

The Urgency of Civil Society's Understanding of Radicalism in South Sumatra

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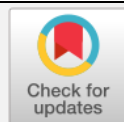
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ABSTRACT

Radicalism is an important element of social movements advocating for individuals or groups seeking ideological emancipation, fostering critical perspectives, and striving for change directly linked to broader adversaries and goals. Vulnerability to radicalism exists at varying intensities, rendering individuals or groups susceptible to radicalization. This research examines a significant issue of potential radicalism identified in previous studies, which appears to surpass society's understanding. The study aims to investigate several dimensions, including understanding, attitudes, and actions with the potential for radicalization. A quantitative method involving face-to-face interview techniques was utilized. The research sample consisted of 400 stratified random samples, which were selected based on characteristics such as gender, marital status, age, occupation, and religion, using the Slovin formula: $n = N / (1 + (N \times e^2))$ with a sampling error of 5%, and three hypotheses concerning attitude, understanding, and action. This research also employs a Scopus-based mapping of radicalism, analyzing the network in detail. The findings of the research show that attitude, understanding, and action have a direct impact on radicalism. Additional findings reveal that attitudes exert the greatest influence on the potential for radicalism, followed by understanding and actions. When viewpoints become extreme, inflexible, or intolerant, attitudes can reveal a person's propensity toward a particular ideology or societal issue. By encouraging the avoidance of possible

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radicalism and supporting improved decision-making in society, healthy social interactions can raise awareness of the hazards of radicalism. The interaction between attitudes, understanding, actions, and the potential for radicalism is a dynamic process that progressively leads to radical involvement within a specific context.

Keywords: Civil Society; Radicalism; Social Movement

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a surge in radicalism, leading to severe manifestations of extremism and terrorism, resulting in the loss of many innocent lives. Extremist ideologies, whether rooted in religion, race, or politics, glorify the dominance of particular groups and oppose the establishment of a more egalitarian and inclusive society. Contemporary states face distinct yet interconnected challenges, including the emergence and spread of extremism beyond national borders and the management of increasingly diverse and multicultural populations (Amit et al., 2021; Böhmelt et al., 2020; Center for Preventive Action, 2024; Helbling & Meierrieks, 2022; Thijssen et al., 2021).

This ideological shift can be exploited by terrorist groups seeking recruits willing to commit acts of violence, as a variety of environmental factors, including religious, political, and economic elements, can influence the process of radicalization. Developing effective counterterrorism strategies involves addressing the symptoms, such as acts of violence and the underlying causes of radicalism (Fathonah et al., 2021). This issue has become a significant concern for numerous countries. Georgi Plekhanov, in 1883, described the tactics employed by terrorists as inhumane and strongly argued that terrorism should never be regarded as an acceptable ideology. The rise of new terrorist activities further demonstrates that the resistance of small groups is insufficient to challenge an established political system. This evolving phenomenon of terrorist insurgencies signifies the onset of a new era in the political development of certain nations (Fedotova, 2013).

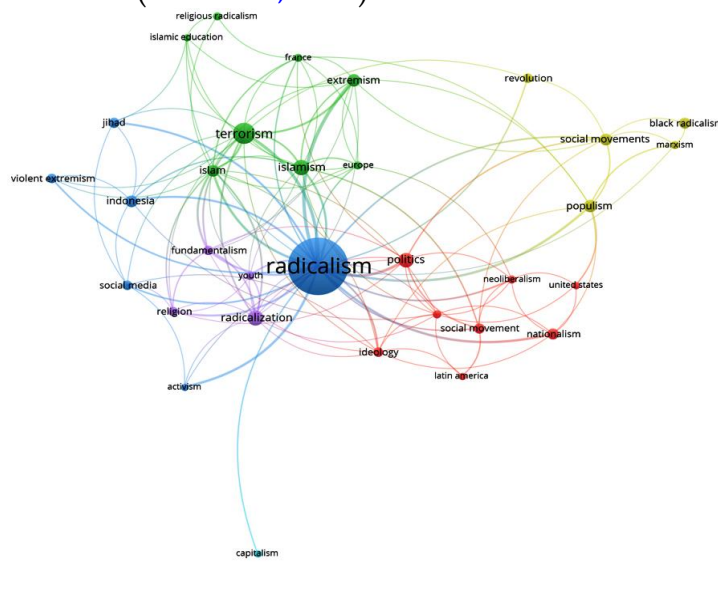


Figure 1. Understanding Radicalism
 Source: Scopus 2021 - 2022



The data above explains the frequently appearing terms, with colors indicating clusters. The mapping was conducted to analyze the network in detail, while clustering provided an overview of the grouping of various journal articles. Each circle represents the number of documents relevant to the keyword or term, with larger circles indicating more relevant documents. The terms show that the larger nodes are *radicalism*, *terrorism*, *Islam*, and *extreme*. The term *radical* has been used to label certain individuals, groups, or religions as associated with extremism. This radical use has led to serious issues due to the lack of agreed-upon measurements and the absence of a clear legal definition, as is evident in Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2021 (Hidayat & Arifin, 2021).

Given the interdependence between radicalism and terrorism, the Indonesian government has recognized radicalism as an important element of its counterterrorism strategy. However, challenges arise from the absence of a widely accepted definition of radicalism, leading to varying interpretations among different communities. In theory, ideologies, religions, or similar entities do not possess inherent attitudes. Rather, radicalism is acquired and shaped by experience, education, or training.

Literature on the understanding of radicalism is still very limited. The primary aim of this study is to investigate critical issues related to the potential for radicalism arising from emerging social divisions that go beyond conventional societal understanding (Koca, 2024; Peels, 2024; Robert & Kaya, 2024). This research addresses the gap in studies on the understanding of radicalism within civil society in detail, whereas previous studies have typically discussed radicalism in broader terms. Research on radicalism remains relatively underexplored, as evidenced by the limited number of international and national journal publications. It can be said that there has been a lack of substantial scholarly attention to radicalism or its understanding. Radicalism continues to be a serious issue for social stability and national security, with radical ideologies posing a significant risk to various segments of society. The theoretical significance of this study lies in its capacity to generate and enhance understanding of radicalism as a contemporary challenge in multiple countries. Furthermore, in practical terms, this research is expected to provide guidance and a framework for stakeholders such as policymakers, researchers, and students to consolidate knowledge, thereby making it a valuable reference.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Radicalism: An Overview

Radicalism is a social movement that advocates for individual and collective freedom and emancipation from ideological views, adopting a highly critical stance towards the existing status quo and calling for the restructuring or overthrowing of outdated political structures. The term *radicalism* is largely associated with highly controversial Islamist and white supremacist organizations and is widely accepted as a problematic construct within the field of social science. Over more than two centuries, radicalization has undergone significant changes in definition throughout history. Initially rooted in medical research, the term was later expanded to describe political figures in Britain who were considered progressive following the Glorious Revolution in the 18th century (Bötticher, 2017).

Its use extended to France in the late 18th century, specifically referring to progressive revolutionaries in Parliament. This trend continued as center-left parties began to include the term 'radical' in their names. In 19th-century Germany, the term took on political significance, symbolizing liberal and left-wing politicians influenced by Enlightenment thought who promoted progressive social reforms. During the 19th century, radicalism evolved into an

ideology advocating the establishment of republics and liberation from direct monarchical control across Europe.

The emergence of radicalism as an ideology encourages radicals' political opponents to portray them as aggressive revolutionaries, prompting political opposition to manipulate to preserve the existing state of affairs (Sartori, 1984). The verb radicalization is derived from radicalism, denoting aligning oneself with a radical political party or ideology such a group promotes. The term represents an extension of the concept of tracing back to the root of a word or creating extremes, indicating a continuous and ongoing process. Since the 1930s, *radicalization* has referred to the process of radicalizing an individual, particularly concerning radical political parties or, more generally, left-wing revolutionary groups. The association between radicalization and left-wing violence continued into the 1960s, particularly concerning civil rights activists and rioters involved in the May '68 uprising. The term *radicalization* transformed its current definition as a process directly contributing to acts of violence, particularly concerning Islamist terrorism, during the 2000s and especially the 2010s (Khosrokhavar, 2014).

Intelligence circles, on the other hand, define violent radicalization as the phenomenon of individuals adopting views, opinions, and ideas that may lead to acts of terrorism. Terms such as *radicalization*, *extremism*, and *terrorism*, in addition to all definitions, consider radicalism as a process. In contrast, the process of radicalism leading to (political) violence differs from violent extremism or terrorism, which are defined differently. Some terms associated with *radicalism* are derived from the word *radical*, which has several meanings depending on its context, relating to origin, foundation, and principles. Later, in the political context, *radicalism* came to be associated with extreme demands for change. The suffix -ism denotes a rigid, narrow-minded exclusivity and a strong claim to absolute truth.

According to Carter, radicalism is strongly related to authoritarianism, anti-democratic parties, and exclusive nationalism (Carter, 2018). Some findings indicate that significant social, historical, and economic factors contribute to the emergence of radicalism, particularly where there is high social inequality, elevated unemployment rates, and pervasive attitudes toward injustice. Meanwhile, Rik Peels explains that radicalism develops over a longer temporal process, where a group or social entity may shift from moderate to extreme positions cognitively, behaviourally, or both. In discussing extremism, Rik Peels aims to broaden the concept of radicalism to encompass affective and conative aspects of radicalization (Usman et al., 2023).

The emergence of radicalism among youth is highly concerning, especially given the goals of national education. Youth are often targeted as potential subjects for radical influence, as they are at a formative stage of life and thus more susceptible to radical ideologies and movements. Educators and academics can play a crucial role in imparting an understanding of radicalism while remaining vigilant about the potential emergence of terrorism (Shatha & Mohammad, 2022). However, research by Achmad et al. indicates that levels of understanding regarding radicalism vary widely, contributing to youth vulnerability (Achmad et al., 2023). Further findings by Pirol et al. showed that six percent of respondents were classified as holding radical views (Pirol et al., 2020).

2.2. Potential Radicalism

Radicalism stems from a perspective, action, or attitude that embodies a desire to radically change the social, political, or cultural order (Muxel, 2020; Nurliah & Supriyanto, 2024). It begins with an understanding of divisive factors that deviate from conventional practices in everyday life, serving both as a critique of current conditions and as a pathway to an

alternative reality aimed at transforming the world and establishing new power structures (Silver, 2018). Based on previous studies, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): An understanding of the potential for radicalism.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Attitudes that have the potential for radicalism.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Actions that have the potential for radicalism.

3. Research Methodology

This study is quantitative research, aiming to obtain data in alignment with its objectives. Quantitative research is conducted on specific populations or samples using random sampling techniques. The quantitative data used in this study is sourced. The agency's data collection process follows rigorous standards, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the information. Data collection for this study was carried out through face-to-face interviews, with stratified random sampling used based on social criteria to determine the sample for this case study in South Sumatra Province, drawn from a total population of 8,657,008 people. The researchers utilized the Slovin Formula to determine the sample size.

The sampling error determined by the author is 5% with an accuracy level of 95% to determine this accuracy using the Slovin formula and the following calculations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Information:

n = Sample

N = Population

e = Sampling error

The sampling error (e) used is 5%, considering the population and the limitations of researchers, as well as the calculation and distribution of population samples.

Slovin formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{8.657.008}{1 + 8.657.008 (.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{8.657.008}{8.657.009 (.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{8.657.008}{1.947825}$$

$$n = 355$$

Based on calculations using the Slovin formula, the research sample consisted of 400 respondents, determined after adjusting the sample size to account for the number of questionnaires distributed and completed. The study employed random sampling techniques, encompassing 13 regencies and 4 cities, with Palembang as the capital. The sampling framework included subdistricts and extended to community-level administrative units in Indonesia known as Neighborhood Units (*Rukun Tetangga* or RT) and Community Units (*Rukun Warga* or RW). The sampling process started at the neighborhood head's residence and proceeded with random selection based on the specified research criteria.

The sample consisted of 400 individuals, with an average age range between 17 and 57 years, residing in the South Sumatra Region, Indonesia. This investigation required voluntary participation, with potential volunteers recruited through a direct, door-to-door approach. The study's purpose and the anticipated completion timeframe were explained to each participant. The total time taken to complete the survey was approximately three days, partly due to the inclusion of additional scales not directly relevant to the study's purpose. Data collection methods adhered to Indonesian laws and regulations regarding privacy and ethical standards in research. The researchers conducted Data analysis using Excel to ensure that the results met the institute's standards. The research findings were derived from respondents' feedback. The following table illustrates the respondents' characteristics.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45.4
	Female	54.6
Marital Status	Married	63.2
	Unmarried	32.5
	Widower/Widow	4.3
Age	17-25	28.0
	26-41	40.6
	42-57	31.5
Occupation	Self-employed	26.1
	Housewives	18.3
	Private employees	12.4
	Farmers/Fishermen	10.2
	University Students	5.4
	Students	3.2
	State Civil Servants	1.1
Religion	Teachers/Lecturers	0.8
	Muslim	99.7
	Catholic	0.3
	Protestant Christianity	0.0
	Hinduism	0.0
	Buddhism	0.0
	Confucianism	0.0

Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents' demographic characteristics, categorized into five groups: gender, marital status, age, occupation, and religion. The data indicate that most respondents were female (54.6%), while males accounted for 45.4%. Regarding marital status, 63.2% of respondents were married, 32.5% were unmarried, and 4.3% were widowed. Age distribution showed that 40.6% of respondents were between 26 and 41 years old, 31.5% were aged 42 to 57, and 28.0% were between 17 and 25 years old. Regarding occupation, 26.1% were self-employed, 18.3% were housewives, 12.4% were private employees, 10.2% were farmers or fishermen, 5.4% were university students, 3.2% were school students, 1.1% were state civil servants, and 0.8% were teachers or lecturers. For religious affiliation, 99.7% of respondents identified as Muslim, 0.3% as Catholic, and none identified as Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism (each 0.0%).

4. Results and Discussion

Radicalism in Indonesia intensified during the post-independence and post-reform periods. In the 1950s, an operation under the guise of religion, led by Kartosuwiryo and associated with Darul Islam, took place. This scheme was foiled but resurfaced in the early Soeharto era through intelligence and special operations led by Ali Moertopo. Moertopo, with the assistance of Bakin, recruited former Darul Islam members and involved them in jihadi commando operations intended to undermine Islam. Around 1976, this jihadi commando faction bombed houses of worship, an action replicated one year later by the Indonesian Muslim Liberation Front. In 1978, the organization Pola Perjuangan Revolusioner Islam further aggravated the situation by committing numerous acts of terrorism.

The reforms of 1998, which emphasized freedom of expression and other democratic freedoms over the rule of law, fostered a climate conducive to extremism and the emergence of new religious groups, some adopting the label of radical Islam. During this period, extremist factions became increasingly vocal. Additionally, the rise of electronic media indirectly boosted their visibility. Radical movements began to pursue diverse goals: some aimed to establish an Islamic government in Indonesia, while others sought to create an Islamic state or caliphate within the country.

Figure 2 shows that attitude is 18.09%, understanding is 9.07%, and action is 2.05%. The analysis was used to test Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

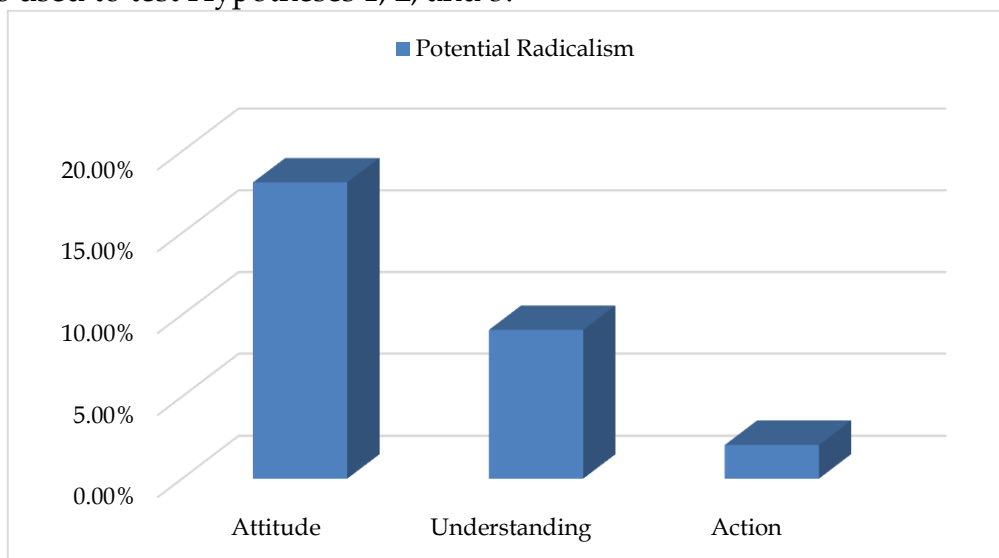


Figure 2. Potential Radicalism

The researchers selected the population in the South Sumatra Region due to the lack of prior research on this issue. Understanding people's perspectives on radicalism is a significant area of inquiry, as understanding is a key determinant of radicalism. Additionally, attitudes and behaviors are interconnected in influencing tendencies towards radicalism, which can be observed in individuals aged 17 to 57, along with several other characteristics.

The findings of this study indicate that attitudes, understanding, and behavior directly influence the occurrence of radicalism. These findings are consistent with those of other scholars, such as Van Hiel et al., who notably emphasized the correlation between attitudes, understanding, actions, and increased aggressive tendencies (Van Hiel et al., 2020). Research based on meta-analysis has revealed a correlation between attitudes, understanding, actions, and increased aggressive tendencies. The interaction between attitudes, understanding, actions, and potential radicalism can be seen as a dynamic process that gradually leads to radical activity in certain situations.

Attitudes represent an individual's inclinations or ideas towards a particular ideology or social issue. Radical attitudes arise when views become extreme, inflexible, or intolerant, often responding to perceived injustice or dissatisfaction with existing conventions. The study by Jungkunz et al. demonstrates that attitudes can be categorized into two dimensions (Jungkunz et al., 2024). Secondly, comprehension indicates how people interpret events and information about their environment. A lack of thorough understanding is often influenced by disinformation or biased sources, leading to extreme perspectives. Certain ideologies may be perceived as absolute truth, causing individuals to disregard alternative perspectives and increasing their vulnerability to radicalization (Bos, 2018). Thirdly, individuals may act based on those beliefs when attitudes and understandings align with radical ideologies. This behavior can range from non-violent political engagement to more extreme actions, including supporting or participating in violence. However, not all people who hold radical ideologies engage in violent acts, underscoring the distinction between radical views and behavior.

Radicalism arises when attitudes, understandings, and actions align to support or rationalize radical ideologies. This process is often intensified by emotional reactions such as anger or resentment, which drive individuals towards radical actions. External factors, such as social context or interaction with radical organizations, can influence the transition from holding radical beliefs to engaging in radical actions. This relationship highlights the complexity of radicalization, as attitudes and perceptions influence actions, potentially leading to radicalism if not balanced by moderation or alternative viewpoints.

The concept of radicalism is a subject of intense debate. The aspiration and advocacy for change characterize the current understanding of radicalism. McCormack defined radicals as individuals who desire institutional transformation (McCormack, 1950). From this perspective, radicalism is an important component of political mobilization that drives social and political change (Bee & Chrona, 2024). Thus, radicalism is a significant element of social movements that drive change, closely linked to opposition groups and ultimate goals.

Radicalism does not arise spontaneously; rather, it emerges as an overreaction to certain circumstances, often fuelled by numerous push and pull factors actively promoted and reinforced as pull factors. The term *terrorist*, therefore, covers a wide spectrum of phenomena influenced by a set of determinants that shape specific personality characteristics, including particular skills, desires, and affective states (Hidayat & Arifin, 2021). Social contact and socialization should be understood as a multi-faceted and interconnected process involving individuals, groups, and society. Radicalism is closely related to fundamentalism, aligning with the core doctrines of religion. It represents an ideology that views religion as a direct force in

guiding societal and personal life within a socio-political context (Fedotova, 2013). In line with the findings of Nafi'a et al., radicalism is largely attributed to religious interpretation rather than considerations of social tolerance (Nafi'a et al., 2022). According to the study by Nasution et al., modernist Islamic groups can be categorized into two factions: one that promotes radicalism and another that supports moderation (Nasution et al., 2021). Traditional Islamic groups maintain a moderate stance by conducting studies on accessible topics such as *fiqh* and *akhlak* (Hopid et al., 2023). Furthermore, a hold-out study conducted by Mustakim and Novita revealed that the term *Khilafah* (caliphate) frequently appears in discussions and contexts related to radicalism, often symbolizing the ideological aspirations of certain extremist groups (Mustakim & Novita, 2023).

Muslims' understanding of radicalism is often conflated with religious understanding. Although the background and goals differ from Islamic teachings, the origins of radicalism stem from a variety of unintended factors, including economic problems, political conditions, social and legal injustice, and marginalization—issues prevalent in people's lives. The emergence of radicalism, particularly religious radicalism, has negatively impacted higher education as well as other societal aspects, notably through extremist radical ideas. Such radical ideas can obstruct achieving goals and threaten stability and national unity if not addressed (Pardede, 2020).

Understanding attitudes, perceptions, and actions is crucial for recognizing the potential for radicalism today. According to Kustati et al., understanding and attitudes are indicators of the phenomenon of radicalism (Kustati et al., 2023). By developing a comprehensive understanding and a balanced attitude, the younger generation can effectively avoid the lure of radical ideologies. A balanced and open attitude towards social and cultural diversity is the main defense against radical beliefs that threaten pluralism. Radicalization is influenced by individual factors and deeply connected to the social and cultural dynamics surrounding the individual.

In the diverse society of Indonesia, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity should be seen as a strength. Suciati & Erzad argue that local wisdom can deter radicalization (Suciati & Erzad, 2018). According to Remiswal et al., values rooted in local culture, such as the role of religious educators, can be crucial in efforts to counter radicalism (Remiswal et al., 2023). However, in some cases, this diversity may become a source of tension, which certain groups can exploit to spread extremist ideologies. Without a solid understanding of the importance of appreciating cultural diversity, the younger generation may become vulnerable to ideologies that promote exclusivity and intolerance.

5. Conclusion

This study presents some findings from the research conducted, specifically regarding understanding, attitude, and action concerning potential radicalism. The findings show that attitude is 18.09%, the highest among other variables, with understanding at 9.07% and action at 2.05%, in addressing potential radicalism among individuals aged 17 to 57 in the South Sumatra Region. Attitudes can reflect one's inclination or stance towards an ideology or social issue, especially when perspectives become extreme, rigid or intolerant. Such attitudes often emerge in response to perceived injustices around changing conventions. Raising awareness of the dangers of radicalism can be achieved by fostering healthy social relationships, which encourage the avoidance of potential radicalism and support better decision-making in society. Future research should investigate attitudes, understandings, and actions related to potential

radicalism more comprehensively to ascertain perspectives on statehood and be provided with new policies on understanding radicalism to educate the public.

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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