

# Unveiling the true concept of *al-wala' wal baro'*: a refreshing perspective on *aqidah* nir radicalism in islamic education

Yusuf Hanafiah <sup>a,1,\*</sup> , Zalik Nuryana <sup>a,2</sup> , Yazida Ichsan <sup>a,3</sup> 

Email: <sup>1</sup> [yusuf.hanafiah@pai.uad.ac.id](mailto:yusuf.hanafiah@pai.uad.ac.id), <sup>2</sup> [zalik.nuryana@uad.ac.id](mailto:zalik.nuryana@uad.ac.id), <sup>3</sup> [yazida.ichsan@pai.uad.ac.id](mailto:yazida.ichsan@pai.uad.ac.id)

<sup>a</sup> Department of Islamic Education, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia

\*Correspondent

## ABSTRACT

*Aqidah* is the theological foundation of Islam, and among its requirements for a Muslim is understanding and practicing the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. However, this concept is often misunderstood in practice. This research aimed to clarify *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* as a normal ideology without any radical elements, using a qualitative literature review approach. The results show that 1) *al-wala'*, which signifies loyalty to fellow Muslims, is a normal concept; 2) Additionally, *al-baro'* refers to turning away from neglectful elements, but Muslims can still act humanely towards polytheists as long as they are not openly fighting against Islam.; 3) Furthermore, Islamic education plays a vital role in instilling *aqidah* without any radical elements. The findings of this study also provide a new perspective on Islamic education by reinterpreting the concept of *aqidah* without any radical elements. This research contributes to the discourse on *aqidah*, *al-wala' wal baro'*, and Islamic education, providing insights that can help in promoting a balanced understanding of these concepts and countering misinterpretations that may lead to radical ideologies, thereby contributing to the intellectual discourse on contemporary Islamic studies.

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## Introduction

Islam is a religion with a distinctive theological framework called *aqidah*. In Islam, it holds a very important and strategic position. *Aqidah* is the fundamental belief foundation for every Muslim (Sabila, 2020). It refers to the belief that must be believed to be true in the heart, which brings peace to the soul, and from which pure faith emerges without being contaminated by any elements of doubt. In short, *aqidah* is a fundamental matter of faith in Islam. In a deeper sense, *aqidah* is not only about theology. It is also implemented as a norm of life (Khaerudin, 2014). One of the most interesting discourses on the theme of *aqidah* is the issue of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. *Al-wala'* means being close to, loving, helping, and being loyal to Muslims.

It is a doctrinal pattern in the Islamic community's *aqidah* discourse, in which they place their love and loyalty towards each other. On the other hand, *al-baro'* terminologically refers to the effort to distance oneself from non-Muslims and not to love them in terms of faith. Like *al-wala'*, *al-baro'* is also a pattern of indoctrination of Muslims so that they do not give their loyalty to non-Muslims, especially in the context of faith (Muhammad Said al-Qathani, 1995). In more practical terms, Brachman explains that the propaganda of global terrorist movements such as Al-Qaeda is driven by the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. Some terrorist actions they carried out include the 9/11 attacks. They are suspected of continuing to promote terrorist movements in the Middle East (Brachman, 2008). This is certainly a dangerous misconception. Viewed from the psychology of religion perspective, the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is something common. Further, fellow believers with the same beliefs tend to have a strong sense of brotherhood (Sururin, 2004).

However, based on the author's initial observations, it is found that *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is often misunderstood. Furthermore, the worst part is that this concept is often assumed to be the embryo of radicalism in Islam. For example, some people consider *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* as the basis for Salafi-Wahabi movement, which tends to isolate fellow Muslims (Ali, 2019). Salafi-Wahhabi movement represents a conservative strand of Islamic thought that seeks to adhere strictly to what its followers believe are the original teachings of Islam. Conceptually, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is a form of fortification for Muslims against the mixing of *aqidah* with its destructive factors. Additionally, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is essentially oriented towards fostering love among fellow Muslims, and serves as a parameter for society in communicating within heterogeneous social realities.

Based on the previous elaboration, the authors focus on a study related to the definition and interpretation of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* and its application in social and religious life in a more in-depth manner. The purpose of this research is to describe and interpret *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* comprehensively. Specifically, it aims to create a concept for instilling faith without radicalism, especially in terms of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, which is closely related to the social and religious life of the people. In addition, this research has a vital urgency as the diversity of society in the homeland is currently very dynamic with various phenomena occurring, including radicalism which certainly harms various parties. Thus, it is expected that this research can help enlighten public's understanding on *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* and its implementation in life without being contaminated by radicalism.

In this section, the authors describe previous studies related to this research as a basis for comparison. The first study is done by Saifudin Asrori entitled "Directing the Call of Jihad: Arguments of Radicalism and Extremism in Indonesia". The research results show that the roots of radicalism and extremism in Indonesia are caused by several factors such as *tawhid*, *aqidah*, *takfir*, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, and *jihad* (Saifudin Asrori, 2019). *Tawhid* is the concept of surrendering

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oneself to Allah SWT and denying any other deity besides Allah. *Jihad* is the effort to mobilize all capabilities to achieve a specific goal. In another context, jihad is also understood as physical warfare against non-Muslim individuals who threaten or attack Muslims physically, with the aim of upholding and defending the Islamic religion. *Takfir* is the act of declaring someone as a disbeliever. The research results share a similarity with this study in regard to the topic of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. However, there is a significant difference. This study leans more towards the efforts to reinterpret the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to instill non-radicalism. In addition, David Bukay in his article argues that Osama bin Laden's actions in the 9/11 attacks were based on the spirit of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* in which the focus is to hate and fight non-Muslims. The article also describes a real misunderstanding on the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* which can lead to brutal and vulgar terrorist acts (Bukay, 2013). In principle, the content of this article is different from previous research in which this study focuses more on the improvement of the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* itself.

Furthermore, there is a journal article titled "Global Salafism as an Islamic Revivalism Movement" written by Ahmad Ma'ruf. The article focuses on the movement of certain individuals in popularizing the concept of the Ahl Hadith, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, and anti-Shi'ism which led to the emergence of the Global Salafism group (Ma'ruf, 2016). In terms of the theme, the article still has an intersection with this research, namely in the terminology of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* which is considered as the basis of the global extremist movement. However, in terms of the main material of the research, there is a significant difference. This study leans more towards the efforts to reinterpret the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* in an attempt to cultivate faith without radicalism.

Another article titled "Encouragement of Jihad Arguments for Radicalization and Extremism in Indonesia" written by S. Asori *et al.* finds that there are several Islamic doctrines such as *tawhid*, *aqidah*, *takfir*, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, and *jihad*. These doctrines are believed to have caused terrorism movements in the country by some individuals (Asrori *et al.*, 2020). Substantially, the topic of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* becomes the main focus in both articles. However, in terms of analytical orientation, there are many differences where this study is more inclined to reinterpret the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to cultivate non-radicalism ideology.

Anthony N. Celso also wrote an article titled "More than the Voice of the Caliphate: The Destructive Legacy of Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani." which discusses the actions of Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, one of the top leaders of ISIS. Al-Adnani is considered to have spread propaganda in the Salafi-Jihadi world, which consists of three core principles: *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, *jihad*, and *takfir*. Additionally, the article explains Al-Adnani's actions in ISIS terrorism movements ("More than the Voice of the Caliphate: The Destructive Legacy of Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani," 2016). Like in the previous literature, substantively, only the topic of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* has a common thread with

the topic in this article.

Furthermore, in terms of analytical orientation, there are many differences where this study is more inclined to reinterpret the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to cultivate a radicalism-free ideology. Regarding the influence of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* concept on social life, there is an article titled "Violent Extremism in the Perspective of Religious Studies" written by Burhanudin Muhtadi. This paper reveals that *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* dogma is the starting point for extremist behavior. Additionally, this writing explains that *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is the cause of the widespread cases of intolerance in pluralistic religious life (Muhtadi, 2019). Similar to the previous literature, there is a substantial similarity between the two topics in this article. However, in terms of analytical orientation, there are many differences as this study leans towards the reinterpretation of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to promote a non-radicalized belief system.

Moreover, another article written by Douglas Weeks titled "Comparing Ideologies: Al Muhajiroun, Al Qaeda, and Islamic State" analyzes the desire of certain groups in Islam to establish a caliphate system and implement Islamic law. The discussion in this paper broadly compares the core beliefs and practices of Al Muhajirin/Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic State. All have the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* in their ideology. The article appears to be limited in describing the role of these groups in their efforts to re-establish the caliphate, one of which is by emphasizing the principle of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* (Weeks, 2020).

In terms of analytical orientation, this research has many differences since it leans more towards reinterpreting the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to promote a non-radicalism ideology. Lastly, another journal article titled "The Myth of Turkish Islam: The Influence of Naqshbandi-Gümüşhanevi Thought in Turkish Islamic Orthodoxy" written by Omer F. Erturk focuses on the six most fundamental issues in Islam, namely *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, apostasy, *jihad*, Islamic state, women, and art and philosophy. This study concludes that Islam in Turkey is quite good at the theological level (Erturk, 2022).

Overall, based on the previous literature analysis, there is a substantial similarity in the topic of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*, which has a common thread with the topic in this article. Furthermore, in terms of analytical orientation, there are many differences as this research is more inclined towards interpreting the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to cultivate a non-radicalized ideology. Referring to the previous discussions, it can be concluded that there is a common thread between previous and current research. The meeting point is in the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. However, substantively, this research has fundamental differences with previous research in terms of research focus, as shown in Fig. 1.

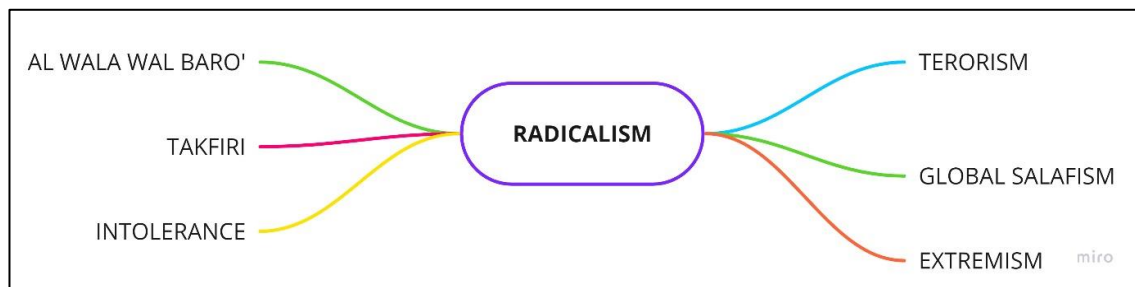


Fig 1. Study Map of Radicalism

Therefore, it is clear that the state of the art of this research is on the reinterpretation of the *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to cultivate a non-radicalized ideology. Further, the novelty of this research lies in the cultivation of non-radicalism to strengthen the *aqidah* of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. In terms of positioning, this research enriches the knowledge and conceptual treasure of socio-humanities in the topic of deradicalization. Based on the previous elaboration, the purpose of this research is to deeply explore the topic of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. Thus, it is expected that this research will pave the way for the concept of non-radicalism to strengthen the *aqidah* in the future. This research uses a qualitative method with a literature research approach. The results of this research are expected to provide a new perspective in the world of Islamic education in reinterpreting the concept of *aqidah* without any radicalism.

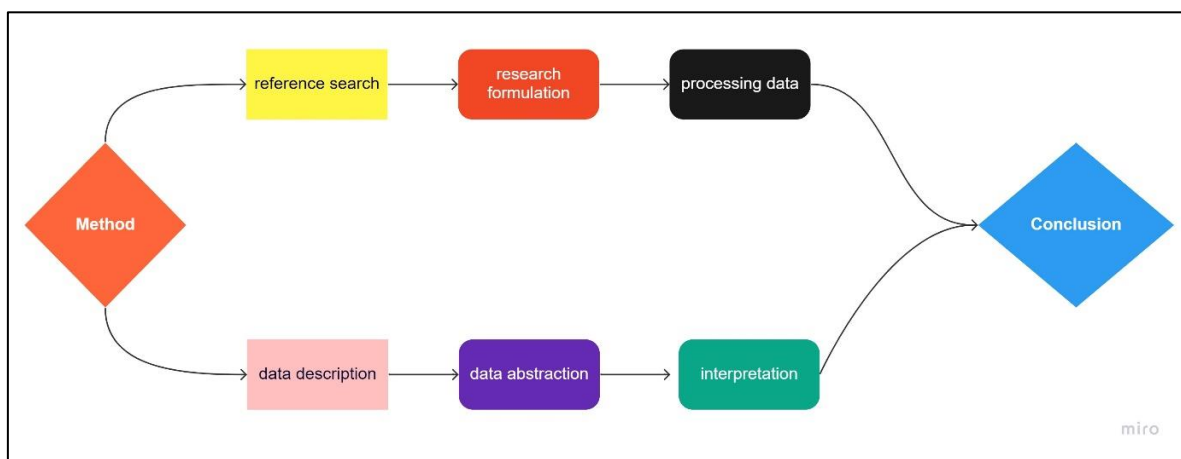


Fig 2. Analysis Flow

This research is qualitative in nature. Creswell states that qualitative research is research that applies relevant methods to reveal occurring social humanities phenomena (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2007). Meanwhile, this type of research is literature research. This research is carried out to solve a theoretical problem by conducting a careful and in-depth study of relevant literature to reveal new theories/concepts (Arikunto, 2002). Literature review research has a typical scenario or procedure in its implementation, namely 1) tracing primary and secondary references; 2)

classifying research formulas; 3) processing data/source citations; 4) displaying data; 5) abstracting data; 6) interpreting data; and 7) conducting final inference (Darmalaksana, 2020). This procedure is shown in Figure 2. The analysis technique in this research is done using content and descriptive analysis. Various literature sources obtained from various references are thoroughly and comprehensively examined to produce a conceptual/idea that has an element of novelty (Fadli, 2021).

## Discussion

*Aqidah* is a fundamental theological structure in Islam. It is the basis of faith for every Muslim. It is understood as a matter that must be believed to be true in the heart, which brings tranquility to the soul, and from which arises a pure conviction without being contaminated by any elements of doubt. In short, *aqidah* is a fundamental matter of faith in Islam (Ahmad, 2019). One of the most interesting discourses in the theme of *aqidah* is the issue of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. *Al-wala'* in terminology means being close to, loving, helping, and being loyal to the Muslim community. It is a doctrinal pattern in the discussion of the Islamic faith so that they place their love and loyalty towards fellow Muslims.

On the other hand, terminologically, *al-baro'* means the effort to turn away from non-Muslims and not to love them within the corridor of faith. Like *al-wala'*, *al-baro'* is also a doctrinal pattern among Muslims to not give their loyalty to non-Muslims, especially in the context of faith. However, based on the author's initial observations, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* concept is often misunderstood. Worse yet, this concept is often assumed as the embryo of radicalism in Islam. In fact, conceptually, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is a form of protection for Muslims from mixing their beliefs with destructive factors. Moreover, *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is basically oriented towards fostering love among fellow Muslims. On the other hand, it also serves as a parameter for society in interacting within heterogeneous social realities (Shalih bin Fauzan, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, discourse surrounding *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is interesting but tends to be neglected by Islamic scholars. *Al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is considered as a sensitive topic that can lead to deviations in religion, especially in the context of radicalism. As it is regarded as sensitive and may potentially cause deviations, it is necessary to make comprehensive efforts to interpret the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* itself. This concept should be studied by Muslim academics with a spirit of purification so that the society can be more enlightened. Further, these scholars also need to carry out large-scale scientific publications to enrich Islamic scientific treasury.

## Understanding of *Al-Wala'*

In this section, the authors provide a detailed explanation on the comprehensive meaning of

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*al-wala'*. Etymologically, *al-wala'* is derived from the word *waliya*, which means near or close. In this context, the closeness referred to is the proximity, love, and loyalty among Muslims. Essentially, what underlies loyalty is love. It helps foster attitudes of tenderness, mutual assistance, protection, and giving. Terminologically, it can be understood as an attitude of mutual love, closeness, and loyalty to fellow Muslims because of their shared beliefs and faith. If understood clearly and comprehensively, there will be no difference in the context of *al-wala'*. It is only natural that people of the same ideology, race, religion, class, and belief love and have loyalty among each other. In this context, it is considered normal and even supported by sociological theory that people of the same religion or belief system have the role in strengthening brotherhood.

Based on the theory, religion or belief naturally creates a sense of intrinsic respect towards fellow followers (Ari, 2016). Similarly, Ibn Khaldun states that one of the functions of religion or belief is to promote solidarity. People with the same faith will automatically develop a strong sense of solidarity in their hearts. This is a universal theory that applies at all times and places. Solidarity, in this context, is a positive thing that can build a civilized society (Dawn, 2019). Therefore, the discourse that portrays loyalty and solidarity among Muslims as one of the roots of radicalism is a false opinion. In a social context, it is inevitable that community members with the same beliefs will love each other.

Further, feelings of solidarity, interdependence, collective motivation, and mutual need will arise. In social dynamics, this is normal and does not contradict any existing norms. In addition, based on psychological and social contexts, the concept of *al-wala'* in Islamic faith is correct and not a form of deviation. Therefore, the concept of *al-wala'* does not violate any psychological or social theories. In the context of textual evidence, both the Qur'an and Hadith provide numerous verses and statements that support the urgency of practicing *al-wala'* in life. Among them is Surah Al-Maidah, verses 55-56, which mentions that Allah establishes that the best protectors of the faithful are Allah, His Messenger, and the fellow believers.

Ibn Kathir states that based on the verse, no non-Muslim is deemed worthy of protecting the Muslim community. Another hadith narrated by Ahmad reveals that Prophet Muhammad emphasizes that one of the indicators of a person's strength of faith is to love and hate for the sake of Allah. The hadith cannot be interpreted merely textually; rather, its explicit meaning must also be understood. The love referred to in this context is to love fellow believers because of the mutual perception of Allah SWT. In the context of religious doctrine, loving fellow Muslims is a command that is consistent with scriptural texts. As the theory goes, the origin of a command is to make it obligatory.

Therefore, anything commanded in any religion must essentially be carried out. As previously

mentioned, loving fellow Muslims is an indicator of strong faith. Thus, the concept of *al-wala'* here is a religious command that is obligatory. There is no room for legal negotiation in its implementation in the realm of life. History has recorded how Prophet Muhammad was able to unite the Arabs from their division at that time. He also freed them from the hegemony of inherited destruction. It was the approach of *al-wala'* that was used at that time. It cannot be denied that the concept of *al-wala'* is an effective strategy that must be implemented in the midst of a divided Muslim community. It is paradoxical to associate the concept of *al-wala'* with radicalism.

If understood clearly, the concept of *al-wala'* is actually the embryo of unity and harmony desired by every religious community. Without the approach of *al-wala'*, it is impossible for the Muslim community to grow rapidly and spread Islam to all corners of the world. The same applies to this country as it is impossible to achieve essential independence without unity and solidarity. This also applies to every follower of any religion to strengthen internal solidarity among each other. A real example is the history of the fall of Islamic Andalusia in the past. At that time, the Christian community united under the banner of the Cross and successfully overthrew Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula with the spirit of Christianity (Setiawan, 2021).

### **Dialectics on Al-Baro'**

In this section, the authors discuss the dialectics surrounding the terminology *al-baro'*. As explained earlier, *al-baro'* is defined as "disavowal" or "hatred". The hatred referred to here is hatred towards disbelief and neglectful behavior. The hands should be kept away from the perpetrators in the corridors of poverty and the shirk they commit. Meanwhile, in the spectrum of humanism, every Muslim must still do good deeds and be fair to anyone, including non-Muslims. The terminology of hatred here is specific, namely hatred in the context of poverty and neglectfulness committed by someone. It is not physical hatred that can lead to violent action. In this context, it is important to emphasize that such hatred is not a blind rejection that opens the door to radicalism and extremism.

Regarding the discussion on *al-baro'*, see Surah 60, verse 4 of the Quran where Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) provides a proportional example in the context of *al-baro'*. In At-Thabari's commentary, several important points are mentioned about Prophet Ibrahim's *al-baro'* attitude, including 1) he only withdraws his hands from matters related to harm and shirk, not from the person himself; 2) he abandons all forms of worship other than Allah; and 3) his denial seems to be a denial within the corridor of faith, not an absolute denial. If a shirk person has a belief, then denial no longer applies (At-Thabari, 1994). This verse clearly shows that there is no command or advice for physical violence even if there is a difference in beliefs.

In fact, in verse 8 of Surah 60 of the Quran, it is mentioned that believers are advised to do



good deeds physically and socially to people, including polytheists who do not fight against Muslims (At-Thabari, 1994). Based on the previous elaborations, it is clear that the concept of *al-baro'* should not be interpreted in an extreme way. Instead, *al-baro'* can be equated with a theological barrier that distinguishes the behavior of believers from non-believers. This falls within the corridor of religious beliefs, where everyone has the right to protect their own religious beliefs.

### **Promoting Non-Radicalism *Aqidah* through Education**

Islam proposes the tagline "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*" which means mercy for all beings. It is not merely an illusion as it is proven by Islamic teachings found in the texts of the Quran and the Sunnah. This tagline is closely related to moderate Islamic *Aqidah*. It is a conception that does not lean towards the right or the left (Imam Mashuri; et al., 2020). Strengthening *aqidah* through education is crucially important as students are in a learning phase, making it an opportunity to instill non-radical *aqidah* from an early age. There are several strategic efforts that can be done in the education sector to prevent deviation from the right *aqidah*. First, educational institutions can organize various extracurricular activities in the form of Islamic studies. It is important to balance non-religious activities at an educational institution. These activities can be designed with attractive concepts and involve relevant speakers depending on the students' developmental stages, as all forms of educational efforts should be based on the right *aqidah* (Benny Prasetya; et al., 2018).

Secondly, educators and educational institutions should reform the current curriculum and learning techniques to improve students' critical thinking skills in a guided manner. In this regard, students are given the opportunity to have dialectics guided by teachers so that their thinking patterns can be well-established in line to *aqidah*. Moreover, it is also expected that with this approach, students are able to filter out all forms of deviant thinking on Islamic *aqidah*. It is undeniable that today's era of rapid transformation has brought us into what is called the new era of society 5.0. Therefore, prioritizing critical, innovative, and solution-oriented thinking is a realistic choice to foster non-radicalism *aqidah*. Furthermore, students are also expected to be adaptable to changes and developments (Adi Kasman; dkk, 2022).

Thirdly, educational institutions and educators need to optimize information technology in teaching *aqidah*. Currently, information flows so quickly and contains various religious narratives. Therefore, educators must be able to take advantage of this opportunity as an effort to strengthen *aqidah* free from radical elements. Hence, the existence of information technology must have a significant impact on the transformation of knowledge, including religious knowledge (Murjani, 2022). With this tremendous potential, efforts to instill *aqidah* in students can be more varied and updated.

Fourthly, it is necessary to enhance moderate religious literacy. In the era of information advancement, students need to have strong literacy skills. In the context of *aqidah*, students need deep literacy as it is the theological foundation that requires comprehensive understanding. As is known, the proliferation of radicalism is commonly caused by a lack of adequate literacy. Therefore, improving literacy is the main key to correct *aqidah* so that it is not mixed with radicalism (Hidayat & Lubis, 2021). Referring to the previous discussion, it is therefore unnecessary to understand the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* in an extreme manner. Further, it does not lead to radicalism. Islamic education has a central role to educate students about *aqidah* that is free from radicalism. Several important elements in this research are listed in Table 1, which contains the main points of the findings.

**Table 1.** The Implementation of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* to Strengthen Non-radicalism

<i>Al-wala'</i>	<i>Al-baro'</i>	<i>Efforts to Strengthen Non-radicalism</i>
Loyalty based on shared faith	Based on the act of shirk	Campaigning for Islam as a Mercy to the Universe ( <i>Rahmatan Lil' Alamin</i> )
Mutual assistance and help in goodness,	Refraining from worshiping anything other than Allah	Conducting additional activities such as Islamic studies with a focus on strengthening <i>aqidah</i>
Mutual protection	Being firm in matters of <i>aqidah</i>	Promoting critical thinking
	Non-physical violence	Utilizing information technology in learning
	Being allowed to do good deeds	Increasing religious literacy in a moderate way

## Conclusion

Islam is a religion that includes a theological concept called *aqidah*. One of the requirements of *aqidah* for Muslims is to understand and practice the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-baro'*. However, this concept is often misunderstood and, in some cases, viewed as the embryo of radicalism in Islam. This literature review aims to clarify that *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* is a normal ideology without radical elements. It is natural for individuals with similar ideologies, races, religions, classes, and beliefs to feel love and loyalty towards one another. Additionally, the concept of *al-baro'* should not be interpreted extremely. Instead, *al-baro'* can be seen as a theological barrier that distinguishes the behavior of believers from non-believers within the corridor of religious beliefs, where everyone has the right to protect their religious beliefs. Efforts to strengthen *al-wala' wa'l-baro'* without radicalism can be carried out through various means, such as holding extracurricular activities in Islamic studies, reforming the curriculum and teaching techniques to improve students' critical thinking skills, optimizing information technology in teaching *aqidah*, and enhancing moderate religious literacy. The study underscores the significant role of Islamic education in cultivating *aqidah* that is free from radicalism. This highlights the importance of promoting proper

understanding and interpretation of *al-wala' wal baro'* in Islamic education to prevent misinterpretations that may lead to radical ideologies. The study's findings provide a valuable contribution to the field of Islamic education, offering a refreshed conception of *aqidah* that promotes a balanced and nuanced understanding of *al-wala' wal baro'* without containing elements of radicalism.

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