifz al-nafs), mind (hifz al-'aql), offspring (hifz al-nasl), and property (hifz almal) (Halim et al., 2024). In this context, parents have a great responsibility, both morally

and legally, to ensure children's rights to good care, proper education, protection from violence, and moderate and tolerant religious guidance (Jafari, 2023). Islamic Family Law strictly regulates the relationship between husband and wife and parent-child, including the obligation to provide physical and mental support, educate children in an Islamic manner, and create a harmonious and loving household environment (Multazam & Badrus Zaman, 2024). These values play an important role in preventing family dysfunction, because by fulfilling children's basic needs, both physical and emotional, the potential for social deviance such as involvement in radical ideologies can be minimized. Therefore, the internalization of Islamic family law values is a strategic step in strengthening family resilience as the first stronghold in facing ideological and social challenges in the modern era.

The urgency of this research lies in the lack of integrated studies that examine the relationship between family dysfunction as a social setting, the sociological roots of terrorism, and the perspective of Islamic family law in the context of preventing radicalism in Indonesia. So far, studies on terrorism have mostly focused on ideological, political, and security aspects, without delving deeply into the micro-sociological factors that shape a person's tendency to engage in violent acts. In fact, the family as the smallest social unit plays a crucial role in the process of forming individual values, identity, and moral orientation (Elsayed, 2024). On the other hand, Islamic family law holds a set of principles that can serve as a normative framework in fostering a harmonious family and resilient to negative influences from outside (Sofiandi et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to use a multidisciplinary approach involving sociology, Islamic law and security studies to provide a comprehensive understanding as well as holistic preventive solutions. The purpose of this research is to explore how family dysfunction contributes to individual vulnerability to radicalism, as well as to explore how the principles of Islamic family law can serve as a normative foundation in strengthening family resilience as a strategy to prevent terrorism from upstream.

#### METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to deeply explore the relationship between family dysfunction, the sociological roots of terrorism, and principles in Islamic family law. This method was chosen because it is able to capture the complexity of social phenomena that are contextual and multidimensional, as well as providing space to understand reality holistically through sociological perspectives, Islamic law, and security studies. Data were collected through literature studies, analysis of relevant documents (such as BNPT reports, previous research results, and Islamic family law regulations), as well as in-depth interviews with relevant resource persons, such as former terrorists, sociologists, Islamic law experts, and community leaders. Data analysis is done thematically, by interpreting the patterns that emerge from each case, then linking them to the framework of social theory and Islamic family law norms. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of family dysfunction in the radicalization process, as well as emphasizing the importance of revitalizing Islamic family law values as a preventive strategy from upstream.

To analyze the data, the researcher applied thematic coding, identifying recurring themes and patterns related to family dysfunction, value transmission, and Islamic legal perspectives on family responsibility. The coding was conducted manually, without the use of software, due to the relatively small size of the dataset and the need for close, interpretive reading of context-specific narratives. Thematic categories were constructed

inductively, based on repeated meanings that emerged from the empirical materials and theoretical frameworks, particularly maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and sociological theories of deviance and disintegration. This analytical approach allowed the study to uncover connections between family conditions and radical tendencies, and to assess how Islamic family law could play a preventive role if contextualized and implemented beyond doctrinal norms.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## **Patterns of Family Dysfunction in Terrorists**

Findings from a number of cases of terrorism perpetrators in Indonesia show a consistent pattern of family dysfunction, especially in the aspects of structure and parenting functions. Most of the perpetrators come from broken home families, either due to divorce, death of parents, or prolonged household conflict. In many cases, fathers tend to be authoritarian, not actively involved in the parenting process, or even completely absent. Conversely, mothers are often in a passive and depressed position, unable to provide adequate emotional support for children. Communication patterns in the family tend to be rigid and lack value dialogue, so that children do not get space to process emotional and spiritual experiences in a healthy manner. The parenting that is applied is neglectful or too harsh without providing constructive moral explanations, making children vulnerable to identity searches outside the home, including to extreme ideological networks or narratives. In this context, the absence of balanced spiritual role models from parents is also a gap that radical groups utilize in the indoctrination process.

This finding strengthens the framework of social disorganization theory, which states that families that fail to perform their functions will lose the ability to internalize social and religious values effectively. In addition, this condition is in line with the concept of social alienation, where individuals who feel alienated from the social system and family tend to seek alternative affiliations that provide a sense of belonging, even if it is in the form of violent ideologies. Therefore, it can be concluded that family dysfunction is the starting point of the disconnection from the socialization of noble values, opening an empty space that is then filled by radical doctrines that promise identity, purpose and pseudo-solidarity.

Table 1. Summary of Findings

Factor Disfungsi	<b>Common Traits in Terrorists</b>	Social Consequences
Broken family structure	Broken home, father absent	Inequality of roles and
		attention
Dysfunctional parenting	Verbal/physical abuse,	Low self-esteem and
style	emotional neglect	empathy
Lack of value	No religious and moral dialog	Vulnerable to extremist
communication		influence
Absence of spiritual	Parents are not role models in	Identity search outside
role models	morals and faith	the family

# **Family Involvement in Radicalization**

One of the striking findings in this research is the collective involvement of family members in terrorism networks, where radicalization no longer occurs individually, but involves fathers, mothers, and even children as an ideological unit. The 2018 Surabaya suicide bombing case involving a nuclear family is a clear example of a new pattern of

domestic-based radicalization. An examination of several other cases shows that the radicalization process does not occur suddenly, but through continuous interaction in the private space of the family. Activities such as closed recitations at home, watching extremist content collectively, and ideological indoctrination by parents to children are hidden but effective mechanisms for spreading radicalism. In this context, the home, which is supposed to be a place of protection and character building, has turned into a space for the reproduction of violent values.

The findings show that radicalization has shifted from the public sphere to the private sphere, which is much more difficult to monitor by security forces and educational institutions. This process takes place intensively in a closed family environment, so that deradicalization strategies that have focused on educational institutions and religious communities have not touched the root of the problem in the domestic sphere. Therefore, an adaptive family law approach and household-based Islamic education are needed to stem the spread of extreme ideologies in the family sphere. This approach must emphasize the importance of strengthening moderate Islamic values and compassion in relations between family members. Recent developments in terrorism in Indonesia reveal a shift from individual radicalization to family-based radical networks, where spouses and even children are involved in violent extremist acts. This shift signals a transformation in the nature of radicalization: no longer confined to isolated individuals, radical ideologies are now transmitted, nurtured, and normalized within family units. Field data from deradicalization programs show that radical beliefs are often passed on not through schools or public sermons, but through domestic interactions, parental teachings, or shared media consumption at home.

This phenomenon highlights a profound gap in the application of Islamic family law. While Islamic legal texts emphasize the roles and responsibilities of parents in nurturing religious and ethical values (tarbiyyah), in practice, Islamic family law in Indonesia has not evolved into a functional system of ethical oversight or preventative regulation. Its implementation remains focused on procedural matters marriage registration, divorce, custody but lacks mechanisms to embed ethical education, emotional development, and resilience-building within family life. For example, the Kompilasi Hukum Islam (KHI) does not provide normative guidelines or institutional follow-up for families post-marriage or post-divorce that would ensure the transmission of moderate Islamic values. As a result, radical narratives can grow unchallenged within homes, despite the existence of formal marriage contracts and legal status under Islamic law.

This disconnect between the moral ambitions of fiqh and its practical instruments allows radical ideologies to occupy the emotional and spiritual space that Islamic family law fails to regulate. While texts on parental responsibility exist, their lack of operationalization in state-sanctioned family policies leaves many households vulnerable to ideological manipulation, especially in socioeconomically or emotionally fragile environments. To address this gap, Islamic family law must move beyond its juridical function and reclaim its role as a preventive ethical institution—one that does not merely settle disputes, but actively shapes family consciousness, values, and resilience against extremism.

### **Absence of Islamic Family Law Principles**

The findings in this study indicate that the families of terrorism perpetrators generally do not implement the basic principles of Islamic Family Law in their daily

lives. The relationship between family members seems to lack the touch of affection (mawaddah wa rahmah), and there is no active involvement of parents in providing balanced and moderate religious education. The value of parental responsibility towards children, such as fulfilling physical, emotional and spiritual needs, tends to be ignored. This condition causes an empty space for moral development which should be the main fortress in shaping children's character. As a result, children become more vulnerable to the influence of deviant ideologies because they do not have a strong moral and religious foundation from within the family.

The absence of these values indicates the non-implementation of maqashid sharia, the main objective of Islamic law, which includes the protection of the soul (hifz al-nafs), mind (hifz al-'aql) and offspring (hifz al-nasl). In the context of family, maqashid sharia obliges parents to ensure the safety and physical and mental well-being of children, including keeping them away from destructive thoughts. Allah SWT says in QS. At-Tahrim verse 6:

#### Meaning:

O you who believe, guard yourselves and your families from the fire of Hell, whose fuel is man and stone, and whose guardians are harsh and hard angels. They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and always do what is commanded.

This verse emphasizes the responsibility of parents in fostering their family as a whole, not only from an economic perspective, but also from a moral and spiritual perspective. In addition, the Prophet Muhammad said:

#### Meaning:

Each of you is a leader, and each leader will be held accountable for those he leads." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

This hadith emphasizes the role of parents as the main leaders in the household who are obliged to direct, supervise and protect their family members from deviating values. Thus, Islamic family law cannot be understood merely as a legal-formal norm, but must be interpreted as an ethical and practical guide to life in building a healthy, loving family that is resistant to the infiltration of radical values. The implementation of these values is one of the earliest preventive foundations in stemming the radicalization process from within the home.

The limited role of Islamic family law in preventing radicalization within families is not merely a matter of legal omission, but reflects a broader neglect in operationalizing its ethical and pedagogical functions. In many legal systems, including Indonesia's, Islamic family law has been reduced to procedural regulation handling matters such as marriage registration, divorce, and custody without extending its influence into value formation and moral education within the family. Yet, fiqh al-usrah (family jurisprudence) contains not only normative ideals but also actionable frameworks for shaping ethical family life. Classical and modern Islamic scholars alike emphasize the role of the family as *madrasah ūlā*—the first school of values. Principles such as *ḥifz al*-

nafs (protection of life), hifz al-dīn (preservation of religion), and hifz al-'aql (protection of reason) offer a rich basis for embedding preventative ethics into family policies.

What is lacking is not doctrine, but institutional translation. Islamic family law can and should be integrated into public policy instruments, such as:

- Islamic parenting modules based on maqāṣid, taught during premarital courses,
- Community-level education on moderating religious teaching at home,
- Post-divorce family support systems that emphasize emotional and spiritual development for children.

Such modules would go beyond doctrinal instruction and offer practical guidance on instilling compassion, critical thinking, and religious moderation from within the family. In this way, Islamic family law becomes not just a legal shield, but a moral compass that helps families build resilience against extremist narratives. Therefore, the absence of Islamic family law in radicalization prevention efforts should not be viewed as a structural limit of fiqh itself, but as a failure of legal and policy design to operationalize its core values into effective family governance tools.

# The Need for Integration of Multidisciplinary Approaches

The final findings of this research show that the handling of terrorism in Indonesia to date is still dominated by criminal law and security approaches that are repressive and reactive. Deradicalization efforts are mostly focused on the perpetrators after they have been involved in terrorist acts, with an approach that emphasizes legal aspects and intelligence surveillance. Unfortunately, this approach has not touched the root of the problem in the social sphere, especially the family as the first environment for the formation of a person's value orientation and worldview. The lack of involvement of sociological and educative approaches in understanding the family background of the perpetrators causes prevention efforts to be incomplete and tend to lose long-term effectiveness.

The discussion of these findings confirms the importance of integrating a multidisciplinary approach that involves not only security forces, but also religious institutions, educational institutions, social workers, and community leaders in designing deradicalization policies that touch the root of the problem. The family must be placed as the main subject in this process, not just as an object of surveillance. In this context, Islamic family law plays a strategic role as a normative framework that is able to guide family development comprehensively, ranging from aspects of affection, parental responsibility, to fair and moderate religious education. The implementation of Islamic family law values can not only function as spiritual and moral norms, but also as a concrete social prevention policy since upstream, even before the potential for radicalization arises in the family. Therefore, the integration of sociological, educative, and normative approaches into deradicalization policies is an urgent need in dealing with the new dynamics of radicalism that infiltrate the private spaces of society.

The complexity of terrorism and radicalization demands more than a legal or security response. It requires a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates legal, religious, sociological, and psychological dimensions. Within this framework, the family is not only a unit of socialization but also a potential site of resistance or susceptibility to extremist narratives. Islamic family law, when understood holistically, contains ethical

principles capable of reinforcing social harmony and moral resilience. However, realizing this potential requires cross-sectoral collaboration among state, religious, and civil institutions. The integration of Islamic legal values into preventive and educational programs should not remain theoretical. It must be translated into concrete institutional action. To this end, several government bodies and public institutions must take on proactive roles:

- The Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) can incorporate maqāṣid-based Islamic parenting education into premarital counseling programs and community religious guidance curricula, ensuring that families receive values-based training from the outset.
- The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), as a grassroots institution involved in marriage registration and family consultation, should be empowered to monitor post-marriage dynamics, detect early signs of ideological drift, and offer preventive interventions.
- The Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) can expand its mandate to include the psychosocial recovery of children and spouses from radicalized families, integrating spiritual rehabilitation with trauma-informed care.
- Additionally, Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI) can lead the development of contextual fiqh modules that integrate sociology, psychology, and Islamic ethics for practical application in community settings.

These actors, when coordinated through a national framework of family-based counter-radicalization, can institutionalize the ethical content of Islamic family law as a viable mechanism for prevention not only at the courtroom level, but in homes, schools, mosques, and counseling centers.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research concludes that family dysfunction has a significant contribution as a sociological root in the radicalization process that leads to the involvement of individuals, even entire family members, in acts of terrorism in Indonesia. Families that fail to perform the functions of nurturing, communicating, and fostering healthy values create an empty space that is prone to be filled by violent ideologies. The findings show that the radicalization process has moved from the public to the private sphere, with the household becoming an arena for the spread of extreme values through closed recitations, digital viewing, and direct indoctrination from parents to children. The absence of Islamic family law principles in the family relations of terrorists, such as love, responsibility, and balanced religious education, indicates the non-implementation of magashid sharia, which should be the foundation in protecting the soul, mind, and offspring. Therefore, counterterrorism cannot only rely on criminal law and security approaches, but must be integrated with sociological, educative, and normative approaches based on Islamic family law. A multidisciplinary approach that places the family as the central point of prevention since upstream becomes an urgent and relevant strategy in dealing with contemporary radicalization patterns that are increasingly rooted in the domestic space. Ultimately, the implementation of Islamic ethical values within the family must be recognized as the earliest and most fundamental form of deradicalization not a peripheral

moral gesture, but a core strategy that precedes and strengthens the limits of criminal law enforcement.

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