

Islamic Radicalization through social media for ISIS Recruitment of Fighters

Mazida Mohd Desa
Norruzeyati Che Mohd Nasir
Mohd Alif Jasni
Mohd Norazmi Nordin
Muhd Zulhilmi Haron
Mohd Ab Malek Md Shah
Albert Feisal Muhd Feisal Ismail

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Mazida Mohd Desa, University Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
Email: inspmazida@gmail.com

Norruzeyati Nasir, University Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Mohd Alif Jasni, University Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Mohd Norazmi Nordin, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Muhd Zulhilmi Haron, Department of Development, Manager, Leader and Executive of Education, Institut Aminuddin Baki North Branch, Jitra, Kedah, Malaysia

Mohd Ab Malek Md Shah, Department of Law, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia

Albert Feisal Muhd Feisal Ismail, Faculty of Technology Management and Technopreneurship, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Durian Tunggal, Melaka, Malaysia

Abstract

This paper will briefly discussed on the history of ISIS establishment, their ideology and the concept of Islamic radicalization that have been disseminate through social media with the purpose of recruiting fighters, promoting jihad ideology and intimidating their enemies. This will further emphasize on the current phenomena of ISIS social media engagement as a global problem to terrorism. With the subsequent growth of social media platforms for communications, militant groups like ISIS have incorporated their ideology through social media and further employ recruitment strategy through the use of social media networks. Under the command of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS has established an Islamic caliphate, an advanced common jihadist ideas in a short amount of time which is an achievement that no other insurgency has been able to accomplish. The ISIS powered their projects by combining innovative technological strategies and advancing with strong force, financial resources and also intimidation as their main ideology.

Keyword: ISIS, Jihad, Social Media, Recruitment, Fighters, Caliphate, Ideology.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

The recent rise of ISIS or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria had increased global interest and pose some sort of global threat especially when they used the advancement of technology to convey messages among fellow terrorist and as a medium to promote their ideology for the recruitment of new fighters and supporters [1-3]. ISIS initially rise from unknown group of terrorist and over certain period of time, this organization later established in vast areas of Syria and Iraq, known as a self-declared Caliphate, rise to challenge the security of the world. ISIS introduced specific implementation of Sharia law which is considered as one-sided, brutal and little they regard about human life as many Muslims scholars across geographical area condemn their theological interpretation of the Quran and stated that they justify the law only by phrases taken from the Quran or Hadith and used it without context [4].

ISIS continues to display threat when they endorses sexual and physical exploitation of children and women, killing and torturing the non-believers without justification, and declared other Muslims who disagree with their definition of faith as apostates and can be killed in the name of Allah[5]. The absurdity remains regardless of their perceived brutality ISIS continues to lucratively recruit younger generations to support their ideology which further pose global threat to many countries. Today in Iraq, sectarian violence is a customary action in daily life although in areas not under the control of ISIS and in Syria; millions of individuals have been forced to leave their country simply because they do not agree with ISIS ideology [6].

Research Objectives

- i. To examine Islamic radicalization through social media for ISIS recruitment of fighters
- ii. To determine the extent of ISIS influence on Malaysian Muslims through social media engagement
- iii. To examine the strategies used by ISIS in promoting and propagating their ideology through social media

Variable Conceptual and Operational Definition

ISIS

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or mostly known as ISIS or IS was initially developed as a part of Al Qaeda in Iraq and was later rebranded as ISIS by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the founder who ruled the Al Qaeda branch for several years. Under his leadership, this organization conducted brutal forces than Al Qaeda. In 2006, he was killed in an airstrike by American but he left various military expertise on the battleground and a legacy of well-equipped fighters with strong faith in jihad. In the present day, ISIS runs large parts of North West Iraq and Syria which make their empire an area greater than the UK, with a population of 8 million people. Studies by [4, 6-10] reported that ISIS gained about US\$2 million daily from taxes enforced on the people living in areas under the control of ISIS, oil smuggling, smuggling of antiques and extortion money.

ISIS portrayed their caused as reinstate idealized eras of earlier Islamic history in a way that reverberates with many of the region's Muslims with the purpose of reflecting the image of Caliphate system and continues to adopt and implement strict Sharia law are

some of the portion from their propaganda that attracts most of their supporters. Their creative usage of social media as a medium of connection with their supporters such as the use of *WhatsApp* to distribute videos and graphics, *Soundcloud* to distribute audio reports, *Instagram* to display images and *JustPaste* to report their battle summaries, had been considered as a threat towards anti-terrorism countries [7].

Jihad

Jihad can be described as an ideology rooted deeply in the perceived superiority of specific group of religious individuals [11] and also known as a promise of individual power that enhanced the meaning of unity with the purpose of fighting together for a common cause. The term jihad sometime served as a meaning of holy war and often used alongside other Islamic terminology such as jama'ah (community), hijrah (migration), manhaj (truth seeking) and tawhid (unity) . ISIS had been known to practice Nikkah ul Jihad which means that woman should become sexual servants to Jihadi fighters to relieve their sexual frustration during war. They give permission for man to marry woman for a few hours in order for them to have 'halal' sex and able to perform effectively in Jihadi mission. Many women in Tunisia have been reported to return home carrying sexual transmitted disease as they have to fulfilled sex desire of 10 to 20 men during those times [12]. This practice is against what the Quran teach and out of justification of the Quran.

Social Media

Social media is a channel or means of social interaction online in cyberspace utilizing the internet. The user of social media to communicate, interact, send each other messages, sharing, and building a network (networking). Social media can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and Web 2.0 technologies that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content [13]. Social media have raised the viewpoint that it can be acquired as a vehicle for political transformation and democratization in which distribution of video files, documents and email petitions. The ability of social media platforms to disseminate information instantaneously provides certain level of communication medium reaching audience across geographical boundaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of ISIS Establishment and Their Ideology of Jihad

Living as an offshoot of al-Qaeda, the ISIS is well known for the brutality of their tactics and also their crime against civilian peoples. Former head of the al-Qaeda Central, Ayman al-Zawahiri kept his distance from the organization in early 2007 as he felt the brutality and immorality of these types of tactics. ISIS pushed his strategy aside by in harsher strategy of violence. In 2003, ISIS (or AQI) was initiated out of the commotion that surrounded the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and had grown as the sectarian tensions elevated. One of the major contributing factors in the Iraqi sectarian civil war that was drawn in 2007 was the targeting of Shi'ites. ISIS diminished its rank hugely from the Sahwa's counterterrorism efforts and the U.S. troop surge. Nonetheless, the group however managed to mount a comeback due to the civil uprising in Syria and also due to the institutional marginalization of Sunnis by the Nouri al-Maliki government [1, 3, 14-16].

On the 29th of June 2014, the Sunni jihadist ISIS or also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant established an Islamic caliphate. With capability of paramilitary and a force of around 10,000 militants, the brutal organization procured territory and accomplished a goal that al-Qaeda. During the implementation phase of its campaign, ISIS used their ideology of strategic tools to venture political, economic, military and informational power to the local and global community [17]. The group continued to spread their anti-Western ideology and also pro-jihadist messages to susceptible populaces by using videos that were made to look like video games and make them viral throughout the world. ISIS was able to expand their form of power further after the deterioration of the Iraqi and Syrian states [8].

Instruments of Power

Military Power

The brutal group, ISIS, in their surge through northern of Iraq, has affected its projection of power on local, regional and also global communities hugely. ISIS also managed to make great gains with a number of 10,000 troops by using strategies such as intimidation and social media. The group gained success easily due to the incompetence and ineffectiveness of the Iraqi army as stated in a report, four out of 14 divisions practically abandoned their positions when opposed in cities such as Tikrit and Mosul by militant groups [9, 18]. ISIS could still gain benefits from the problems with the national army which are representative of a larger endemic problem of systems, morale and broken leadership [18]. Writer Terrence McCoy state that the former al-Qaeda operatives has now morphed from a recently ragtag cadre to a fully militarized, transnational and literally scoff at the existence of al-Qaeda and labeled them as 'wannabe' jihadists. ISIS demonstrates its military might as they advance into Lebanon and Kurdistan as well as their gains in the northern Iraqi towns of Zumar, Wana and Sinjar [3, 7, 16].

Economic Power

The insurgent group's main forms of economic power eventually came from its other types of power. ISIS gained control of some facades of oil production and supplies actively in fundraising through social media and also through force. Within its Iraqi territory, ISIS loots oil from fields, pipelines and storage tanks and sells it to intermediaries and smugglers in Iraqi Kurdistan with the price of \$26 per barrel and then the Kurds will refine it and sells them for \$63 per barrel. Basically, these activities providing the group with a million dollars per day and the insurgent group sell the liquid gas and oil from Syrian [19]. With its power, they use force to squeeze funds through taxes from local business. ISIS has threatened other religious minorities and sells electricity from power plants captured in Syria. In its controlled territory, only the sale of electricity helps to provide services but it is not enough to counterpoise the other projections of economic power through force [8, 19, 20].

Political Power

ISIS's crucial political power to date comes from its capability to emphasize its claims for an Islamic caliphate under sharia-based law in its occupied territories. Its political power and capacity to work with local Sunni militants and tribes fortified its aims to mount the caliphate. ISIS does not want to share their throne, and each party does not hold the same objective. Some of the factions have already started to splinter as counteract to the

radicalism stimulated by ISIS. The contest to the unrelenting power projection will be the Islamic State's shift into a bureaucratic institution. Fractions to the Sunni base, a growth in Iranian-backed Shia militancy and the ultimatum to provide persistent and improved services for local communities could challenge the insurgent group. A division or rise of Shia militancy may bring in more violence or disturbance, whereas a failure to deliver adequate services will bring impact to the loss of support. The feebleness of the Nouri al-Maliki government was, and uncertainty regarding the Haider al-Abadi government is all about comprehensiveness [5, 7, 19, 21].

Informational Power

The insurgence handle on the distribution of information and propaganda is conceivably its greatest strength, and strongest influence to its growth in power. The group has applied social media as a medium and also a weapon of war, by using it to spread implicit and official messages, fundraise, network, and recruit [21]. The group's campaigns have the advantage of being pervasive and multidimensional, bearing an enormous effect. Revolutionary fervor was built by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in the 1970s by recording dialogues on cassette tapes and distributed them broadly throughout the mosques and bazaars in Iran, but spew out a unidirectional message. Other local jihadist activities have elevated through assemblies in mosques [22]. Although in the digital age, insurrectionary groups such as al Qaeda have not implemented social media to the same scope that ISIS has. ISIS's selected platforms and viral style of distributing messages have a wide-ranging reach and enabled multidimensional communication, continuously spreading and augmenting its aims [9].

ISIS Social Media Engagement: Strategy of Recruitment, Promoting Ideology and Intimidating Enemies

ISIS signed up its communications and social media campaigns in an extraordinary professional and advanced way. Its propaganda, recruitment, and information operations are well devised, skillfully constructed, and carefully designed in flow since this group has decided to associate with social networks for quick real-time responses, and even studied to prepare for any unpleasant circumstances. ISIS approached cleverly in understanding of the media worldwide by allowing for transformation, manipulation, and exploitation of the message that they had created [22].

Technology Innovation

"Dawn of Glad Tidings," is a *Twitter* application that has been used by ISIS's as their most important technological innovation to promote their organization. *Twitter* linked the group's main communication arm as it posts tweets on a user's behalf to a supporter. The app has posted more than 40,000 tweets in a day from the battlefield by using various users' accounts and after that Android took action by removing the apps from Google play store as it violated the terms of the services [23]. This type of app has been utilized by many organizations to tweet on a user's behalf to show their true support for campaigns regularly. Its plan of using many hashtags for every tweet makes it trending on *Twitter* as it promotes further rendezvous of the topic and leads to further notice to the other social media user. The tweets from these organizations are likely to recruit more supporters that can fight by showing deaths, explosions, arrests, and perceived injustices towards Islam to worldwide [1, 3, 24, 25].

Social Media Communication and Recruitment.

Dozens of accounts from central leadership being hold that focusing on discrete topics such as official messages from the leader, recruitment, networking, intimidation or religious themes. Half of the pages regards on recruiting Westerners were maintained by The al-Hayat Media Center that provide content in many language such as English, German, French and Russian [26]. In the past, most of jihadist group send messages about their campaign and spread propaganda to scared the world through official channels that been provided by their leaders [27]. ISIS also strives to customary the inoffensive hashtags or tagline like blend together with some #WC2014. ISIS tries to take over the #WC2014 by spreading about their own agenda messages [7, 18, 25, 28].

The organization also uses the social photo sharing platform such as *Instagram* in order to share the image that contains many messages of injustice and jihad within the world. ISIS manipulates many jihadist stories and turns their story into something that can simply seduce social media user brain to support them. Among the plethora of photos of weapons, bullets, or consequences of battle, there are images of jihadists enjoying food, adapting to life on the frontlines [8, 20]. ISIS basically does not care about any terminating accounts since they can easily create a new account with. Therefore, the terminating account by admin would be time consuming, ineffective, and fruitless since the insurgent still at the front controlling social media. Analysts in the Intelligence Community announced that they want the accounts to remain active in order to studies about the organization motivations, strengths, tactics, networks and hierarchies [20].

Communication Theory: Spiral Silence

The theory of spiral silence originated from 1974 by Nolle-Neumann which assumes that for morally loaded matters, the fear of isolation propels society to determine the viewpoint climates that surrounds them. Individuals who believe their opinion to be in the majority would tend to state their point of views, while other who categorized into minority group would eventually fall silent. A spiraling process is generated where the majority leads the public perception while the perception of minority group weakens [29]. To fear social isolation is the obstructive requirement to gain respects and recognition. As social beings, most people within a society are so afraid of being different, inflicting different opinion on others or to become isolated from the environment thus they will behave themselves according to social surrounding and following public acceptance. The key to ISIS triumph in global recruitment especially of the young fighters was influenced by the organization's broad use of various social media platforms as it have been recognized as high quality and unprecedented by the American government officials [19].

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this research, qualitative approach is followed which involve the qualitative content analysis through deductive approach by collecting information and previous data from previous research journals, books and published papers on ISIS social media engagement for recruitment [21]. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis is a type of scientific research which seeks answers to a question, collecting evidence and produces findings that are applicable beyond the boundaries of the study. Qualitative research focuses on the meanings, traits and defining characteristics of events, people, interactions, settings,

cultures and experience. Formation of research questions and research objectives should be based on the problem statement and the procedure for data collection [30, 31]. This study will employ qualitative content analysis to elaborate on the influence of ISIS through social media platforms among Malaysian Muslims [32]. In this study, purposive sampling is employed to understand the current trend of ISIS ideology spread through social media especially when it involves recruitment of Malaysian Muslims. Lastly, this conceptual framework will control data analysis processes and also the deductive analysis of data collected [33].

Paradigm and Methodology of Research

Qualitative research seeks out the 'why', not the 'how' of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information such as manuscripts, interview transcripts, emails, notes, feedback forms, photos and videos. It is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. It's used to inform business decisions, policy formation, communication and research. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, content analysis, ethnography, evaluation and semiotics are among the many formal approaches that are used [30]. Qualitative content analysis was chosen as the methods because it is a systematic means that allow us to quantify and describe phenomena and to test theoretical issue to further enlighten our understanding of the current information and available data.

Data Collection Method

Particularly any research will involve the collection of data regardless method used either qualitative or quantitative method. The data used in this research involves secondary data through the qualitative content analysis on ISIS social media engagement. Justification of usage of secondary data is that it contained data that have been established by other researchers and the collection of data is via qualitative content analysis.

Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis can be describe as a unit that represent the whole topic being studied and it can be individuals, group, programs, communities (Forman and Damschroder, 2008)^[14] and in this case, this study analyzed a militant organization known as ISIS. This study involved content analysis of published knowledge in manuscripts, journals, books, thesis dissertations and online news, regarding the ideology of ISIS, their influence through social media and their recruitment strategies within a period of 10 years (2007 to 2017). The study will further emphasizes the status of ISIS social media engagement and their influence of ideology and strategies to convinced Malaysian Muslims to support the organization.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is the method that developed knowledge base on constructivist perspectives in order to generate theory. The implementation of qualitative approach in research allowed grounded theory studies, phenomenologist, narratives, ethnographies and case studies to provide a comprehensive finding from published data. Qualitative content analysis tend to use pragmatic clouds as the fundamental of study for instance the use of problem-centered, consequence-oriented and pluralistic in the implementation of method. The data collection procedure involved the collection of numeric information such as from descriptive analysis of published sources interpreted into conceptual framework in which this methods compliment weakness and strength of each other [16].

Population and Sample

Sample Size Determination and Selection of Procedure

According to [34], appropriate sample size is vital for ensuring the credibility of content analysis study because information on the sample size is essential when evaluating whether the sample is appropriate. In the process of selecting appropriate procedure for research purposes, the sampling method used in qualitative studies represent the whole population and suitable for the design of research. The most commonly used method in content analysis studies is purposive sampling [35]. When using purposeful sampling, decisions need to be made about who or what is sampled, what form the sampling should take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled. In this study, published articles and news regarding ISIS ideology and social media engagement will be collected, read through and the information will be carefully abstracted for content analysis.

Research Instruments

The main data in this study comprised of elements of words, published information, headline of news, discourse, narratives and images contained in manuscripts, journals, books, online news and thesis dissertations and also social media websites which will add to perspective and sharpness during data analysis and provide enhanced understanding in addressing the problems. The literature and data obtained from the online sources will be extracted and analyzed for content worthiness and credibility to provide comprehensive understanding regarding the issue on ISIS ideology and social media engagement for recruitment of Malaysian Muslims.

Pilot Study

A pilot study will be organized to test the reliability of instrument for this study. For a content analysis methodology, intercoder reliability is widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message and reach the same conclusion. To measure the intercoder reliability for this study, researcher will use Cohen's kappa for coding nominal categories. According to [21, 26, 28, 36, 37], reliability test is a critical component in a qualitative content analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software will be used to calculate Cohen's kappa. Since we have included social media websites especially Twitter as one of the research instruments to analyze ISIS recruitment methods, the intercoder reliability must be determined prior to data analysis. The pilot study was conducted by assessing 50 tweets that may contain ISIS ideology or agenda or just merely non-related conversation regarding the matter where two raters categorized the tweets into yes or no.

Cohen Kappa Calculation

Step 1: Calculate p_o (number in agreement / total)

= (35 tweets were rated yes by both) + (10 tweets were rated no by both)

= (30 + 10) / 50 = **0.90**

Step 2: Find the probability that both raters would randomly said Yes

Rater A said Yes to 40 / 50 tweets (80% / 0.8)

Rater B said Yes to 35 / 50 tweets (70% / 0.7)

The total probability of the raters both saying Yes randomly is: (0.8)(0.7) = **0.56**

Step 3: Find the probability that both raters would randomly said No

Rater A said No to 10 / 50 tweets (20% / 0.2)

Rater B said No to 15 / 50 tweets (30% / 0.3)

The total probability of the raters both saying No randomly is: (0.2)(0.3) = **0.06**

Step 4: Calculate p_e by adding answers from Step 2 and Step 3 to get the overall probability that the raters would randomly agree:

$P_e = 0.56 + 0.06 = 0.6$

Step 5: Insert the values required into the formula (Figure 3.1)

$K = (0.9 - 0.6) / (1 - 0.6)$

$K = 0.75$, which indicates **substantial agreement**

The value obtained at the end of the study (K) will determined the reliability of instrument and interpreter reliability based on Cohen Kappa statistic interpretation below:

Table 1

Substantial agreement	
0	Agreement equivalent to chance
0.21-0.40	Slight agreement
0.41-0.60	Fair agreement
0.61-0.80	Moderate agreement
0.81-0.99	Substantial agreement
1	Near perfect agreement
	Perfect agreement

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is the approach in qualitative studies presently accessible for interpreting its meaning and analyzing data [38]. A requirement for successful content analysis is that data collection can be trimmed down to concepts or models that illustrate the research phenomenon and describe the research objectives [30]. In qualitative content analysis, the abstraction or extraction of content is the stage at some point in which concepts are constructed. In this study, deductive content analysis will be carried out which involved categorization matrix establishment. All of the data collected will be reviewed for its contents and further categories or coded for exemplification or correspondence to each category [37]. In the reporting phase, results are described by the content of the categories describing the phenomenon using a selected approach which in this case, deductive approach ([38]. It is vital to conduct pre-testing or pilot study although we are conducting qualitative analysis as the categorization matrix should be pre-tested. In trial coding, researchers autonomously test the coding of the newly created matrix and then discuss any obvious obstacles in using the developed matrix [35] and the units of coding they have deduced differently [38].

FINDING

Research Objective 1: To examine Islamic radicalization through social media for ISIS recruitment of fighters

In order to fully understand the concept of Islamic radicalization and the recruitment of fighters that support and fight for ISIS, abstractions of contents have been conducted from various sources within ten years period of time (2007-2017) to examine detailed definition of radicalization and how this organization managed to gained followers. The radicalization process is in support of the rebel factions, normally accompanied by an ideological socialization outside mainstream for more extremist or radical positions concerning a dichotomous world view and the recognition of an unconventional focus of political mobilization outside the dominant political order [9, 37]. Based on various studies regarding ISIS recruitment of fighters, up until the year of 2014 thousands of ISIS followers

are recruited from all over the world which have been summarized in Table 2 and the recruitment records from Southeast Asia have been summarized in Table 3

Table 2

Number of known ISIS recruits according to country

Country	Number of known ISIS recruits	Capacity	Sources
Jordan	1,500	Fighters	[39]
Morocco	1,500	Fighters	
Egypt	8,000	Fighters	
Tunisia	3,000	Fighters	
Saudi Arabia	2,500	Fighters	
France	700	Fighters, Suicide Bomber	[27]
Britain	500	Fighters	
Germany	300	Fighters	
United States	100	Fighters	[15]
Australia	60	Fighters	
Canada	130	Fighters	
Bosnia	50	Fighters, Organizers, Financiers, Recruiters	[16, 36]
Australia	60	Fighters	[34]
Switzerland	15	Fighters, Propaganda, Logistics, Financiers	[20]

Table 3

Number of known ISIS recruits from Southeast Asia Countries

Country	Number of known ISIS recruits	Sources
Malaysia	40	Malaysian Insider (2014)
Philippine	100	Philippine Times (2014)
Indonesia	300	IPAC (2014)
Cambodia	Unknown	Hanson (2015)
Thailand	Unknown	

Most of ISIS followers or fighters are recruited regionally and locally with some of them recruited from the Western countries. This is one of ISIS strategy in recruitment as they utilized Western fighters in their global membership campaign making them a symbol of global support for this organization [38] Foreign recruits normally will be given military training focusing on skills and indoctrination in order to serve ISIS purposes in claiming a state and implement caliphate system [17].

Islamic Radicalization through Social Media for Recruitment of Fighters

Findings of this study suggested that the process of Islamic radicalization by ISIS, regardless of it being represented by a lone wolf or a group of people, most certainly fit [40] definition of radicalization. Moreover, the spectrum of confrontational tactics, may range from the acts of violent extremism in the way of war crimes or terrorism, to the use of non-violent coercion and pressure in which both display the range of actions conducted by ISIS supporters, sympathizers and active recruits from Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines. In this case, Islamic radicalization by ISIS refers to an ideology of superiority

of this religious group with aim to establish a state in vast areas of Syria and Iraq rise to challenge the security of the world by implementing caliphate system and Sharia Law [4].

Recruits or fighters are people who volunteers to become combat actor in an area of armed conflict and in this case, most of ISIS fighters think they serve for holy duty of Jihad motivated by ideology and kinship [39]. It is perceptible that the number of ISIS followers and recruits vary widely with a range from 20,000 to 40,000 operating in Syria and Iraq with an estimated amount of 15,000 foreign fighters originated from 80 countries around the globe [39]. Among that, about 2,500 fighters are from Western countries for instance US, Australia, Canada, Britain, Germany and France.

Research Objective 2: To determine the extent of ISIS influence on Malaysian Muslims through social media engagement

Based on the findings of this study, it is perceptible that ISIS has disseminate the jihadist ideology among Malaysian Muslims, demonstrates the ideology through various attacks and attempts thus established their regional presence in Malaysia and also in the neighboring countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, Philippine and Singapore. It has been reported that ISIS develop and strengthen their ideology and caliphate system in the Southern Philippines, the centre of magnitude of the ISIS regional intimidation has moved to the Philippines. The Syria-based Malaysian operative Rafi Udin release a statement saying that Abu Abdullah al-Filipini has been assigned by the organization to become the head leader in the Philippines [37, 39, 41, 42].

Furthermore, the organization aims and takes advantage of online social networks for its own needs on an extraordinary scale. ISIS makes extensive use of Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook and in relation to senior American officials, operatives and supporters of the organization produce up to 90,000 tweets every day. A current study found that ISIS supporters maneuver at least 46,000 independent Twitter accounts, with 200-500 of these accounts active all day, in so helping to circulate the organization's propaganda. Moreover, the organization expanded an application for mobile devices called "Dawn of Glad Tidings," which for a while was obtainable for download in Apple app stores and Google, permitted its supporters to keep track the organization's activities in real time [37, 39, 41, 42].

Research Objective 3: To examine strategies used by ISIS in promoting and propagating their ideology through social media

In order to propagate and disseminate information globally, ISIS utilizes social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Skype, Ask.fm and Google Play in which the platform accelerate the radicalization process of prospective recruits. It allows recruits to be in undeviating contact with ISIS fighters in the field to become experienced at what the "ISIS know-how" is like and what the organization has accomplished up till now [37, 43]. When Facebook and Twitter were not options, ISIS built up and sold a Google Play app officially known as *The Dawn of Glad Tidings* that authorizes the user direct admittance to propaganda. On smartphones, the app is called *Dawn*, which circulates a daily digest of thousands of messages. Along with the advancement of this app is a website that sells clothing and accessories with ISIS-selected phrases related with their ideology and spirit for revolution [10, 26, 39, 44, 45].

One of the most ever-present technological resources in the Middle East, as well as Syria, is smartphones, which does not entail literacy to view, 'like,' and repost videos on multiple social media platforms and further offer an opening for recruiters and users to have 'face time' on video chat platforms to gain knowledge of how to partake in jihad and

hijira to Syria. The cyber-branding employed by ISIS, including apps, websites, videos and social media recruitment modus operandi have allegedly been designed by Westerners allowing real-time discussion with an ISIS fighter permits prospective recruits to feel part of the ISIS movement [10, 26, 39, 44, 45].

The term cyber jihad refers to use of 21st century technological tools and cyberspace in order to promote the notion of a violent jihad against those classified by its followers as enemies of Islam. While the concept of cyber jihad has evolved over the years, the use of online space by jihad organizations per se is not a new phenomenon: a popular manual published already in 2003 extolled the “electronic jihad.” This paper and others attest to the tremendous importance that ISIS organizations attribute to online space, which enables them to circumvent the barriers placed before them by various state institutions and security organizations and disseminate the message calling for a violent struggle against the West and the infidel Arab regimes without interruption and faster and more easily than ever before.

DISCUSSION

Based on the finding of this study, the most suitable and comprehensive interpretation of radicalization is by [22, 46] in which he defined radicalization as a group of people or an individual which involve a state of affairs of political polarization, normal practices of dialogue, tolerance and compromise among political groups or actors with different interests are forsaken by one or both sides in a conflict dyad in favor of a mounting dedication to engage in offensive tactics of conflict-waging [36]. This interpretation comprised either the acts of violent extremism in the form of war crimes and terrorism, various method of political violence other than terrorism, or the utilization of non-violent coercion and pressure which were found reliable to provide clear depiction of ISIS ideology.

The extent of ISIS influence in Malaysia initially begin in 2013 and until recently, the influence of ISIS clearly grew as Malaysia had been reported in the top 17 countries of the OIC that have people fight for ISIS. Their effective strategies on recruitment and increase support from their followers are largely contributed from their advancement in technology and the broad use of social media platform such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr and other medium of disseminating their ideologies especially to younger generations. The cyber-branding employed by ISIS, including apps, websites, videos and social media recruitment modus operandi have allegedly influence their increasing growth of fighters and allow prospective recruits to feel part of the ISIS movement which further exploits recruits’ online existence to grow more revelation and budding followers.

CONCLUSION

The ability of ISIS to employed various contemporary model of connection through social media especially to recruit fighters, to establish a caliphate, to intimidate enemies and to implement Sharia law strictly in a unified Muslim state has garnered world’s attention. However, Malaysian governments has actively establish partnership in combating ISIS ideology and develop more advance capacity to encounter the ideological threat disseminate by ISIS in order to protect Malaysian Muslims. With the exemption of the Philippines the regional capacity to counteract the operational threat is significant. In the meantime, Malaysia is planning to generate a number of capabilities including a Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communication Centre in Kuala Lumpur en route for curbing the ideological threat with hope that Malaysian authorities with vast expertise and

experience may to disrupt other ISIS cells operating throughout the country and further protect Malaysian Muslims from joining the violence cause.

Findings of this study enlighten current understanding on the history of ISIS development, their concept of Islamic radicalization and jihadist movement, strategy in recruiting followers across the globe, their capabilities of exploiting social media platforms to serve their own purposes and lastly, knowledge regarding the extent of ISIS influence along with current influence status of Malaysian Muslims have been analyzed and discussed in this study. This study is significant for anti-terrorism studies to counteract terrorism and the findings can be utilized to perceive connection to society creating awareness regarding the brutality of this organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the Russian air campaign in Syria in 2015, IS has suffered but continues to replenish its losses. Although the IS threat in Iraq and Syria has plateaued, IS is in a growth phase in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus. To counter the threat, governments will have to develop greater intelligence and operational capabilities both in the physical and cyber space to counter the extant and emerging threat. With its mastery in exploiting the social media, IS succeeded in creating pockets of supporters and sympathizers throughout the Muslim world, including in Southeast Asia. Given that this dissertation provides the extent of ISIS influence in Malaysia and their strategies in recruitment of fighters and followers, to fight the threat strategically, government security and intelligence services will have to work closely with both their domestic law enforcement and military counterparts as well as with their foreign partners. There needs to be a shift to collaboration where governments build common databases, exchange personnel, conduct joint training and operations, and share expertise, technology and experience, otherwise the Southeast Asian region will suffer more attacks in the coming months.

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