Online Radicalization and Violent Extremism

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Abstract: In this globalization, the emergence of internet and social media expedites critical potential in diverting people mind and thinking. The freedom of speech is being practiced in various platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Blogs. Through these platforms, online radicalization becomes big issue around the world. The purpose of this paper is to determine the relationship between online radicalization and violent extremism as well as the impact of online radicalization on violent extremism. A total of 10 empirical studies are reviewed in this study. The overall results demonstrated that there exists significant relationship between online radicalization and violent extremism. Besides that, there are great impacts of online radicalization on violent extremism. Several recommendations for further investigations are also proposed in this study.

1. Introduction

At present scenario, we able to get any information as we wish through online portal within clicks of mouse. But as like arguments always goes on “whether science is a gift or a curse”. Internet is advantageous if user uses in positive way, meanwhile it can increase hate, fear, and extremism if users use other way around. Consequently, internet is a platform for the emergence of online radicalization. Online Radicalization (OR) (also called Cyber-Terrorism or Extremism or Cyber-Racism or Cyber-Hate) is widespread and has become a major and growing concern to the society, governments, and law enforcement agencies around the world [1]. In details, online radicalization is here imagined as a procedure whereby people, through their online cooperation and introduction to different sorts of Internet content, come to view violence as a legitimate method of solving social and political conflicts [2]. One study has shown that there are four interrelated functions of online radicalization which are, delivering news, exposing propaganda, starting point for training and medium of expression [3].

To date, several earlier studies have been conducted by relation on online radicalization and violent extremism in different countries. Therefore, this study is aimed to determine the relationship of online radicalization and violent extremism as well as the impact of online radicalization on violent extremism.

2. Online Radicalization and Violent Extremism

On this section, we focus on how online radicalization resulted in negative sentiment polarity specifically violent extremism. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are one of the most happening and used social platform among youths in the world, where user can share their daily life story, share pictures, music and can advertise items they want to sell/buy with free of cost. People do advertise their items to sell on these social media and able to make a good business meanwhile, some people make fake ID of some person and do share all the extremism ideas and thought which increases hate and fear among race, religion, and gender in the society [4]. Social platform has already inclined like one the must thing in vogue. Undoubtedly, it cannot be controlled, but meanwhile educating and awaring the users about the extremism and radicalization might able to curb the impact of negativity.

A study by Neumann in 2013 has stated that the Internet is one of advance technology and testing condition in which radicalization and enlistment happens, and that understanding and infiltrating this condition are fundamental to averting home-grown terrorism [5]. For example, the killing of six worshippers at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin toward the beginning of August 2012 was the second most destructive terrorist assault in the United States since 11 September 2001. The gunman, Wade Michael Page was believed invested such a large amount of...
his time on the internet, and being manipulated by the web to read and write comments. At the end he became psychologically abused resulted the violent attack of killing. Another example of the impact of online radicalization on violent extremism is the case of Anwar Al Awlaki. He has led the use of internet to radicalize young Americans as well as gave training that advise recruits for bombing and carry out suicide attack [5]. Few researchers have posited that violent extremism is affected by people's capability to use internet.

Consequently, the use of the internet for terrorist recruitment and operations has increased significantly in recent years. As mentioned earlier, part of that expansion is an embracing of Western social media including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube [6]. However, a study has suggested to consider the theory of all terrorist are radical, but not all radical is terrorist [7]. To justify, several people manipulate the use of internet as means of dissatisfaction and expression. Some brings it to worst level that leads them to violent extremism. In fact, researcher has agreed that radicalization studies are part of the search of the root causes of terrorism [8]. Thus, encountering the world from online radicalization is vital to reduce hate, fear, and extremism through the internet.

Given the pivotal role of internet on online radicalization, it is important for the authority to be aware of this issue to avoid worst case scenario happening in the future. Recently, the presence of countering violent extremism (CVE) programs has earned the consideration of both researchers and policymakers. These projects are seen by many as a key toward to the need to battle radicalization to violence [9]. In Australia, some new approaches are introduced in the syllabus of school including teaching about terrorism, primarily due to the approach taken to discussing terrorism in the classroom context [10]. Past research also indicated that several nations such as the USA take major concern to scrutinize their online strategy and policy against this issue.

3. Methodology

This study intends to determine the relationship between online radicalization and violent extremism as well as the impact of online radicalization on violent extremism. To fulfill these objective, the researchers will be conducted a qualitative meta-analysis to synthesis the theories, methods, instruments, and the findings of both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the studies of online radicalization and violent extremism. Various databases will be included including Google Scholar, Springer and IEEE libraries will be employed to obtain journal papers and conferences proceedings.

The past research will be reviewed in this paper following several criteria (a). Content relevancy-study of online radicalization and violent extremism, (b) year of publication- 2005 to present, (c) Language- English language, (d) types of publications -empirical journal papers.

Table 1: A Summary of Empirical Research Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Responden t</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norman &amp; Roger (2007)</td>
<td>To understand the effect of social networking and personal bonding in the recruitment process and radicalization.</td>
<td>Certain group members with support violent extremism</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Their key conclusion is that a more hostile recruitment environment has developed in Europe through web sites and online chat communities; Internet supported recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas &amp; Hoffman (2008)</td>
<td>To emphasize importance of social networking on which plays a vital role in the process of radicalization.</td>
<td>Compilation of biographies of individuals affiliated with Osama Bin Laden Al Qaeda</td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>Mixed method</td>
<td>The researchers found out that global networks of militant Islamists, connected not so much by formal organizations, but by a common ideology by the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolden (2006)</td>
<td>To study the importance of networked bonds when it comes to</td>
<td>Compilation of biographical data of more than 200</td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>Mix method</td>
<td>He found out that extremism groups on all recruit through various medium use of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Findings

4.1 Studies on the Relationship of Online Radicalization and Violent Extremism

Based on meta-analysis table 1, we notice that there are 10 empirical studies that showed the relationship between online radicalization and violent extremism. The researchers concluded that online radicalization is one of the starting points for individuals to involve in violent extremism. Today, due to the emergence of internet at its peak, the extremism content is spreading far beyond traditional communication. Among these studies, 4 out of 10 studies utilize mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) [11], [12], [13], [14]. For example, Bakker has conducted a study to emphasize the importance of networks and personal bonds when it comes to recruitment and radicalization. The respondent was 200 individuals who have been formally charged or convicted in terrorism trials in Europe. The result indicated that individuals are self-recruit and internet is in charge to be the radicalization medium which leads to terrorism conviction [12]. This empirical finding has corroborated with recent study that suggested radicalization has part of the search of the root causes of terrorism [8].

Consequently, 4 out of 10 studies utilize qualitative method [15], [16], [17], [18]. For example, Koehler has conducted a study to explore online radicalization driver. He applied a grounded theory methodology on 8 German former right-Wing
Extremist through interview. He found out that internet has become the main driver for the individuals to be extreme. It is because Internet drives them to more effective communication, while, it is a platform for an anonymous identity and better bonding opportunities to find individuals with similar agenda [18]. Meanwhile, 2 out of 10 studies have conducted quantitative method [2], [19]. For example, Birmingham has conducted YouTube crawl and sentiment analysis. It is aimed to study the potential amount of interaction at radicalization of individuals with little or no apparent prior interest in violent jihadism. It is found out that the gender differences between male and female on which most extreme and less tolerant views are from among female users. In addition, he found out that female is more triggered in certain videos and the comments are more extreme as well as showing radicalized sentiment polarity [2]. Meanwhile on the same year, Grossman conducted a study on 117 western homegrown terrorists. Part of the study found that majority of the respondents own online media like blogs, postings on online newsgroups, communications and comments made consists of extremist messages [19].

4.2 Studies on the Impact of Online Radicalization on Violent Extremism

Online radicalization has impacted violent extremism critically and towards negative sentiment polarity. Throughout the empirical studies conducted, online radicalization is one of factor for individuals to be violent and extreme. Online radicalized individual can be active or passive. Passive is for individuals that do not have intention for violent, but they can be influenced by blogs and video they seen on the internet and further heat up the topic. This supported with a study by Chatterfield in 2015, 3,039 tweets posted by @shamiwitness who was identified in prior research as propaganda distributor for IS cause. While active is for individuals that have intention for violent fanaticism and extremism on social or political believe, thus internet able to be the platform of gang up with other individuals that have similar agenda, recruitment purpose and could be training platforms [14]. As suggested by few case studies on Osama bin Laden case, London Bombers, and terrorist cells, the findings leading to some extremist being radical through online then eventually conducted violence. One interviewed conducted in the study by Nesser, one respondent admitted that they learn to make a bomb through the posts shared by others [17].

5. Recommendations

The topic associated with online radicalization and extremism has been investigated in different parts based on real events especially in Western countries. Nevertheless, there is paucity of these studies in developing countries like Malaysia. Therefore, it is recommended for such empirical studies to be conducted in different countries so forth in future studies. On the other hands, to further investigate the relationship, it is proposed that online radicalization could be related to other area such as psychology and human science. With this study, it is essential to further investigate root for all causes and try to hinder any worst-case incident that could happen in future. Moreover, the emergence of data scientist and data mining today has rising to its peak. Several studies have been conducted on YouTube crawl and social media sentiment analysis but with limited dataset as its gap. With larger datasets, it is crucial to study the pattern of online radicalization that might lead to life threatening events. With these studies, it could be an eye opener for law enforcement and IT policy makers in many organisations and countries.

6. Conclusions

This study reports a qualitative meta-analysis with 10 empirical studies on online radicalization and violent extremism. It can be concluded that there exists significant relationship between online radicalization and violent extremism. There are interrelated with one another especially in the access of internet and social media as medium of communication and discussions. The relationship between these two variables is critical. The meta-analysis of this study could be a source of useful of references for future research. A few recommendations have been suggested for future study.

7. References

[2] Bermingham, A., Conway, M., McInerney, L., O'Hare, N., & Smeaton, A., "Combining Social Network Analysis and Sentiment Analysis to Explore the Potential for Online Radicalisation". International Conference on Advances In Social Network Analysis And Mining. 2009.


