



Security Threats of Radicalism through Social Media amid Covid-19 Pandemic: Indonesia's Perspective

Aththariq Rizki and Fauzia Gustarina Cempaka Timur

Asymmetric Warfare Study Program, Indonesia Defense University.

Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic has brought so many uncertainties for society. People are compelled to adapt to the “new normal” in every aspect of their lives. The government of Indonesia introduced new policies to limit the movement of people through the Policy and the Work From Home (WFH) work system. As a result, large-scale social restrictions relied on the Internet, thus posing higher security risks. Even though the use of social media to spread radicalism is no longer considered novel, the pandemic has revamped social media into a more convenient platform for radicals and extremists as more people are engaged on a daily basis. By using qualitative methods, this study aims to analyze how the spread of radicalism through social media has become a tangible threat to Indonesia during the times of pandemic and the government's response strategy. This study found that the number of social media users in Indonesia peaked at 51.5 % since the start of the pandemic, most of which came from productive age groups. This study concluded that the pandemic had extended recruitment and radicalization through social media by reaching out to more people and spreading diverse narratives and hoaxes. In order to face those threats, Indonesia's government uses a strategy of combating such narratives, increasing digital literacy, and blocking content and accounts to minimize the echo of radicalization on social media.

Keywords: Covid-19, radicalism threat, social media, Indonesia

Introduction

The development of information and communication technologies is increasing rapidly. Technology is essentially made to assist and facilitate human activities.

Still, sometimes it is misused as a crime tool, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, where individuals widely use technology to help them fulfill their lives, from formal work to daily activities.

Citing the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) report, the number of world internet users in 2018 increased to 3.9 billion, i.e., half of the world's population. The number of internet users has also increased significantly in Indonesia. According to the 2020 APJII survey results, the number of internet users in Indonesia was 171.1 million, an increase of 27.9 million from the previous year when it was only 143.2 million. In the last survey during 2019-2020 (Q2), it was found that internet user penetration in Indonesia had reached 196.71 million users. Hence, 73.1% of Indonesian people currently use the Internet.

Between 2019 and 2020, Internet use in Indonesia increased further. This increase was related to the spread of COVID-19, which also affected Indonesia. Reporting from *VOI* (Voice of Indonesia),¹ the APJII chairperson explained that the rise in the number of Internet users in Indonesia was due to the online learning and work-from-home policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2019. With so many activities being carried out online at home, Internet usage will also increase.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Indonesian government to issue a policy of large-scale social restrictions. According to the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture,² "large-scale social restrictions" are restrictions on certain activities of residents in an area suspected of being infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This policy aims to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by limiting community activities, including work activities. Every activity carried out by the community must also comply with 3M health protocols (wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining distance). Based on APJII data,³ during the Covid-19 pandemic, as many as 51.5% of Indonesians actively use the Internet to access social media.

With the widespread use of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been numerous threats and concerns about using social media for criminal purposes and other malicious activities. One threat involves several parties exploiting social media to spread radicalism. The Head of the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT), Boy Rafli Amar,⁴ confirmed that radicalism spreads

¹ Tachta Citra Elfira and Aditya Fajar Indrawan, "APJII: Pandemi COVID-19 Buat Pengguna Internet di Indonesia Meningkatkan Hampir 200 Juta [APJII: The COVID-19 Pandemic Makes Internet Users in Indonesia Increase by Nearly 200 Million]," *VOI*, November 10, 2020, <https://voi.id/teknologi/19331/apjii-pandemi-Covid-19-buat-pengguna-internet-di-indonesia-meningkat-hampir-200-juta>.

² "Apa itu PSBB [What is PSBB]," *Kemenko PMK*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.kemenkopmk.go.id/apa-itu-psbb>.

³ Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, "Laporan Survei Internet APJII 2019-2020 [Q2] [APJII Internet Survey Report 2019-2020]," December 23, 2020, <https://apjii.or.id/survei>.

⁴ Sania Mashabi, "Kepala BNPT: Penyebar Paham Radikalisme Manfaatkan Media Sosial [Head of BNPT: Spreaders of Radicalism Take Advantage of Social Media]," *Kompas*,

not only face-to-face. Currently, radicals are disseminating intolerant radical ideas through social media. Radical parties use the existing channels on their social media accounts to spread their extreme views. According to him, social media became one of the most effective means to reach the younger generation and incite radicalism during the pandemic. The main target group is teenagers aged 17 to 24 years. At this age, they are still young, energetic, and unstable about their identity.

Sunarto's research⁵ reveals that advances in information technology generate threats to the integrity of the life of the nation and the state. One of them is the ease of access to the Internet and social media, which makes it easier for people to receive information about radicalism, bomb-making, and crimes. Low literacy levels may facilitate radicalization through the internalization of values during the interaction with online media in the lack of a well-integrated family.⁶ However, the secondary social environment, where a person interacts socially in the neighborhood and the educational environment, may counter radicalization by attitudes of tolerance to diversity and difference so that he or she is not easily influenced by content with radical nuances.⁷

Several scholars agree with Sunarto and highlight that radicalization is now widespread in Indonesia. Therefore the government needs a suitable counter-radicalization communication strategy, which may specifically utilize social media.⁸ Ghifari⁹ has also found that, currently, the spread of radicalism in society on social media has contributed significantly to the dissemination of radicalism, where social media became a propaganda medium to carry out intolerant actions, such as recruitment and training events, education, member network de-

July 3, 2020, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/07/03/15343511/kepala-bnpt-penyebar-paham-radikalisme-manfaatkan-media-sosial?page=all>.

⁵ Andang Sunarto, "Dampak Media Sosial Terhadap Paham Radikalisme [The Impact of Social Media on Radicalism]," *Nuansa: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Kemasyarakatan* 10, no. 2 (December 2017): 126-131, <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/nuansa.v10i2.647>.

⁶ Widodo Agus Setianto, "Literasi Konten Radikal di Media Online [Radical Content Literacy in Online Media]," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 16, no. 1 (January-April 2018): 75-88, <https://doi.org/10.31315/jik.v16i1.2684>.

⁷ Surryanto D. Waluyo, Fauzia Gustarina Cempaka Timur, and Ningsih Susilawati, "Pengajaran Nilai Bela Negara Melalui Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Sebagai Upaya Cegah Dini Terhadap Radikalisme [Teaching the Value of State Defense Through Citizenship Education as an Effort to Prevent Early Against Radicalism]," *Bhineka Tunggal Ika: Kajian Teori dan Praktik Pendidikan PKN* 8, no.1 (May 2021): 10-20, <https://ejournal.unsri.ac.id/index.php/jbti/article/view/12125/pdf>.

⁸ Ratna Puspita, "Kontra-Radikalisasi Pada Media Sosial Dalam Perspektif Komunikasi [Counter-Radicalization of Social Media in a Communication Perspective]," *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Garut: Hasil Pemikiran dan Penelitian* 6, no. 2 (October 2020): 509-529, <https://journal.uniga.ac.id/index.php/JK/article/view/785>.

⁹ Iman Fauzi Ghifari, "Radikalisme di Internet [Radicalism on the Internet]," *Religious: Jurnal Agama dan Lintas Budaya* 1, no. 2 (March 2017): 123-134, <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/Religious/article/view/1391>.

velopment to spread acts of terror and suicide bombings in Indonesia. Zamzamy¹⁰ added that the advancement of internet media allowed radicalism groups to recruit, propagate, and spread ideology. If, in the conventional method of spreading radicalism, it is necessary to meet with an ideology carrier, then this method is now available online. Radicalization is a process of seeking, discovering, adopting, and developing beliefs and extremes. The existence of online media is an instrument that has the potential to accelerate the radicalization process. From Aisy and colleagues,¹¹ we know that to deal with this, the government has increased cyber patrols to prevent the dissemination of content containing radicalism. Aside from that, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics strictly supervises content disseminated through social media applications, which has affected recruitment patterns and the spread of radicalism.¹²

Moreover, Handoko and Susanto¹³ elaborate that the role played by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in preventing radicalism is already taken where they continue to educate the public about the dangers of radicalism and continue to counter every radicalism-related content through social media by sharing positive and peaceful narrative content. Interactions that occur on social media can be seen through the number of likes, shares, and comments. This number of interactions determines the reach of other social media users. The mention of a radicalism-related word on social media is not only related to religious issues. Other concerns associated with radicalism are elections, politics, government, crime, and other social issues.¹⁴

Fanindy and Mupida,¹⁵ through their research, also explain the results of social media as the first option for the younger generation in seeking instant infor-

¹⁰ Ahmad Zamzamy, "Menyoal Radikalisme di Media Digital [Questioning Radicalism in Digital Media]," *Dakwatuna: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam* 5, no. 1 (February 2019): 13-29, <https://doi.org/10.36835/dakwatuna.v5i1.318>.

¹¹ Bilqis Rihadatul Aisy et al., "Penegakan Kontra Radikalisasi Melalui Media Sosial Oleh Pemerintah Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme [Enforcement of Counter-Radicalization Through Social Media by the Government in Countering Radicalism]," *Jurnal Hukum Magnum Opus* 2, no. 1 (February 2019): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.30996/jhmo.v2i2.2174>.

¹² Achmad Sulfikar, "Swa-radikalisasi Melalui Media Sosial di Indonesia [Self-radicalization Through Social Media in Indonesia]," *Jurnal Jurnalisa* 4, no. 1 (May 2018): 76-89, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jurnalisa.v4i1.5622>.

¹³ Jefri Handoko and Eko Harry Susanto, "Humas Kominfo Dalam Mencegah Bahaya Radikalisme Di Media Sosial [Kominfo Public Relations in Preventing the Danger of Radicalism in Social Media]," *Jurnal Prologia* 3, no. 1 (July 2019): 147-153, <https://doi.org/10.24912/pr.v3i1.6232>.

¹⁴ Abdul Wahid, Nia Ashton Destitry, and Fariza Yuniar Rakhmawati, "Radikalisme di Media Sosial: Penyebutan dan Konteks Sosial Penggunaannya [Radicalism in Social Media: Mention and Social Context of Its Use]," *Jurnal InterAct* 9, no. 1 (2020): 60-70, <https://doi.org/10.25170/interact.v9i1.1711>.

¹⁵ M. Nanda Fanindy and Siti Mupida, "Pergeseran Literasi pada Generasi Milenial Akibat Penyebaran Radikalisme di Media Sosial [Literacy Shift in Millennial Generation Due

mation so that they are easily exposed to radicalism content. The young generation is easily exposed to radicalism because they are in the process of finding their identity; thus, they will be influenced easily by what they read. Also, because they are familiar with how social media may grant them diverse information instantly, extremist groups use the same logic. Initially, they spread radicalism in the name of religion to uphold the ideology of the caliphate and reject the democratic system through writings, books, and magazines and uploading them to social media networks considered more effective.

So looking at the prior arguments, during the COVID-19 pandemic, health protocols and government policies have limited people's physical movements, which led to increased activity on the Internet, especially on social media. Of course, this is a potential for the growing threat of radicalism on social media. Therefore, below we analyze in more detail the threat perception of radicalism via social media in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method

In writing this article, the authors use a qualitative research method with a literature review approach. According to Creswell,¹⁶ a literature review is a research approach based on non-numeric data, which can be in the form of writing and images, and filtering of the data is carried out to make interpretations of the literature review. This research study has been conducted through literature sources such as journals, books, theses, research reports, and scientific articles with valid and reliable sources.

Finding and Discussion

Use of Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia

The Digital Trends Report, a survey conducted by Facebook with YouGov, shows that more than 140 million Indonesians joined social media groups that were active during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, Indonesia's population is 267.7 million people. Ninety-five percent of the respondents claimed to provide support, both moral assistance and household needs, to community members via social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. As many as 54 percent of respondents received moral support from their friends in the Facebook group, and another 55 percent provided moral support via social media. More than half of the social media community thrives on digital platforms. A total of 67 respondents said the community had become increasingly important during the COVID-19

to the Spread of Radicalism on Social Media],” *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama* 20, no. 2 (February 2021): 195-222, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol20.iss2.art1>.

¹⁶ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishing, 2003).

pandemic. Furthermore, as reported by *Kompas*¹⁷ on the basis of the latest report from the marketing agency “We Are Social” and social media management platform Hootsuite, more than half of the population in Indonesia was “literate,” i.e., actively using social media in January 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report entitled “Digital 2021: The Latest Insights into The State of Digital” claimed that out of a total of 274.9 million people in Indonesia, 170 million had used social media. Thus, the penetration rate is around 61.8 percent.

As of January 2021, active social media users in Indonesia have grown by 10 million, or around 6.3 percent, compared to January 2020. At the same time, internet users in Indonesia have also increased by 27 million or 15.5 percent, so currently, internet users in Indonesia are 202.6 million. Rohmah’s research¹⁸ shows that from 50 random samples on Instagram, 80% of people agreed that social media could be used as a medium of general information, and 93% agreed with social media as a medium for COVID-19 information. Furthermore, Rohmah¹⁹ also explained that 80% of his research respondents agreed that social media could be an escape from all problems. For individuals isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has become a source of entertainment and psychological relief.

This increase in the use of social media is in line with the convenience provided by social media.²⁰ Five aspects of social media’s superior characteristics make it a stronger choice than traditional media. Among its advantages are:

1. *Accessibility*: social media is easily accessible since it requires a small fee or is accessible at no cost
2. *Speed*: information and content on social media will be immediately available to everyone on networks, forums, and communities when the content or information is published
3. *Interactivity*: social media has the ability to accommodate two or more communication channels

¹⁷ Conney Stephanie, “Riset Ungkap Lebih dari Separuh Penduduk Indonesia ‘Melek’ Media Sosial [Research Reveals That More Than Half of Indonesia’s Population Is ‘Literate’ on Social Media],” *Kompas*, February 24, 2021, <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2021/02/24/08050027/riset-ungkap-lebih-dari-separuh-penduduk-indonesia-melek-media-sosial>.

¹⁸ Nurliya Ni’matul Rohmah, “Media Sosial Sebagai Media Alternatif Manfaat dan Pemuas Kebutuhan Informasi Masa Pandemi Global Covid-19 (Kajian Analisis Teori Uses And Gratification) [Social Media as an Alternative Media Benefit and Satisfying Information Needs During the Global Covid 19 Pandemic (Analysis Study of Uses and Gratification Theory)], *Al-I’lam: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 4, no. 1 (September 2020): 1-16, <https://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/jail/article/view/2957>.

¹⁹ Rohmah, “Media Sosial Sebagai Media Alternatif Manfaat dan Pemuas Kebutuhan Informasi Masa Pandemi Global Covid-19.”

²⁰ Varinder Taprial and Priya Kanwar, *Understanding Social Media* (London: Ventus Publishing ApS, 2012).

4. *Longevity*: information or content on social media can be accessed for a long time or even forever.
5. *Reach*: social media and the Internet offer an unlimited range of all available content.

Meanwhile, based on a survey conducted by GWI in the third quarter of 2020 in *Beritasatu*,²¹ Youtube is still the most popular social media in Indonesia. The number of YouTube users reached 94%, with ages 16 to 64 years. The second most popular social media in Indonesia is WhatsApp, followed by Instagram in the third position. In the report, Instagram rose to third place by displacing Facebook to fourth.

The Threat of Terrorism and Radicalism in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Aisy and coworkers²² explain that radicalism is the forerunner to the formation of terrorism. Radicalism is an attitude that wants change as a whole and is revolutionary in nature, with a fast tempo, and against existing values with violence and extreme actions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, radicalism and terrorist activities often occur in Indonesia. Even at the beginning of 2021, terrorist activities from radical groups are increasingly being carried out. There was a bomb terror attack in Makassar – a suicide bomber attacked the Makassar Cathedral Church, South Sulawesi. Police said the bombers were part of the radical group *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD)*. The National Police Chief, General Listyo, stated that the four people were partners of L and YSF in participating in the study at the Villa Mutiara Housing. The housing was the location in Makassar for the arrest of members of the JAD terrorist network.²³ Suspect ZA carried out a terror attack with an airsoft gun inside the National Police Headquarters. In his statement, the National Police Chief said that ZA managed to break into the Police Headquarters complex through the back door and then went to the police post near the front entrance and carried out an act of terror. Based on the police report, ZA had left the post but returned again and fired six shots.²⁴

²¹ Yudo Dahono, "Data: Ini Media Sosial Paling Populer di Indonesia 2020-2021 [Data: This is the Most Popular Social Media in Indonesia 2020-2021]," *Beritasatu.com*, February 15, 2021, <https://www.beritasatu.com/digital/733355/data-ini-media-sosial-paling-populer-di-indonesia-20202021>.

²² Aisy et al., "Penegakan Kontra Radikalisasi Melalui Media Sosial Oleh Pemerintah Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme."

²³ Tommy Kurnia, "4 Kasus Terorisme yang Terjadi di Dunia Selama Pandemi COVID-19 [4 Terrorism Cases That Happened in the World During the COVID-19 Pandemic]," *Liputan 6*, March 29, 2021, <https://www.liputan6.com/global/read/4518650/4-kasus-terorisme-yang-terjadi-di-dunia-selama-pandemi-covid-19>.

²⁴ Berita Utama, "Penembakan Mabes Polri: 'Terduga teroris berideologi ISIS', polisi ungkap identitas perempuan 25 tahun pelaku serangan [Police Headquarters shooting: 'Suspected terrorist with ISIS ideology', police reveal the identity of the 25-year-

In interviews with the Indonesia Intelligent Agency (2020), the National Police explained that during March – December 2020, it suspected 143 people were involved in terrorism and radicalism. The police revealed that of the 143 suspects, 97 were from the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) group, 20 were from the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), 12 were from the East Indonesia Mujahidin group (MIT), and 14 from the social media.

The rise of terror and radicalism activities carried out by radical groups cannot be separated from the factors that support the spread of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia. This is in line with Fatkhuri's opinion,²⁵ which states that two supporting factors trigger the spread of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia, namely, economic deprivation and political injustice. The first is related to the problem of economic deprivation. Reporting from Wijaya in BBC Indonesia,²⁶ the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) noted that the number of poor people in Indonesia increased by more than 2.7 million people due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that the number of poor people in Indonesia in September 2020 reached 27.55 million, which is equal to 10.19 percent of the total population, an increase of 2.76 million people compared to September 2019. This increase in the poverty rate cannot be separated from the mass layoffs carried out by several private companies affected by the restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

This is in line with previous research conducted by Fanindy and Mupida,²⁷ which concluded that poverty was one of the factors supporting the terrorism or radicalism movement in Indonesia, although this did not directly affect the spread of radicalism. However, poverty easily influences someone in supplying their needs. This enables an economical approach to tackle radicalism and religious extremism. With widespread poverty, many Indonesians are trying to get income and material support from many sources. Radical groups and terrorists can use this to spread radical ideas and recruit by providing material support.

Second, there are issues related to political injustice. Many terrorist and radical groups saw government policies during the pandemic as an opportunity to attack the government and influence the minds of the Indonesian people. The economic condition worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The government

old woman who carried out the attack],” *BBC News*, March 31, 2021, www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-56579674.

²⁵ Fatkhuri, “Faktor Pendukung Terbentuknya Radikalisme dan Terorisme di Indonesia [Factors Supporting the Formation of Radicalism and Terrorism in Indonesia],” *Jurnal Universitas Pembangunan Veteran Jakarta* (2017), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318054171_FAKTOR_PENDUKUNG_TERBENTUKNYA_RADIKALISME_DAN_TERORISME_DI_INDONESIA.

²⁶ Callistasia Wijaya, “Dampak Covid-19: 2,7 juta orang masuk kategori miskin selama pandemi, pemulihan ekonomi ‘butuh waktu lama’ [Impact of Covid-19: 2.7 million people categorized as poor during the pandemic, economic recovery ‘takes a long time’],” February 17, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-55992498>.

²⁷ Fanindy and Mupida, “Pergeseran Literasi pada Generasi Milenial Akibat Penyebaran Radikalisme di Media Sosial.”

policy was considered unfair and detrimental to small communities, especially for the workers. Yahya in Kompas²⁸ reported in October 2020 that the government and the Indonesian House of Representatives passed the Omnibus Law on Job Creation in a plenary meeting. However, this bill's ratification received much criticism from the Indonesian people. Many parties deplore the ratification of the Job Creation Bill. This bill is considered problematic and can potentially harm people, especially workers. Moreover, the ratification of the bill was carried out during the outbreak of the pandemic.

Waluyo and colleagues²⁹ have explained this political injustice stating that the dissatisfaction of several community groups leads to the emergence of terrorist movements and acts of radicalism. This feeling of dissatisfaction prompts the formation of radical groups, which then leads to terrorism, intending to confront the government.

In addition, Chaidir³⁰ also explains that BNPT has tried to analyze four attitudes toward terrorism and radical groups during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely:

1. Terrorist and radical groups circulate the idea that the spread of COVID-19 is a punishment for infidels and oppose government policies to follow health protocols.
2. Terrorist and radical groups take advantage of the PSBB period to carry out propaganda on social media.
3. Terrorist and radical groups view the COVID-19 pandemic as the right time to carry out acts of terror.
4. Terrorist and radical groups take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic period for capacity building, spreading their narratives and recruiting people online.

²⁸ Achmad Nasrudin Yahya, "Ramai-ramai Menolak UU Cipta Kerja dan Ancaman Nasional [Many Against the Law on Job Creation and National Threats]," *Kompas.com*, June 10, 2020, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/10/06/05545351/ramai-ramai-menolak-uu-cipta-kerja-dan-ancaman-mogok-kerja-nasional?page=all>.

²⁹ Waluyo, Timur, and Susilawati, "Pengajaran Nilai Bela Negara Melalui Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Sebagai Upaya Cegah Dini Terhadap Radikalisme."

³⁰ Leski Rizkinaswara, "Pemblokiran dan Literasi jadi Langkah Kominfo Cegah Terorisme di Ruang Digital [Blocking and Literacy are steps for Kominfo to Prevent Terrorism in the Digital Space]," *Jakarta: Aptika Kominfo*, August 16, 2020, <https://aptika.kominfo.go.id/2020/08/pemblokiran-dan-literasi-jadi-langkah-kominfo-cegah-terorisme-di-ruang-digital/>.

The Threat of Radicalism via Social Media in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic

From Wahid's previous research,³¹ it is known that the mention of the word "radicalism" is often followed by the use of hashtags (#) associated with other words. Some popular hashtags related to the mention of radicalism are #radicalism, #indonesia, #pancasila, #indonesiapeace, #indonesiahebat, #tolerance, #bhinnekatunggalika, and others. Moreover, various uses of these hashtags appear along with important events at certain times. Ines von Behr and colleagues³² explain that there are five reasons why the Internet and social media have an important role in promoting radicalism, namely:

1. The Internet and social media create more opportunities
2. The Internet and social media act as "echo chambers"
3. The Internet and social media accelerate the radicalization process
4. The Internet and social media allow radicalization to occur without physical contact
5. The Internet and social media increase opportunities for self-radicalization.

According to Anthonius Malau, director of Information and Communications Application Control at the Communications and Informatics website (2020), acts of terrorism and the spread of radicalism and information during the Covid-19 pandemic were still high. Records from July 2017 to July 2020 show that 16,739 pieces of content (on social media and websites) related to terrorism and radicalism were successfully blocked.

Meanwhile, according to the Director of BNPT Protection, Herwan Chaidir, the Kominfo website³³ also recorded increased cases related to terrorism and radicalism. From January to June 2020, 84 terrorism suspects were prosecuted by the police. According to Chaidir,³⁴ the Covid-19 pandemic caused 2 million people to lose jobs and increased poverty. The data provided by the BNPT indicates efforts to tackle these terrorist and radical groups so that they do not use the pandemic to recruit members.

As for social media content that can be said to be radical content, according to the guidebook for preventing radicalism in the work environment of BUMN and private companies by BNPT (2020), it has been found that four indicators

³¹ Wahid, Destitry, and Rakhmawati, "Radikalisme di Media Sosial: Penyebutan dan Konteks Sosial Penggunaannya."

³² Ines von Behr, Anaïs Reding, Charlie Edwards, and Luke Gribbon, *Radicalisation in the Digital Era: The Use of the Internet in 15 Cases of Terrorism and Extremism* (RAND Europe, 2013).

³³ Rizkinaswara, "Pemblokiran dan Literasi jadi Langkah Kominfo Cegah Terorisme di Ruang Digital."

³⁴ Rizkinaswara, "Pemblokiran dan Literasi jadi Langkah Kominfo Cegah Terorisme di Ruang Digital."

characterize a group or individual as radical: intolerance, fanaticism, exclusivism, and anarchism. Here are examples of anarchic content circulating during the COVID-19 pandemic on social media based on BNPT’s radical indicators:

Table 1. Radical Activities on Social Media during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

No.	Case	Category	Date
1	The raid on houses of worship in Cikarang	Intolerance	13-09-2020
2	Fanatical support for the radical FPI movement	Fanatism	30-12-2020
3	Rejection of the Gospel in Minangnese language	Exclusivism	10-06-2020
4	Instructions against the FPI Command 1 government	Anarchism	26-06-2020

Table 1 lists cases from 2020 illustrating each of the four categories of radicalism defined by BNPT: intolerance, fanaticism, exclusivism, and anarchism. From the report of *Kumparan.com*,³⁵ one example of intolerant actions during the COVID-19 pandemic was the viral video on social media of the raid on a Christian house of worship in Cikarang, West Java. Local residents raiding the church were considered to have violated large-scale social restrictions (PSBB).

Aside from the intolerance category, fanaticism action has also been found in the data obtained from *Warta Ekonomi*.³⁶ The news of freezing the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) community organization through the hashtag #FPIterlarang became a trend on Indonesian Twitter. Many Indonesian netizens showed their support together with FPI fanatics who are still trying to support and defend FPI through social media. Members and supporters of FPI spread such tweets, which have been seen as fanaticism towards the organization they run and idolize.

In one example, a June 2020 news was spread exclusively via social media. A Minangkabau community group objected to the publication of the Bible in the Minangkabau language. This act of rejection was channeled via social media tweets or direct reports, claiming that this publication was considered controversial and against the customs and culture of the Minangkabau people. An ex-

³⁵ Anwar Saragih, “Intoleransi di Masa Pandemi [Intolerance during a Pandemic],” *Kumparan.com*, April 20, 2020, <https://kumparan.com/anwar-saragih/intoleransi-dimasapandemi-1tG7MN5ffb0>.

³⁶ “FPI Dibubarkan, Warganet Pro-Kontra! Ada yang Bilang, ‘FPI Tetap di Hati!’ [FPI Disbanded, Warganet Pros and Cons! Some Say, ‘FPI Remains in the Heart!’],” *Wartaekonomi*, December 30, 2020, <https://www.wartaekonomi.co.id/read320669/fpi-dibubarkan-warganet-pro-kontra-ada-yang-bilang-fpi-tetap-di-hati>.

ample of an anarchistic call to action via social media during the COVID-19 pandemic was a call for jihad to fight against the Trisila communist group in Indonesia. Quoted in *Fajar.co.id*,³⁷ the General Secretary of FPI Munarman issued the first Command Alert instruction inviting jihad resistance to communist groups in Indonesia. This was a response to the actions of the Trisila group after the alliance held a demonstration against the draft Pancasila Ideological Direction Law.

Conclusion

Social media has turned into an essential platform for information, entertainment, and communication with the community and other people during the pandemic. In 2020, the most used social media in Indonesia was Youtube, followed by WhatsApp and Instagram.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the threat of radicalism has increased. There are two reasons why an increased number of society members have turned to radicalism during the Covid-19 pandemic. First, the problem of economic deprivation, which got worse during the pandemic, and second, the political injustice felt by society. Many people were dissatisfied with what was perceived as unfair treatment by governmental policies. Inefficiencies in handling Covid-19 in Indonesia are among the causes for the emergence of this feeling of dissatisfaction. As a result, several cases of radicalism in 2020 indicated intolerance, fanaticism, exclusivism, and anarchism.

Disclaimer

The views expressed are solely those of the authors and do not represent official views of the PFP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, participating organizations, or the Consortium's editors.

Acknowledgment

Connections: The Quarterly Journal, Vol. 20, 2021 is supported by the United States government.

About the Authors

Aththaariq Rizki is a student in the Asymmetric Warfare Study Program at Indonesia Defense University, Bogor. E-mail: erikatorik@gmail.com

Fauzia Gustarina Cempaka Timur is a Lecturer in the Asymmetric Warfare Study Program at Indonesia Defense University, Bogor. E-mail: fgccempaka@gmail.com

³⁷ Adi Mirsan, "Siaga 1, FPI Cs Serukan Jihad Qital Lawan Komunis [Alert 1, FPI Cs Calls for Qital Jihad Against Communists]," *Fajar.co.id*, June 26, 2020, <https://fajar.co.id/2020/06/26/siaga-1-fpi-pa-212-dan-gnpf-serukan-jihad-qital-lawan-komunis/>.