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UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION: AN INTERVIEW ANALYSIS THROUGH FATHALI MOGHADDAM'S STAIRCASE MODEL

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Abstract
This study aims to understand the radicalization process of former terrorist convicts in Indonesia through the framework of Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model. Unlike previous studies that were primarily conceptual or based on secondary data, this study utilizes semi-structured interviews with a former terrorist convict, analyzed through thematic analysis to explore the psychological, social, and religious dynamics at each stage of radicalization. The results indicate that radicalization is not solely triggered by structural factors but is also influenced by relational pressures (family and religious study communities), ideological justification through deviant religious interpretations, and the role of social media in accelerating the strengthening of radical identities. These findings confirm the relevance of the Staircase Model in the local context, while highlighting its limitations as it does not fully accommodate relational and digital variables. Thus, this study contributes to the development of theoretical understanding of radicalization and offers implications for deradicalization policies that emphasize early family-based intervention, moderate religious education, and digital literacy to prevent extremist propaganda.

Keywords: *Staircase Model, radicalization, terrorism, ex-convicts, deradicalization.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Hoffman (1998), the term terrorism was first popularized during the French Revolution and at that time had a positive connotation as a means of establishing order amidst anarchy, although it was essentially still characterized by order, organization, and the goal of replacing a political system deemed corrupt and undemocratic (Hoffman, 1998). In the contemporary context, terrorism is understood as an attempt to overthrow a regime or weaken its influence by using violence or threats as a political instrument (Horgan J., 2005). Developments in the 21st century show that terrorism is no longer centered on formal organizations with hierarchical structures, but has transformed into a decentralized social movement through informal networks of individuals and groups that can mobilize spontaneously to carry out dramatic acts of violence (Sageman, 2008). This issue became increasingly prominent after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, in the United States, when the

country declared terrorism a transnational crime based on radical ideology and initiated the Global War on Terror with its allies, which in turn also triggered terrorist groups to carry out retaliatory actions against those they considered infidels (Dewi, 2019).

Shortland (2021) explains that terrorism can be understood through three main sections: perpetrator, victim, and audience or target. Cragin and Daly emphasize the role of ideology, leadership, recruitment, and publicity as the primary instruments of terrorist groups (Cragin & Daly, 2004). This perspective demonstrates that terrorism is a multi-sectoral issue that cannot be addressed solely through a security approach but also requires consideration from a social and economic perspective (Jusi, 2019). The process leading to acts of terrorism generally begins with fanaticism toward an ideology, progressing to exclusivism, extremism, and radicalism, ultimately leading to terrorism (Minderop, 2019). From a psychological perspective, involvement in terrorism is a complex psychosocial process with phases of involvement, activity, and disengagement (Horgan J., 2008). Individuals who feel alienated often find support in radical groups as a “surrogate family” (McGilloway, Ghosh, & Bhui, 2015). The role of social media reinforces this dynamic by providing a platform for the dissemination of ideology, recruitment, communication, and justification of extremist narratives (Setiawandari, Munandar, & Hannase, 2020), while technological advances increasingly facilitate propaganda, training, and attack planning (Sukoco, Syauqillah, & Ismail, 2021). In a religious context, radicalism reflects a community of believers rather than a body of believers (Thomas, 2005; Syahputra & Sukabdi, 2021). Schmid (2013) asserts that radicalization is a gradual process leading to a commitment to violence, echoing Borum's assessment of radicalization as an escalation through stages that culminate in the adoption of an extremist belief system to facilitate violence for political, religious, or social ends (Borum, 2011).

Violent radicalization occurs at the intersection of a supportive environment and an individual's trajectory toward greater militancy (Montasari, 2024; Pilkington, 2025; Stanojoska et al., 2025). Although violent radicalization generally "thrives in supportive environments characterized by a broader sense of injustice, exclusion, and humiliation (real or perceived) among the constituencies the terrorist claims to represent," not all individuals experiencing this sense of injustice living in the same polarized environment turn to radicalism, and even fewer to terrorism (Muhić, 2021). Arham (2020) also explains that the radicalization process can occur within prisons, where ordinary inmates meet terrorist inmates in prisons, resulting in recruitment and radicalization. When we examine the process of radicalization, our attention is drawn to the evolution of the protest cycle. Radicalization happens to both them and us. The political radicalization of individuals, groups, and the general public occurs within a trajectory of action and reaction, and the outcome of this trajectory is rarely controlled by either party alone. Radicalization emerges within a relationship, within the friction of competition and conflict between groups that inflame both parties. This relationship must be understood if radicalization is to be separated from terrorism (Porta, 2018).

Radicalism is often associated with religion, particularly when a lack of understanding of sharia leads certain groups to interpret jihad fanatically, even justifying violence in the name of da'wah (Rohman & Nurhasanah, 2019). However, several studies confirm that radicalization is not solely triggered by ideological factors, but is also influenced by socio-psychological conditions such as dissatisfaction, injustice, and alienation (Moghaddam & Hendricks, 2020). Extreme, absolutist ideologies reinforce intolerance, facilitate dehumanization, and encourage the search for identity and meaning in life (Borum, 2004). Cross and Snow (2012) distinguish three forms of radicalism: ideological, tactical, and structural change, while Rogers (2008)

emphasizes the complexity between ideology and religiosity, which radical groups often exploit to build a shared vision of attacks on political targets with religious legitimacy, as constructed in narratives of holy war or the establishment of a caliphate (Ramadhyas, 2020). Arifin (2014) added that radicalism is also strengthened by social injustice, marginalization, and the state's failure to guarantee welfare. Therefore, prevention strategies require a multidimensional approach that integrates inclusive education, national values, and community participation in deradicalization programs (Widya, 2020). These efforts can be realized through soft power approaches such as disengagement, which is the process of individuals distancing themselves from violent acts even though their ideological beliefs have not completely changed (Asrori, 2019). The difference between deradicalization and disengagement lies in perspective: deradicalization is an external program aimed at actors exposed to radicalism (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021; Sawyer et al., 2021; Subagyo, 2021), while disengagement is an individual's internal decision to leave indoctrination, which is often influenced by push and pull factors (Frazer, 2023). Thus, efforts to suppress radicalization require an understanding that radical networks are not only physically present but also formed through online spaces and symbolic narratives that reinforce ideological cohesion (Altier, Thoroughgood, & Horgan, 2014).

The role of networks in the process of individual radicalization and deradicalization must be assessed based on their weight and value relative to the role of narratives. We propose that the weight of networks relative to narratives influences the extent to which individuals assess the significance they can derive from networks, as well as the amount of influence networks have on individual decisions. More prestigious networks should be more attractive to individuals who already tend to value networks over narratives (i.e., those with low ambition and low epistemic authority), as their respect should be valued more and their epistemic authority should be perceived higher than that of less prestigious networks (Ellenberg & Kruglanski, 2024). The role and attention of many parties is essential in any process of transforming radicalized individuals into those free from radicalism, better known as deradicalization. The involvement of former senior terrorist convicts is expected to be heard and followed by other former terrorist convicts. In terrorism, seniors play a similar role. Seniors are considered to possess greater knowledge because they were once in the position of those conducting jihad. This makes former senior terrorist convicts believed to have a better understanding of the conditions of any terrorist group than governments or other organizations consisting solely of ordinary civilians. Therefore, their views are expected to be heard regarding terrorist groups (Widya, Syauqillah, & Yunanto, 2020).

The phenomenon of radicalization has been widely explained through various theoretical models, one of which is the Staircase Model developed by Fathali Moghaddam (2005). This model views radicalization as a gradual process that begins with social dissatisfaction and culminates in involvement in terrorist acts. Several previous studies have used this framework to analyze the social, political, and ideological factors that drive individuals towards extremism (Lygre et al., 2011; Borum, 2017). However, most previous studies have been conceptual in nature or focused on secondary data, thus lacking a direct depiction of individual psychological dynamics based on the personal experiences of former perpetrators.

In Indonesia, discourse on radicalization generally emphasizes ideology, social networks, and the role of digital media as a catalyst for radicalism (Riyanta, 2022). While making important contributions, these studies often fail to detail how individuals experience the stages of radicalization in everyday contexts, including interactions with family, work, and community.

Thus, there is a research gap in linking the psychological dimensions and empirical experiences of former terrorist convicts with the Staircase Model framework.

This article seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the lived experiences of a former terrorist convict in Indonesia through in-depth interviews. This approach allows researchers to explore each "floor" of the Staircase Model more concretely and assess the model's continued relevance in the context of contemporary radicalization. Thus, this study not only tests the applicability of the Staircase Model to empirical cases in Indonesia but also offers a contribution to the development of deradicalization policies based on the real-life experiences of former perpetrators.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews analyzed through thematic analysis. The analysis process involved several stages: (1) verbatim transcription of interview results, (2) coding (open coding) to identify units of meaning, (3) grouping codes into initial themes (axial coding), and (4) extracting core themes representing the stages of the Staircase Model. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing interview results with secondary documents (articles, reports, and news).

The research informant is a former convict in a terrorism case who is currently undergoing a deradicalization program and reintegrating into society. Biographical descriptions are used only for context (age, educational background, and brief experience) without revealing personal identities to maintain confidentiality. Strict ethical aspects of the research were adhered to. The researcher obtained informed consent before the interviews, guaranteed anonymity by using initials to refer to the informant, and ensured the confidentiality of personal data. Furthermore, the researcher built rapport with the informant to create a safe interview atmosphere and respect the sensitivity of the experiences shared.

Interviews were conducted semi-structured to provide flexibility in gathering relevant information related to each stage of the Staircase Model. Interviews were conducted via an online communication platform (Zoom meeting) (Martins, 2024). The author will also collect and analyze documents such as journal articles, official reports, and media reports that discuss cases of radicalization leading to terrorism. The focus of the analysis is on patterns that show how individuals pass through each "floor" in Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model. The floors discussed in this methodology are the steps taken by "perpetrators" of terrorism from the beginning before radicalism, until committing acts of terrorism. Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model explains that there are six floors: the ground floor is the Psychological Interpretation of Material Conditions; the first floor is Perceived Options to Fight Unfair Treatment; the second floor is Displacement of Aggression; the third floor is Moral Engagement; the fourth floor is Solidification of Categorical Thinking and the Perceived Legitimacy of the Terrorist Organization; and the fifth floor is The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanisms. Each floor has its own meaning and discussion, which the author will explain in the analysis section (Sugiarta, Sutanto, & Timur, 2023). The author will compare the interview results with secondary data (reports and documents) to increase the validity of the research results (Budiastuti & Bandur, 2018). This methodology combines in-depth interviews with document analysis to provide a deep understanding of how individuals experience the stages of radicalization according to Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model. In viewing the radicalization process, a pyramid model can also be used. The pyramid model in the radicalization process

referred to by Muro (2016) is to see radicalization not from the individual process that experiences it but this model introduces the role of ideology that connects the interaction of terrorists with society (Moghaddam F. M., 2005). Therefore, the author prefers to use Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model to identify whether the informants interviewed by the author have experienced levels that are in accordance with Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model or not, because the author wants to see based on individual experience, not the role of ideology such as the model explained in Muro's writing (Muro, 2016).

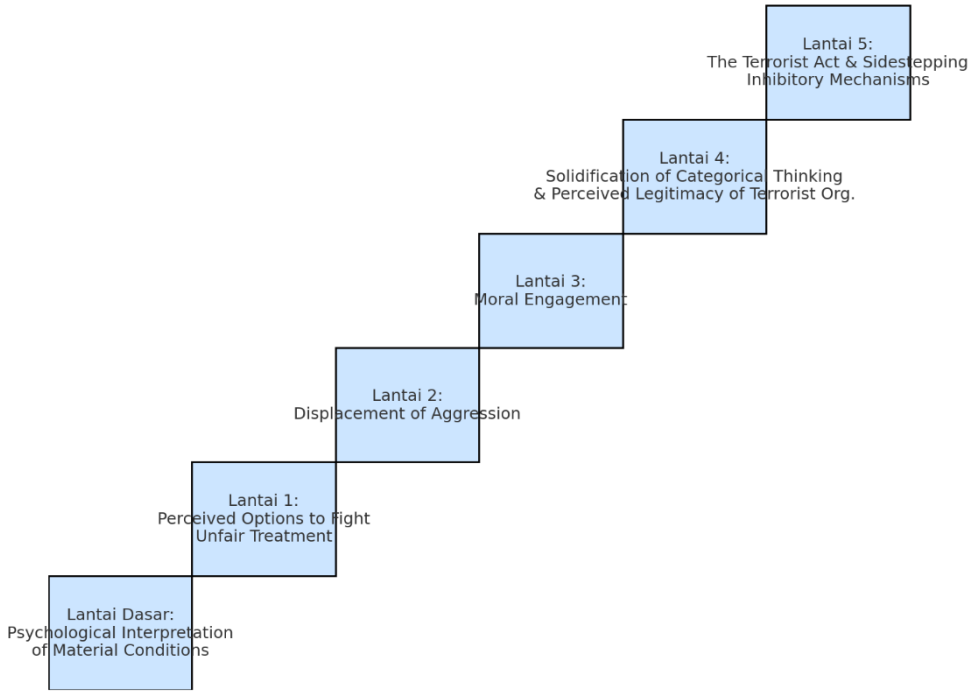

Figure 1. Staircase Model of Radicalization (Fathali Moghaddam)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research process, the author uses primary data through interviews in his discussion. The author interviewed a former terrorist convict, named "ML". ML is currently the chairman of the foundation under the auspices of Densus 88 for former terrorist convicts who have been successfully deradicalized, called Debintal. ML recounted on Thursday, October 31, 2024, in a casual chat conducted online via the Zoom Meeting platform that the initial situation and conditions that led to ML being recruited were attending regular religious studies, which were considered normal. Amir, as he is known to the wider community as Ustad, began to invite ML in depth in the first three months of ML joining the study group. The study group he attended turned out to be closely affiliated with ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) because it turned out that Ustad ML was from NII (Islamic State of Indonesia). In the group, ML said that there were approximately 100 (one hundred) members, the majority of whom were young, searching for their identity. So, when someone at his age wants to know who they truly are, and at this crucial time, they find themselves in a fundamentally unhealthy environment, unaware of it. Thus, prevailing ideologies easily influence their thinking and life choices; just as ML experienced.

Critical thinking and the pursuit of satisfactory answers prevent victims of radical ideology from denying or comparing what they currently know to be true or false. ML, dissatisfied with the government at the time, met members of other radical groups who shared similar views—so ML felt that the vision and mission they were presenting aligned with his own. With a similar vision and mission, and a sufficient number of members, he was considered a worthy candidate for a movement. Since joining the group, ML considered plans to rebel against the government, either by getting involved in creating domestic chaos or joining the ISIS movement in Syria. ML was with the group for two years (2016-2018), during which time he served in the logistics division for food supplies. Therefore, ML was involved in every organizational planning meeting. Another driving factor was the Arab Spring at the time.

During the period ML joined the group, he explained that there had been no acts of violence or any impact of his dissatisfaction that led to violence. ML explained that the targets of his group's planned attacks were the Mobile Brigade Headquarters (Mako Brimob) and the State Palace. However, ML explained that the radical group he joined had not yet committed violence. In 2018, the Mobile Brigade Headquarters was attacked by terrorists; the plan was still just a plan, and its execution was preempted by another group. ML explained that his group also lacked the weaponry to carry out the attack. He also believed that the group's mentality was not yet deep enough to fully dedicate its life to jihad. Regardless of the readiness and reluctance of ML and his colleagues at that time, this radical group had already conducted ideological and physical training, ideological training was carried out through regular religious studies – the discussion in the study was also excerpts of Quranic verses that were made to suit the interests of the group (in contrast to the completeness of Quranic verses in general) – by saying that violence was permitted, and jihad was required in the land of Sham or Syria. For physical training, ML said that he had carried out physical training regularly up to the mountain.

The group inside Mako Brimob during the terrorist attack were not members of the group ML was involved in. However, ML was also caught in the incident. This is because, in every terrorist attack carried out by each radical group, they would broadcast via telegram, to give a call in the form of an invitation about the activity they would carry out; in this case, the attack on Mako Brimob. The broadcast brought ML and his colleagues to Mako Brimob to see the situation; at that point, ML also began to return to society in general (free from radical ideology). ML was in a radical group affiliated with ISIS, but his presence was not structured or like a sympathizer. ML said that anyone can claim to be ISIS, but ISIS is structured and not (lone wolf). For those who are not structured are usually called sleeper cells. This difference can occur, even though they are both affiliated with ISIS, depending on the Amir or Ustad (leader of the radical organization). ML also explained that his organization once had 100 members, but only 35 were active, and of those remaining, none had successfully traveled to Syria.

ML's change in outlook, from normal to radical, was due to the reading material he was given, as described in the article above. This reading material indoctrinated ML into believing that what he was learning was correct. However, ML managed to obscure the changes in his social life; the changes were subtle. He stated that his relationships with his parents and those around him remained stable; only limited to socializing and socializing. Currently, ML is in the green zone, free from radicalism and has joined the management of the Debintal Foundation for former terrorist convicts, particularly in the Bekasi area. The author also asked ML what his greatest trauma and regret was. ML replied, "Trauma in choosing a teacher, and my biggest regret is not learning sooner. Learning about religion, what is truly right and what is wrong. By learning more, at least the risk of ignorance in the name of 'ignorance' is reduced."

Moghaddam in The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration (2005) explains in his writing that terrorism is a group that works on an international scale to undermine democracy, and destroy the resources pioneered by pro-democracy in various parts of the world. To understand terrorism more deeply, Fathali Moghaddam explains it as a staircase that leads to higher and higher floors (Levels); and the steps on the stairs taken by the person concerned depend on the doors and spaces they imagine open to them on those floors.

Ground Floor: Psychological Interpretation of Material Conditions

The informant explained that his participation in religious study groups was driven more by family pressure to deepen his religious studies, rather than economic factors or social marginalization. This finding differs from Moghaddam's (2005) explanation, which emphasized structural injustice as the initial trigger for radicalization. Therefore, in the Indonesian context, family relationships and local religious study groups can be understood as entry points for radicalization that have not been fully accommodated in the Staircase Model. He stated,

"I was actually busy with work, so I never thought about joining religious study groups. But my parents said, 'You have to make time to study religion even though you're busy working,' so I tried."

This parental pressure prompted ML to join the religious study groups. After participating in these activities, ML began to feel dissatisfied with the government system in place at the time. However, ML emphasized that he did not experience any economic or social dissatisfaction.

"Economically and socially, I'm fine. What I find odd is the government system," ML said.

This situation was then exploited by the leader of the religious study group, who was able to fill the existential void within ML and several of his colleagues, who, according to ML, were also in the same age range.

First Floor: Perceived Options to Fight Unfair Treatment

Informants described the group's teachings as offering "firm answers" to socio-political frustrations, including the legitimacy of jihad. This aligns with Taylor & Moghaddam's (1994) theory on the diversion of aggression, but in this case, the religious narrative served as the primary catalyst. These findings suggest the need to expand the model by incorporating the religious framing dimension as a crucial factor in constructing resistance options. As ML stated,

"We felt there was no way out of this injustice other than through the path they offered, because it spoke directly to our anger and frustration."

At this stage, they began to develop the belief that the existing system would never change without more drastic and confrontational action. The radical narratives accepted on this floor often legitimized the use of violence as a means of achieving social or political change. This is reinforced by ML's statement,

"Amir said, if we want change, we have to act not just talk. Struggle requires sacrifice."

Within three months of joining, ML had received direction from the group to address their frustrations through jihad, both nationally and through direct recommendations to Syria. For them, jihad was seen as the definitive answer to the existential emptiness they had been feeling. After receiving this direction, ML chose to study and strengthen themselves before taking this major step. Thus, at this point, ML moved to the second rung of the Staircase Model developed by Fathali Moghaddam, the stage where individuals consciously consider engaging in extreme action as a response to unresolved injustice.

Second Floor: Displacement of Aggression

The group's aggressive plans, although not yet realized, indicated a justification for violence through an interpretation of a fragmented verse of the Quran. This finding supports Borum's (2004) view of the role of ideology in justifying violence. However, in the Indonesian case, the manipulation of religious texts appears to be more dominant than the political-economic factors Moghaddam often emphasized. At this stage, ML admitted in an interview, he stated,

"We had developed a systematic plan to carry out aggressive actions that gradually led to acts of terrorism."

ML further revealed that the study material in his group's religious studies deviated from authentic Islamic teachings. He stated,

"The verses of the Quran were not taught in their entirety, but rather fragmented, selecting only those containing narratives about war and the taking up of arms, thus giving rise to justifications for violence against those outside our group."

This statement indicates a deviant indoctrination process through the manipulation of religious texts for the group's ideological interests.

Third Floor: Moral Engagement

Informants admitted to starting to live "parallel" lives, distancing themselves from family and friends, and interpreting nature contemplation as military training. This phenomenon aligns with Moghaddam's (2005) explanation of the internalization of alternative morals. However, the results of this study confirm that the normalization of religious activities, reinterpreted as jihad training, is a unique mechanism in the local context. ML added that his involvement was not easily detected by his family:

"With my parents and neighbors, I remained normal; no one suspected anything. But with my friends, I deliberately kept my distance and limited my interactions."

This reflects how the group encourages its members to maintain absolute secrecy, making them "invisible" to society. In preparation for what they call martyrdom, members also undergo special training. ML explained:

"We often engage in nature meditation, but our version is different. While the general public uses meditation to reflect and draw closer to God, we do it in the mountains or forests for physical training, weapons training, and war simulations. It's part of the preparation for martyrdom."

This practice demonstrates how religious symbols commonly understood as spiritual have been reconstructed into instruments justifying violence by radical groups.

Fourth Floor: Solidification of Categorical Thinking and the Perceived Legitimacy of the Terrorist Organization

The "us versus them" narrative is reinforced, with the outgroup perceived as the enemy. Informants hide their activities from their families, indicating deep social isolation. This finding aligns with Borum's (2011) dehumanization theory. However, this case also demonstrates that online network support (Telegram, social media) accelerates the process of strengthening group identity, a factor under-emphasized in classical models.

Fifth Floor: The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanisms

In the final step of Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model, individuals are trained to kill through training to circumvent inhibitory mechanisms. Two psychological processes are crucial

in the dynamics between groups and those they intend to attack: first, social categorization (considering civilians as an out-group) and second, psychological distancing (exaggerating the differences between in-groups and out-groups). Categorizing civilians as an out-group aligns with the secrecy practices practiced by terrorist organizations. Those recruited into terrorist organizations are trained to treat everyone, including civilians, outside their group as enemies (Sageman, 2004; Sageman, 2005). To anticipate inhibitory mechanisms in the process of "executing" different parties, killing is also demonstrated by distance to avoid eye contact, pleading, and crying. Terrorist attacks are effectively avoided through psychological distancing. Terrorists often operate in close proximity to their human targets, particularly suicide bombers, making them susceptible to solicitations and other signals that would normally trigger the inhibition mechanism. However, two key factors can circumvent this mechanism during a terrorist attack. First, by categorizing targets, even civilians, as “enemies” and exaggerating the differences between in-groups and out-groups, terrorists psychologically distance themselves from the human beings they seek to destroy. Second, victims are rarely aware of the imminent danger before the attack, thus preventing them from engaging in behaviors that might trigger the inhibition mechanism (Moghaddam F. M., 2005).

In ML's case, the "execution" of the deterrent mechanism never took place. ML belonged to a terrorist group classified as a "sleeper cell" and lacked an operational structure or adequate resources. In an interview, ML admitted,

"My friends and I only had the spirit of jihad, but we didn't have the strength to carry out our plans. We didn't have time to do anything."

The turning point was the Mako Brimob tragedy in 2018, when ML and his group planned an attack, but were preempted by another group. While the attack was underway, the "ready to fight" group sent a broadcast message via Telegram to garner moral and material support from sympathizers. ML and his group could only monitor from afar, and shortly afterward, ML was arrested by security forces. ML has now undergone deradicalization and expressed regret for the path he had taken.

Based on this explanation, it can be said that terrorism is a moral issue with psychological underpinnings, targeting the younger generation. Therefore, the major challenge is preventing disaffected youth and others from becoming involved in the morality of terrorist organizations. The author also agrees with Krueger's statement in his book "What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism," which states that the majority of terrorists do not come from backgrounds of poverty or lack of education. Krueger (2007) explains that the argument that poverty and lack of education are the root causes of terrorism is merely an assumption. When someone is poor and uneducated, they are unable to do more than simply survive; in contrast, someone who is educated and dissatisfied is more likely to become radicalized and take extreme action to address their dissatisfaction. This is especially true if they live in a country that lacks active and inclusive legal and civil service assistance to address political issues (Krueger, 2007).

ML's experience also revealed that the radical organization he joined exemplified lone wolf terrorism. This terrorist typically acts based on strong political, ideological, or religious beliefs, meticulously plans his actions, and successfully conceals his operations from those around him (i.e., leading a kind of "double life") (Spaaij, 2012).

According to McGilloway, Ghosh, & Bhui (2015), radicalization does not always follow a linear path. Some individuals may experience radicalization slowly through gradual exposure to extreme ideologies, while others may engage in the radicalization process more rapidly due to

significant experiences or major life events. This is also supported by Lygre et al. (2011) who argued that the complexity of the radicalization process is not as simple as sequential stages and does not reflect the reality of the radicalization process. This is also emphasized by Riyanta (2022), in his writing explaining that the Staircase Model echoed by Moghaddam can be said to be an irrelevant concept because the process between floors described in modern times can be shortened or catalyzed by utilizing developments such as social media platforms owned by terrorist groups. The similarity with the author is the importance of the role of family or community in preventing the process of radicalization; and the difference lies in the perspective taken, Riyanta (2022) introduces a new concept that is considered more relevant today, namely Shortcut to Terrorism as the name suggests, this concept states that to become a terrorist today the path is faster, no longer going through the stages as proposed by Moghaddam. The development of communication technology in the current digital era makes it easier for individuals to access news or new knowledge easily, only requiring a device and an internet network. This is what then becomes one of the reasons for the many 'lone wolves' where the radicalization process occurs, not because of being instigated by other people but the radicalization process occurs because social media contains jihad narratives which then make individuals become terrorists.

Despite Riyanta's (2022) assertion that Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model is irrelevant in today's modern era, there are profound similarities and differences between the author and Riyanta's paper, "Shortcut to Terrorism: Self-Radicalization and Lone Wolf Terror Acts: A Case Study of Indonesia." The similarities between these papers lie in their depiction of how individuals can experience the radicalization process that leads to acts of terrorism, emphasizing the psychological and social factors that influence individuals in making extreme decisions. Both the author and Riyanta (2022) agree that radicalization does not occur instantly, but rather through complex stages. The fundamental difference in approach is that the author uses Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model as the primary framework for understanding how individuals progress from initial dissatisfaction to involvement in acts of terrorism.

This model highlights the psychological factors and stages experienced by individuals in the radicalization process. Meanwhile, Riyanta's (2022) research focuses more on the phenomenon of self-radicalization and acts of terrorism carried out by individuals without direct involvement in large terrorist networks, or what is known as lone wolf terrorism. By showing how individuals can be radicalized through digital information sources, social media, and online propaganda without needing to be physically involved in extremist groups, it shows that in the current digital era and technological developments, access to extremist ideology has become easier and more difficult to control. Thus, although there are differences in approaches to understanding radicalization, technological developments and easy access to extremist information have made the threat of global terrorism increasingly complex and difficult to detect. Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model remains relevant in analyzing the psychological stages an individual goes through, including in the context of increasingly widespread self-radicalization and recruitment from terrorist groups disguised as religion. Therefore, a deep understanding of the radicalization process, both through classical approaches and new perspectives such as those proposed by Riyanta, is crucial in designing effective prevention strategies in this digital era. Awareness of the dangers of online propaganda and the importance of digital literacy must continue to be raised to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies that could threaten global stability and security.

The findings of this study reinforce the relevance of the Staircase Model in explaining the psychological stages of radicalization, but also reveal its limitations. In the Indonesian context, family relationships, local religious studies, and the role of social media have proven to be significant catalysts, but they are not fully explained in the model. Therefore, this study not only describes the informants' journeys but also encourages modifications to the Staircase Model to better contextualize contemporary radicalization phenomena.

Figure 2. Radicalization process Matrix: Moghddam's Staircase Model

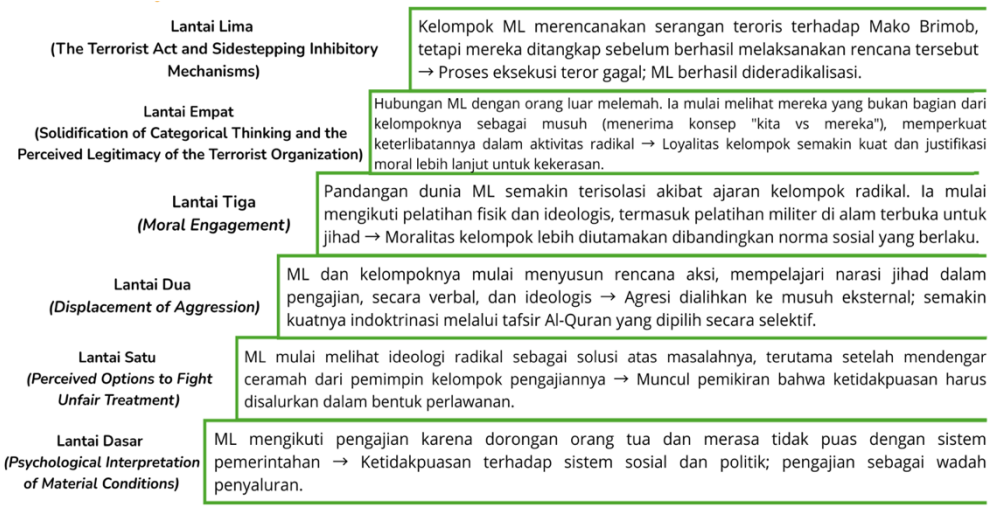

Figure 2. Radicalization process Matrix: Moghddam's Staircase Model

This research demonstrates that Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model is a useful tool in understanding the process of individual radicalization toward extremist behavior. In the author's research, this concept is highly applicable because the individuals involved experience what Moghaddam describes in each stage of his Staircase Model. This model successfully explains the main stages individuals go through, from social dissatisfaction, the search for radical solutions, the justification of violence, to active involvement in extremist groups and acts of terrorism. Through interviews with participants with related experiences, this study confirms that factors such as social marginalization, discrimination, economic injustice, and the influence of extremist ideology play a significant role in accelerating the radicalization process. However, the findings also reveal several limitations of the Staircase Model. The radicalization process is not always linear, and some individuals may skip certain stages or become directly involved in radical groups without gradually seeking radical solutions. Contextual factors, such as political and social pressures, can also influence the radicalization pathway. Therefore, while this model is relevant in many cases, it requires adjustment and combination with other approaches that better account for the complexity of local contexts and individual factors.

The implications of this research emphasize the importance of early intervention at early stages, such as social dissatisfaction, to prevent individuals from progressing to more dangerous stages of the radicalization process. Programs that promote social inclusion, economic opportunities, and political literacy can help address the root causes of dissatisfaction, while deradicalization programs that engage families and communities can disrupt the justification of violence at later stages. Community-based interventions, education, and digital literacy are also needed to counter extremist narratives spread widely through social media.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model is a useful tool in understanding the process of individual radicalization toward extremist behavior. In the author's research, this concept is highly applicable because the individuals involved experience what Moghaddam describes in each stage of his Staircase Model. This model successfully explains the main stages individuals go through, from social dissatisfaction, the search for radical solutions, the justification of violence, to active involvement in extremist groups and acts of terrorism. Through interviews with participants with related experiences, this study confirms that factors such as social marginalization, discrimination, economic injustice, and the influence of extremist ideology play a significant role in accelerating the radicalization process. However, the findings also reveal several limitations of the Staircase Model. The radicalization process is not always linear, and some individuals may skip certain stages or become directly involved in radical groups without gradually seeking radical solutions. Contextual factors, such as political and social pressures, can also influence the radicalization pathway. Therefore, while this model is relevant in many cases, it requires adjustment and combination with other approaches that better account for the complexity of local contexts and individual factors.

The implications of this research emphasize the importance of early intervention at early stages, such as social dissatisfaction, to prevent individuals from progressing to more dangerous stages of the radicalization process. Programs that promote social inclusion, economic opportunities, and political literacy can help address the root causes of dissatisfaction, while deradicalization programs that engage families and communities can disrupt the justification of violence at later stages. Community-based interventions, education, and digital literacy are also needed to counter extremist narratives spread widely through social media.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several suggestions are provided for future research development. First, further research is recommended to combine Fathali Moghaddam's Staircase Model with other approaches, such as psychosocial, cultural, and digital approaches, to more comprehensively capture the dynamics of radicalization. This integration is important considering that the radicalization process is not linear and is often influenced by different contextual factors in each social environment. Second, future studies can expand the scope of the data by involving more participants from diverse social, economic, and educational backgrounds. This will enrich our understanding of the variations in radicalization pathways and the driving and inhibiting factors for each individual.

Third, further research should emphasize the role of digital technology and social media as catalysts for radicalization. Research focusing on digital content analysis, online interaction patterns, and counter-narrative strategies will make an important contribution to radicalization prevention efforts in the digital era. Fourth, the government and relevant institutions are expected to develop multi-level intervention programs that not only focus on deradicalizing individuals who have reached an advanced stage but also target early prevention. These efforts can be realized through improving economic welfare, strengthening digital literacy, promoting tolerance education, and engaging families and communities as key actors in counter-radicalization.

By considering these aspects, further research is expected to produce a more comprehensive analytical framework and make a tangible contribution to the development of policies for preventing and addressing radicalization and terrorism in Indonesia.

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