

## The Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth Against Violent Extremism

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### ABSTRACT

*This study targets to explain the roots of violent extremism in Philippines particularly in Mindanao wherein various terrorist attacks were being conducted. The researcher also looks on education interventions that have been implemented in fragile communities and/or those that have targeted high risk groups, as a way of discouraging violent extremism. The study employed the descriptive – evaluative method of research, with the researcher made survey questionnaire as the principal instrument for data gathering. The setting of the study is the City of Cotabato which is composed of various Islamic schools and institutions that offers Religion and Theology courses. Cotabato City is formerly part and the regional center of Region XII. But due to the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, it is now part of BARMM and served as the regional center. Being an independent component city, it's not a subject to regulation from the Provincial Government of Maguindanao where it is geographically located. The respondents of this study were the Islamic teachers (Mudarrisun) of selected Islamic schools (Madaris) and Professors (Asatidz) of Islamic Studies in selected institutions in Cotabato City that offer Religion and Theology courses. Only fifty (50) respondents were finally chosen to constitute the sample of the study which is complete enumeration of the target sample population. As a descriptive – evaluative study, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution and percentage. Frequency distribution was used to facilitate computation of summary values, such as the mean and standard deviation. Percentage was used to describe and compare relative proportion of categories. The mean and standard deviation were used to describe the typical perception and the variability of the perceptions of the respondents, respectively.*

### KEYWORDS

*role; education; Islamic Scholars; extremism; extremist groups*

### INTRODUCTION

The Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination is already a struggle of generations. The longest in Asia and may be the whole world, it started in the 16th century and up to now there is no clear indicator yet as to when it will end. Other peoples' struggle in the world have either succeeded or been totally crushed. The Moro struggle is still going on. It is an ongoing struggle for survival, cultural identity and for the right to self-determination.

Further, the struggle of the Bangsamoro Muslims of the Philippines for their right to self-determination against foreigner domination is the longest and bloodiest struggle in the entire history of mankind in the world which extends to about four hundred eighty-nine (489) years already up to this writing. First, the Bangsamoro Muslims fought, without let up, against the Spanish colonial power for 377 years from 1521 to 1898. Second, they fought a bloody war

against the American imperialist from 1898 to 1946, and third, they are still fighting against the Philippine neo-colonial power from 1946 up to the present. For 489 years, the Bangsamoro people fought foreign colonizers and earned the distinction of remaining unconquered.

In any case, the Bangsamoro battle for self-determination cannot be set in legitimate viewpoint without a brief account of the Islamic era which started within the year 1310 A.D. through the endeavors of Arab dealers, travelers, Sufis (saintly Muslims) and Muslim missionaries. Islam as a way of life (legislative issues, administration, financial frameworks, justice frameworks, etc.) spread and before long Islamic realms in Sulu and Maguindanao were established. Within the 15th century and early 16th century, the Sultanate of Sulu and Maguindanao came into being. Each sultanate was free, had autonomous control and had diplomatic and exchange relations with other nations within the region.

Other Muslim realms known as emirates, like those of Rajah Solaiman in Manila and the emirates of Panay and Mindoro were also born. This goes to show that Islam stands on record as the primary political institution, the primary organization religion, the primary instructive framework and the primary civilization within the Philippines, and that its economy was distant progressed than those of the other inborn communities. But some time recently the Bangsamoro seem completely develop into full country statehood, a arrangement of remote colonial mediations came their way.

The Philippines has been managing with rough assaults from radical bunches for decades but in spite of various endeavors to resolve debate between the Philippine government and Islamic separatist bunches, the nation proceeds to confront rough radicalism nowadays, as of late positioning 11th out of 162 countries within the 2015 Global Terrorism Index.

Violent extremism, but deeply-rooted within the history of the Philippines, has as of late taken a rearward sitting arrangement to the anti-drug campaign of President Duterte. In any case, it is basic that we keep our eyes peeled for the modern fear that has sprung into presence in Mindanao. The imposing risk that has struck fear among billions of people has landed within the Philippines. ISIS has started to saturate Southeast Asia and the Philippines are at the beat of their list.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study employed the descriptive-evaluative method of research, with the researcher made survey questionnaire as the principal instrument for data gathering. The setting of the study is the City of Cotabato which is composed of various Islamic schools and institutions that offers Religion and Theology courses. The instrument used in the study was a researcher made questionnaire composed of three four (4) parts. Part I measures the level of perceptions of the respondents on the Ideological Views of the Extremist Groups. Part II determines Whether the Ideological Views of Extremist Groups Resulted to Violent Acts. Part III measures the level of perceptions of the respondents on the Roles of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Formal Education and Non-Formal. Part IV is on the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Value Formation and Spiritual Strengthening. Part V focus on Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address this Problem of Violent Extremism in terms of Security Measures, Countering Violent Extremism Policy and Advocacy. Data gathered in this study was treated using descriptive statistics namely; mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution and percentage. Frequency distribution was used to facilitate computation of summary values, such as the mean and standard deviation. Percentage was used to describe

and compare relative proportion of categories. The mean and standard deviation were used to describe the typical perception and the variability of the perceptions of the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of data using the indicators contained in the survey questionnaire yielded the following results:

**Table I.** Level of Perceptions of the Respondents on the Ideological Views of the Extremist Groups

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Killings against oppressors is justified as Jihad	3.78	1.13	Agree
2. Fighting for the cause of Almighty Allah is the Greatest Jihad	3.56	1.16	Agree
3. Killing to enforce Islam to non-Muslim is necessary	3.96	.99	Agree
4. Mass Killings and destruction of properties are necessary in times of war against political leaders.	4.20	.89	Agree
5. Killing to remove a tyrant is justified as Jihad and required among Muslim	4.10	.79	Agree
6. Killing to change a Social Order is necessary	4.04	.72	Agree
7. When one kills for the sake of Islam, his place in Paradise is assured	4.38	.85	Agree
8. Extremist groups are the soldiers and warriors of Allah	4.30	1.07	Agree
9. Because of killings of the extremist groups, they are assured to be provided with the best reception in the Paredise	4.50	.50	Strongly Agree
10. Anyone not believing on Islam are (Continuation) Disbelievers (Kufr) so they are enemy of Muslim, therefore they deserved to be killed and Allah will reward you for that.	4.40	1.10	Agree
11. A non-believer of the faith of Islam could never be a friend to believer	4.04	1.31	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	4.10		Agree

Table 1 show the level of perceptions of the respondents on the ideological views of the extremist groups. Generally, data on Table 1 garnered a grand mean of 4.10 which described that the perceptions of the respondents on the ideological views of the extremist groups was agreed.

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Responses on Whether the Ideological Views of Extremist Groups Resulted to Violent Acts

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
1. Yes	42	84%
2. No	5	10%
3. Uncertain	3	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data on Table 2 show that Eighty-Four Percent (84%) of the respondents said YES that the ideological views of extremist groups resulted to their violent acts; Ten Percent (10%) of the respondents said No that their ideological views were not actually lead them to commit

violent acts. Six Percent (6%) of the respondents were uncertain about the ideological views of the extremist groups. This implies that that majority of the respondents believed that their ideological views were the drivers of violent extremism.

**Table 3.** Evaluation on the Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Formal Education

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. One of the critical roles of Islamic Scholar in educating the youth against violent extremism is to integrate the discussion of the topic in every subject area in the madrasah	4.24	1.11	Agree
2. Another role of Islamic Scholar is to work at enhancing the Curriculum of the Madrasah so that separate discussion on the topic on Violent Extremism will be included.	4.64	.48	Strongly Agree
3. Another role of the Islamic Scholar is to craft textbooks, brochures and other learning materials for the increase of awareness on the topic of Violent Extremism and its effect	4.76	.43	Strongly Agree
4. Another role of the Islamic Scholar is to provide extensive training to those Teachers (Assatids) on the topic of Violent Extremism	4.62	.57	Strongly Agree
5. Another role of the Islamic Scholars is to increase the Education, Information Campaign in school premises or Madrasah schools on the topic of Violent Extremism.	4.74	.44	Strongly Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	4.60		Strongly Agree

Table 3 show the Evaluation on the Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Formal Education. Generally, data on Table 3 garnered a grand mean of 4.60 which described that the role of Islamic scholars in the education of Muslim youth against violent extremism in terms of formal education was strongly agreed.

**Table 4.** Evaluation on the Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Non-Formal Education

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. One role of Islamic Scholar to influence the Youth on the topic of Violent Extremism is to organized an Islamic Leadership Camp for youth design as avenue to discuss many topics including Violent Extremism.	4.72	.54	Agree
2. Another role of Islamic Scholars is may be organized Islamic Sport Competition among youth to divert their attention in being recruit into Extremist movement.	4.60	.49	Strongly Agree
3. Islamic Scholars have great influence to Muslim so it is suggested that one role they can play is to engage the tri-media for a special program focus on raising awareness on Violent Extremism. They can even have invited some youth leaders as testimony.	4.72	.45	Strongly Agree

4.	Islamic Scholar also can include violent Extremism discussions every KHUTBA Sermon during Friday (Jumuah) or any congregational prayer.	4.68	.74	Strongly Agree
5.	Islamic Scholars can attend “Pulong–Pulong sa Bayan” or Barangay Assembly to discuss Violent Extremism.	4.60	.57	Strongly Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		4.66		Strongly Agree

As shown on the above Table, the respondents gave a rating of strongly agree as evidence by the grand mean of 4.66, which implies that the that majority of them perceived also the great importance of non-formal education for the Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism.

**Table 5.** Summary of Respondents’ Evaluation on the Role of Islamic Scholar in the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Formal Education and Non-Formal Education

	Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
A.	Formal Education	4.60	Strongly Agree
B.	Non-Formal Education	4.60	Strongly Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>4.63</b>	Strongly Agree

As gleaned in the data above, the foregoing findings provide evidences to conclude that the role of Islamic scholars in both education – formal and non-formal education of Muslim youth against Violent Extremism are equal in importance. This was justified by a grand mean of 4.63 described as strongly agree.

**Table 6.** Evaluation on the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Value Formation

	Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1.	Islamic Scholars can organize a forum with school leaders to include in their Guidance Counselling program the discussion of Islamic ethics and Morality.	1.34	.63	Always Effective
2.	Islamic Scholars can have print pamphlets or Comics style material on good Islamic Values especially the general principles of Enjoining what is right and forbidding wrong.	1.34	.63	Always Effective
3.	Islamic Scholars can discuss in the TV or Radio many of the Islamic Principles of good values.	1.38	.67	Always Effective
4.	Moral recovery program must be emphasized in the Khutba of Islamic Scholars in Masjid or in the Islamic Youth Leadership Camp to be organized by Islamic Scholars.	1.18	.48	Always Effective
5.	Islamic Scholars Must Convince the BARMM Government to include in the Basic Education Curriculum Islamic Ethics and Morality	1.30	.65	Always Effective
<b>Grand Mean</b>		1.30		Always Effective

Table 6 suggest that all items regarding the most effective approach of Islamic Scholars were always effective on the Value Formation of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism as evidence by the grand mean of 1.30.

**Table 7.** Evaluation on the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Spiritual Strengthening

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Islamic Scholars should have more Sermon Activities (Da'wah) where youth are invited for the youth to hone their spiritual practices.	1.38	.63	Always
2. A "house-to-house" visit as a family session conversation should be done by Islamic Scholars to council both parents and their children on Islam and the beauty of strong faith.	1.12	.38	Always Effective
3. Islamic Scholars must always give emphasis on the reward of following strictly the five (5) Pillars of Islam and six (6) tenets of faith in Islam.	1.16	.47	Always Effective
4. Islamic Scholars must request their children to organized public forum or debate on the "DEEN".	1.32	.65	Always Effective
5. Quiz Bee for children and Contest on the memorization of the Quran must always be organized in all municipality supervise by Islamic Scholars.	1.14	.45	Always Effective
<b>Grand Mean</b>	1.27		Always Effective

Table 7 suggest that all items regarding the most effective approach of Islamic Scholars were always effective on the Spiritual Strengthening of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism as evidence by the grand mean of 1.27.

**Table 8.** Summary of Respondents' Evaluation on the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in the Two Areas

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
A. Value Formation	1.30	Always Effective
B. Spritual Strengthening	1.27	Always Effective
<b>Grand Mean</b>	1.28	Always Effective

The above findings, in general, reflects an always effective approach of the Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Value Formation and Spritual Strengthening. This was justified by a grand mean of 1.28 described as always effective.

**Table 9.** Evaluation on the Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address the Problem of Violent Extremism in terms of Security Measures

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Government establishes several checkpoints in conflict sensitive areas like in the BARMM and Mindanao where some believed terrorist are organized.	4.64	.56	Strongly Agree
2. Government have strengthened Military Camp especially on their Capacity to attacked an enemy camp or terrorist movement.	4.56	.67	Strongly Agree

3.	Government every now and the trained special force of the Military like the SAP to counter Violent Extremism	4.58	.67	Strongly Agree
4.	Create armory and immunization by Buying necessary gadgets, armament etc. all for the purpose of providing the military as preparation for possible war against terrorist.	4.76	.55	Strongly Agree
5.	Government always provide reward for the arrest of Terrorist leaders like Marwan, Hapilon and the like	4.38	.97	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		4.58		Strongly Agree

As reflected in Table 9, data show that in terms of Security Measures done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to address the problem of violent extremism, it garnered a grand mean of 4.58. The above findings imply that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) will be more effective in the Prevention of Violent Extremism when the mentioned measures will be established.

**Table 10.** Evaluation on the Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address the Problem of Violent Extremism in terms of Countering Violent Extremism Policy

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. The Government adopted the Anti-Terrorism Act of America and localized its implementation.	3.98	1.02	Agree
2. Government Increase the Budgetary allocation to Men-In-Uniform (ex. PNP, Marines, AFP etc.)	4.52	.86	Strongly Agree
3. Establishment of BPAT unit in every Barangay as a community policing.	4.84	.37	Strongly Agree
4. Strengthening of the Barangay Justice Program to settle disputes within the Barangay level.	4.56	.50	Strongly Agree
5. Adoption and Implementation of Curfew Hours especially among youth in Conflict Sensitive areas.	4.82	.39	Strongly Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		4.54	Strongly Agree

As reflected in Table 10, data show that in terms of Countering Violent Extremism Policy done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to address the problem of violent extremism, it garnered a grand mean of 4.54. The above findings imply that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) will be more effective in the Prevention of Violent Extremism when the mentioned measures will be established.

**Table 11.** Evaluation on the Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address the Problem of Violent Extremism in terms of Advocacy

Indicator	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Government Strengthening their coordination with other countries for the countering of Violent Extremism.	4.46	.50	Agree
2. Government thru the Military have some advocacy forum in discussing Violent Extremism.	4.68	.71	Strongly Agree
3. PNP have organized some Forum especially with the Youth and other different sector as	4.48	.68	Agree

stakeholders to discuss issue on Security Measures.			
4.	Some pamphlets and brochures on Violent Extremism was distributed in all areas to raise public awareness on the issue.	4.72	.54 Strongly Agree
5.	Some tarpaulin on listed names with pictures of considered terrorist groups and anti-terrorism activities of the Government thru the Military also in strategic areas especially in BARMM and Mindanao were posted for public awareness.	4.50	.93 Strongly Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		4.57	Strongly Agree

As reflected in Table 11, data show that in terms of Advocacy done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to address the problem of violent extremism, it garnered a grand mean of 4.57. The above findings imply that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) will be more effective in the Prevention of Violent Extremism when the mentioned measures will be established.

**Table 12.** Summary of Respondents’ Evaluation Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address this Problem of Violent Extremism in the Three Areas

	Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
A.	Security Measures	4.58	Strongly Agree
B.	Countering Violent Extremism Policy	4.54	Strongly Agree
C.	Advocacy	4.57	Strongly Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>4.56</b>	Strongly Agree

To sum up the evaluation of the respondents in the three areas, each of the overall means are recalled and the general average was obtained, as shown in Table 12. This value reflects the total picture of Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address the Problem of Violent Extremism as perceived by the respondents. The foregoing findings provide evidences to conclude that in order to address the problem of Violent Extremism, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) must enforce the all indicators mentioned in the three areas. This was justified by a grand mean of 4.56 described as always effective.

The findings revealed that in the area of Ideological Views of the Extremist Groups, the respondents evaluated it as agree which is indicative of level of perceptions. While, in the area of Whether the Ideological Views of Extremist Groups Resulted to Violent Acts, the respondents evaluated as Yes that the Ideological Views of Extremist Groups Resulted to their Violent Acts which is an indication of high level of percentage.

On the other hand, on matters about the Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth Against Violent Extremism in terms of Formal and Non-Formal Education, on the first hand, the respondents evaluated the role of Islamic Scholars in Formal Education as strongly agree. On the other hand, the respondents also evaluated the role of Islamic Scholars in Non-Formal Education as strongly agree. Overall, the respondents evaluated the Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth Against Violent Extremism in both types of education as strongly agree.

As to the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Value Formation and Spiritual Strengthening, on the first hand, the respondents evaluated the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the

Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Value Formation as always effective. On the other hand, the respondents evaluated the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in terms of Spiritual Strengthening as always effective also. Overall, the respondents evaluated the Most Effective Approach of Islamic Scholar on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism in two areas as always effective.

Also, In the aspect of the Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address the Problem of Violent Extremism in terms of Security Measures, Countering Violent Extremism Policy and Advocacy, the respondents evaluated Measures Done by Government in terms of Security Measures as strongly agree. In terms of Countering Violent Extremism Policy, they also evaluated the Measures Done by the Government as strongly agree, and in terms of Advocacy, they evaluated it as strongly agree. Overall, the respondents evaluated the Measures Done by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to Address the Problem of Violent Extremism in three areas as strongly agree

### **Recommendations**

In view of the results and the conclusions, the following are recommended:

It is strongly suggested that Islamic Scholars in the Philippines particularly in Mindanao are voices of authority who can be influential in shaping information for vulnerable Muslim Youth who are searching for guidance and meaning. There is an opportunity for Islamic religious leaders to become more active on the Education of Muslim Youth against Violent Extremism, and asking coordination for a group such as the National Commission of Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), to trial an active engagement mechanism to help guide and share accurate information on Islamic practice and teachings.

It is also suggested that there is a need to encourage Islamic scholar to execute their role as, it is clear that the Role of Islamic Scholars in the Education of Muslim Youth Against Violent Extremism plays a very significant role in a country's development and stability, and equitable access to quality education is in and of itself a valuable goal for most governments. On the Other hand, it is also clear that governments must go beyond focusing only on access to education, thus they must also focus on quality and relevance of their education systems in order to generate real impact.

In addition, It is highly recommended that everyone must be involved in the fight against violent extremism to prevent the Muslim youth in joining such group. Parents has also a great responsibilities including other institutions in putting a stop to violent extremism because everyone experience the extent of damage it could cause to the community if such practice exist. Together we should save our Muslim youth in joining violent extremism group.

Lastly, other researches can be conducted to validate the findings of the study specially those areas in Bangsamoro land where there is a strong presence of Violent extremist like Abu Sayaf Group.

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