Women and the Spread
of Global Extremism Narratives of ISIS

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Abstract. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a radicalized group that has the goal of building an Islamic caliphate globally. ISIS recruits its members globally and spreads the extremism narrative widely. ISIS recruits more men to fulfill their roles as fighters and martyrs, but the role of women is also needed in ISIS activities as a supporting capacity in every activity carried out by jihadists. The involvement of women is seen as quite effective in polarizing radicalism, because women will continue the descendants of the next generation of ISIS and have a higher humanist and cognitive spirit than men. For this reason, it is interesting to study the radicalization process carried out by ISIS on women, propaganda, and the pattern of approach. This research uses a qualitative approach to gain an understanding of how transnational networks of the ISIS movement influence women and encourage women to join acts of terrorism through propaganda and extremism narratives. It was found that ISIS spreads its ideological narrative through offline and online channels where the basis of its approach is more towards an emotional intelligence approach related to social identity. ISIS uses many social media instruments in the process of spreading its ideology, so a strategy that focuses on a multidimensional and gender-valued approach that involves the entire spectrum of society needed, including governments, civil society, and families, as well as interstate cooperation to prevent polarization of ISIS ideology to women, such as internalization of education and gender equality.

Keywords: ISIS, Women Sympathizers, Emotional Intelligence Approach.

1 Introduction

The rapid development of globalization affects the increase of transnationalism crimes. The crime of transnationalism is a crucial threat to the life of the global community because it directly affects the security and prosperity of the global community. Quoted from the official statement of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), transnationalism crimes are money laundering, drug trafficking, human trafficking, corruption, and terrorism [1]. Acts of terrorism are one part of the crime of transnationalism because this action can harm many countries, not only the countries that experience these actions. One of them is the bombing of the World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings in the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001. The United States globally issued an official statement on its foreign policy saying it would combat any acts and acts of terrorism "War on Terror" [2] and if other countries are not willing to help, then the country is included in the ranks that support acts of terrorism. Even the American statement gave rise to a new phenomenon, namely Islamophobia, where the accused

perpetrators of terrorist acts are Al-Qaeda which carries the concept of Islamic jihad and adherents of Islamic radicalism. Al- Qaeda already existed in the war against the invasion of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and in the internal Afghan conflict in the 1990s. This group is adherents of Islamic radicalism who are disillusioned with the growing political and economic structure of the West and are unable to meet their sense of satisfaction.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is another radicalism group that emerged after Al-Qaeda and actively spread terror globally. ISIS emerged after acts of terrorism committed by Al Qaeda in 2003 with many suicide bombings and other extremist actions globally. Much evidence has found that the two networks are linked, and ISIS receives a lot of logistical and weaponry support from Al-Qaeda. Even many of its thinkers are part of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. ISIS's goal is more or less the same as Al-Qaeda's, which is to build a global caliphate, so ISIS always recruits its members globally and spreads the narrative of extremism widely.

It is interesting to study further the radicalization process carried out by ISIS on women, propaganda, and the pattern of approach to instruments such as what ISIS does so that it makes women easily exposed to ISIS. ISIS recruits more men to fulfill their roles as fighters and martyrs, but the role of women is also needed in ISIS activities as a supporting capacity in every activity carried out by jihadists. The involvement of women is seen as quite effective in polarizing radicalism, because women will later continue the descendants of the next generation of ISIS and have a higher humanist and cognitive spirit than men so that it is easy to radicalize. So, it is undeniable that the most vulnerable group exposed to ISIS is women. In 2015, there was an increase in the number of women exposed to ISIS more than men. About 5,000 European women are expected to go to Syria and that number is expected to rise to 10,000 in the next year, and on average not only women from Europe but from the Asian region and beyond. It is hoped that this research can help to design strategies on how to overcome ISIS radicalization, especially for women who are vulnerable to exposure [3].

2   Methodological Framework

This research uses a qualitative approach that focuses literature studies to gain an understanding of how transnational networks of the ISIS movement influence women and encourage women to join acts of terrorism through propaganda and extremism narratives. The secondary data collection was obtained from tracing documents about the organizational history of the ISIS movement, terror acts that have been carried out, movement mobilization, movement ideology, and campaign strategies carried out transnationally. The sources of documents used are: (1) newspapers and online magazines that carry news about ISIS, (2) YouTube shows about ISIS, and (3) social media used for spreading ISIS propaganda. The collected data were analyzed by descriptive-qualitative techniques. All data were organized into categories and given qualitative-narrative analysis. Analysis is carried out by interpreting the data that has been collected and juxtaposing it with findings from similar studies, as well as relevant theories.

3   Results and Discussions

3.1. Patterns of Radicalization of ISIS Women Recruitment

Acts of terrorism carried out by the ISIS militant group are increasingly global. They not only dominate in Iraq and Syria but carry out power struggles in the surrounding region. But as well as spreading terror around the world, within a few months ISIS was able to seize control of a strategic area rich in oil and gas resources that play a key role in supporting the financing of ISIS military operations and recruiting many jihadist sympathizers from the world. all over the world. However, the success of ISIS was also accompanied by defense and resistance actions from various Western regions, especially the United States and countries that experienced ISIS terror acts. In the end, ISIS suffered defeats in its actions in Iraq and Syria and ended up regaining control of the territories they occupied. Especially the areas where the command headquarters reserves for consumption and war supplies. Defeat triggered the group to think of a new war strategy. ISIS is building a new strategic plan by no longer making the territory of Syria and Iraq only the place of struggle for their caliphate. They began to look for areas for their base of operations in nearby regions, such as to Europe, the United States, Australia, and even Southeast Asia as an alternative. ISIS leaders in Syria and Iraq began to expand their networks and sympathizers to different parts of the world. The way they approach to influence Muslims globally is by conducting propaganda actions and campaigns about their radicalism through various channels, both through space offline and online.

ISIS spreads its ideological influence through an emotional approach under the instrument of proselytizing propagated by its networked intellectual agents. They place their intellectual agents all over the world, especially in Muslim-majority countries or regions. They carry out campaigns and propaganda actions by carrying ties of religious solidarity to easily penetrate   Muslims globally. In their offline actions, they influence Muslims around the world by proselytizing Islamic literature that is distributed within the network of certain mujahideen groups and providing education on extremism explicitly by his agents stationed in the area. ISIS networks are smart to look for opportunities for their radicalism process, where they place their agents in areas that are prone to conflict or are experiencing internal conflict so that it is easy to play the emotions of Muslims who are involved in conflict. For example, in the Poso region of Indonesia, ISIS intellectual agents joined Muslim communities such as Jemaah Islamiyah, Mujahidin Kompak, Laskar Jihad, and Laskar Wahdah Islamiyah, to spread their jihadist-extremist ideology. At that time the Poso region was in communal conflict between the Christian and Muslim populations.   The arrival of these jihadists, or ISIS intellectual agents, brought a new complexion to Islam in the region, where they taught the need for a military base to defend from things that can damage the religion of Islam. The chaos of communal conflict became a structure of political opportunity for them to build *training camps* for local people and facilitate indoctrination and understanding of   Jihad in a "pesantren" education. ISIS Intellectual Agents successfully encouraged its followers to attack each other in the name of   Jihad and spread the radical ideology of   Islamism in the Poso region. This includes where women [4] are involved as a new strategy by jihadist groups as a

reinforcement of group networks through marriage or family ties, as well as a sense of religious solidarity. Women who are already married as jihadist brides are increasingly easily doctrinated, with gender-biased narrative discourse mixed with a reinterpretation of erroneous views of Islam. To be a *sholeha* (pious) woman like the wives of the previous prophets, women must observe Sharia Islam by obeying their nature. It is like obeying the husband's commands. The basis of Islamic Sharia is used as an initial foundation to build women's beliefs so that they are easily radicalized, Women who *sholeha* must obey their nature, namely continuing offspring, obeying their husbands, and prohibiting contributing to the social field and pursuing Westernization-style higher education. The propaganda narrative conveyed through Islamic texts conveyed by ISIS narrows the view of women and is very patriarchal. But despite the perceived extreme domestication of women, they still believe that this is true because there are other assumptions at play in ISIS's emotional doctrine: women's mental and spiritual well-being. Gender bias weakens women's mentality as they feel they are weak creatures who deserve to be protected by their husbands. An erroneous interpretation of religious and spiritual interpretation has strengthened their belief that the ideal woman as the perfect wife is silent and wholeheartedly obedient to her husband without criticism to produce a harmonious family ready to go to heaven.   This view of gender bias has been used by the radical group ISIS to make women radical perpetrators [5].

Another instrument used by ISIS to spread its ideology and encourage the global community, especially young women, to support the group is through internet networks and the development of social media communication technology. The use of social media has proven to be an important instrument for the ISIS organization in spreading its ideology and is considered suitable for the audience it wants to target. ISIS targets 89% of women aged 18 to 29 by using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and even YouTube to allow their propaganda to reach around the world in real time (8). ISIS seeks various ways to indoctrinate their ideology online so that they become sympathizers and are willing to travel to the Middle East to engage in combat and become brides of jihad. Usually, their target is young women who experience social problems are psychologically vulnerable, and actively use social media, and personal internet networks. The propaganda strategy offered by ISIS is to appeal to women's desire for empowerment, adventure, or a sense of purpose to achieve utopian Islam.

Charlie Winter, a researcher at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR) in 2015, stated that ISIS approaches its targets persuasively and manipulatively through social media by offering the aim of Islamic utopia. Islamic utopia is a narrative about Islamic ideology in which they believe that the world of the Islamic caliphate will be formed if westernization disappears, and Muslims will live joyfully and happily under the caliphate and Islamic law of ISIS. ISIS develops Islamic Utopian narratives through seven aspects, namely religion, economic activities, governance, world justice, improvement of social life, territorial expansion, and protection of nature. But most importantly in his propaganda narrative about government, religion, and economics. (9)In its narrative, ISIS explains that the Islamic State has a system of government that is far more effective than the

democratic system of government disseminated by Western countries. The government system of the Islamic state has good social facilities and a much more developed economic system and the Islamic system is the only implementer of true Islam. Even from the narration of one of the women exposed to ISIS in Indonesia who has the initials AN, said in the ISIS narrative and da'wah studies obtained online, it was explained directly that life in the Islamic countries of Iraq and Syria there are no economic limitations for the people of the country, all borne by the government of the country. And their social life is safely controlled without any crime. They illustrate the narrative through videos that illustrate how the Islamic caliphate is truly fully established and depict the success of ISIS in invading countries around the Middle East that are considered infidels.

This is also evidenced in an article written by Aaron Zelin in his research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. In the article, he wrote that 32 media outlets released by ISIS contained fantasy ideas related to the economic welfare of ISIS society, *hisba* (moral surveillance), and the spread of the Islamic caliphate. The illustrated images uploaded through the videos and narratives of the story point to how the Islamic state is a beautiful Caliphate and naturally has a much better system of democracy and high quality of social services and respects just human rights. From the propaganda of online media, many vulnerable people, especially young women, are exposed to ISIS and are willing to become sympathizers of ISIS. Utopian fantasies that differ from reality make them convinced that jihad in the way of God with extremist activities is justified and facilitates the elimination of sins for them. Usually, the potential targets of ISIS are women who are indeed looking for their identity or are experiencing complexities within themselves. Those who are less able to think clearly and understand the true meaning of Islam, so they are misinterpreted. They tend to think in categorical terms, where there have been previous rejections and in ISIS previous rejections that have occurred to them can be accepted by the group and convinced that they will be much better [6]. Like feelings of deprivation in both economic and social life, unfulfilled desires, anger at real or perceived justice, and they feel that they need to be blamed for all the misery experienced by them. Some end up believing in the narrative of ISIS extremism offered through online media and dream of having a better religious experience and ISIS capitalizes on that condition with its psychological black-and-white mentality [7].

In the end, recruitment through online media supports the formation of online communities that easily facilitate the involvement of women in carrying out extremist actions and activities. Online communities became social media platforms that allowed like-minded ISIS sympathizers to connect, share extremist ideologies, and provide support to each other, to foster a sense of belonging and validation. In some parts of Western Europe and Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines women are easily indoctrinated because ISIS offers a utopian Islamic narrative in every online proselytizing. The official statement of two female sympathizers from Indonesia who joined ISIS and made it to Raqqa the capital of ISIS, Initials LE and Nr, stated that they were willing to fly there immediately after seeing photos and videos provided by ISIS about how ISIS deserves to be occupied through the internet. ISIS has spread propaganda full of fantasy where there are

various kinds of guarantees for every sympathizer who comes to ISIS, both guarantees in the world and the gates of heaven. In the video, it is played by the Indonesian people so it is more convincing for them when they hear testimonials directly. LE said that after watching the video she became convinced that to become a true Muslim he had to go to Syria. And hopes to get the best health care because all this time he needs money to undergo surgery for the disease he suffered. LE also communicated directly with other prospective members who will go to Syria, namely Nr so that they are more confident in their choice.

ISIS is so good at directing sympathizers that soon-to-be-joined sympathizers are put into telegram groups to make it easier to communicate with each other, understanding that private messages will be more persuasive to sympathizers. But in reality, what ISIS offers in its propaganda narrative is not experienced by the two female sympathizers. Instead of getting various kinds of public facilities and free health services, the two of them turned out to be just jihadi brides who were left behind by their husbands to commit acts of terrorism. There they were also provided with military training from the Al-Khansa Brigades (ISIS women's military forces). The indoctrination of ISIS through women's psychological vulnerability is a powerful recruitment to recruit female sympathizers from various Southeast Asian regions, especially Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Nearly 600 sympathizers from the Southeast Asian region have been detected to have.

ISIS is good at playing subjective narratives to female students or sympathizers who are interested in studying Islam more deeply, and ultimately get caught up in the scope of searching for Islamic interpretation through online media. They also always accompany digital links and documents sourced from expert research, making it very reassuring for well-wishers who are already entangled. Ultraconservative thinking in Islam where as good Muslims and sholeha women must take a combined action against modern science becomes a narrative of discourse to brainwash young women who are many students in the European region. ISIS also uses other approaches to propagate by using instruments that are trending, especially among adolescent girls, to attract attention. In the UK, ISIS emerged using social media embedded in trends in social media algorithms that make it easier for them to polarize ideologies, such as attaching propaganda links in celebrity tweets so that they will be read by teenage girls or making video footage from famous film adaptations but which have been changed, for example, the trailer video for the film "Flames of War", which is professionally packaged in the style of a Hollywood action film even though it has messages containing radicalism. This approach makes it easier for ISIS networks to recruit teenage girls to sympathize and volunteer for the group. The development of online matchmaking engines for Muslim women is also used by ISIS, the grooming processes used by ISIS in recruiting teenage girls over the Internet are similar to tactics used by online predators [8]

There are 4 reasons why adolescent girls in the United States, are quite vulnerable to ISIS. First, this group of radical people can give the younger generation a sense of identity. ISIS usually targets young Western generations who are disillusioned and have no purpose or sense of belonging, especially because of the rise of Islamophobia.

The general description given by ISIS fighters shows the support of friendship, good morale, and purposeful activity, all mixed with an understated sense of heroism, designed to attract their friends as well as to boost their self-esteem and ultimately voluntarily join and uphold loyalty between the group. ISIS fighters in Syria are not only learning about military and war strategies but, also they are trying to dominate the world of information and technology.

3.2. Strategies to Prevent Women's Involvement in ISIS

ISIS provides the younger generation or women who are vulnerable to complex social issues, a new sense of identity and protection security. The sense of security and protection they provide in the form of friendship support, acceptance, or moral integration and activity goals that can be adapted to their goals, all mixed with motivation certain, designed to target them. ISIS intellectual agents create new social structures for targets by creating new social identities to motivate and boost their self-esteem. In the end, this pattern instills high loyalty, and voluntarily targets are willing to join and commit to becoming ISIS sympathizers.

ISIS radicalism is a complex issue and requires a strategy that focuses on a multidimensional approach, its strategic steps are focused on preventive and reactive efforts, and involve the entire spectrum of society, including governments, civil society, and families. In addition, the planning and implementation of this strategy should take into account the specific cultural and social context in each region [9], [10], which is described as follows:

1. The Importance of Internalizing Education and Gender Equality
   Improving social relations by creating spaces for positive social groups for women globally will help the process of preventing radicalization. Because they will avoid learning about the issue of radicalism personally and misinterpretation the understanding of the educational knowledge they receive. They need assistance to understand the concepts of radicalism, and extremism and recognize the warning signs and dangers in it. This includes understanding the role of women based on human rights, gender equality, and a wiser understanding of religion. The government needs to provide and facilitate civil society organizations that advocate gender equality and women's rights so that they can be monitored and help change social norms that tend to support radicalism.
2. By encouraging or providing opportunities for women to become leaders in the anti-radicalism community as well, it can make them act as agents of change who can promote peace, equality, and justice in society, with the support of positive mentors or role models can help women gain a better understanding of religion, culture, and social conditions of society. Facilitating women's access to moderate religious education supported by an imam figure who has an inclusive understanding of religion can also dispel extremist interpretations and will change their perspective more wisely in understanding the interpretation of Islam they believe in.

3. Counseling and Psychological Support
   Women who are exposed to ISIS are women who are psychologically vulnerable to the complexity of certain issues, so it is easy to be brainwashed through the doctrines they find in social media. For this reason, it is necessary to provide psychosocial support spaces for those who experience problems trauma, or emotional difficulties either before they are exposed or after receiving radicalization. Each case of women engaging in radicalism is unique. An individual approach by instilling empathy by understanding their background and motivation, can be more effective in overcoming the issue of radicalism because it goes straight to the root of the problem and understands what steps will be taken next. Providing at-risk women with access to appropriate psychological support and counseling can help address factors fueling radicalism, such as trauma or social dissatisfaction with their social relationships.

4. In addition to psychosocial support spaces, involving families in the rehabilitation and deradicalization process is very important because it plays a key role in the recovery process. Healthy family support at the beginning also has an important and even most important role in preventing women from being exposed to radicalism. Family is the initial key to detecting behavioral changes and the most important contributing factor to recovering those who have fallen victim to ISIS sympathizers.

5. Understanding Social Media Content
   ISIS uses many social media instruments in the process of spreading its ideology, so the thing that needs to be considered is how to instill in women the importance of digital literacy. Training in reading and critiquing extremist content on social media is important because it can help women avoid consuming material that provokes radicalism. Governments should also support it by providing specialized training on how to recognize and respond to extremist propaganda on social media, as well as having online monitoring tools that can be used by government agencies and civil society organizations to detect radical activity. The information found can be used to provide early warning and intervention and has a legal umbrella to provide legal sanctions for social media users who are active in supporting extremism and terrorism.

6. International Cooperation
   Cooperation between countries to share intelligence and prevention strategies can also help tackle women engaging in acts of radicalism across borders. The cooperation is like monitoring individuals or women who have the potential to be involved in acts of radicalism in each country.

There is no most effective approach or strategy for overcoming the exposure of women to the ISIS movement because the motives of each individual who joins are different. But a combination of these strategies can at least be part of an effective approach. These strategies must be applied in a coordinated manner and adapted to the situation and conditions. In addition, it is important to involve cross-sectoral

cooperation between the government, civil society, communities, families, and religious leaders in these efforts as they can play an important role in supporting women involved in radicalism to change and regain their place in society.

4   Conclusion

The previous explanation of the pattern of ISIS radicalization of women led the author to understand the basic instruments of ISIS to recruit female sympathizers. ISIS approaches with *an emotional intelligence* approach related to their social identity and understanding of gender bias through offline and online instruments. With this approach, ISIS intellectual agents can monitor the feelings and emotions of their targets to direct their thoughts and actions. They play narratives that can play and construct the emotions of their followers through the emotional messages conveyed. But before delivering emotional messages that are more suggestive of penetration of ISIS ideology, their intellectual agents try to explore the emotional feelings of the targets first. They try to instill empathy first so that an emotional fabric is built. By paying attention to the problems of individual targets, they will more easily enter into the target's emotions. Mood coordination is at the heart of this approach, if an ISIS agent is good at adjusting to the target's heart or good at empathizing, then, in the end, it will open up opportunities for closer relationships so that the indoctrination process will easily enter constructing the contents of the target's head. To prevent polarization of ISIS ideology that emphasizes *an emotional intelligence* approach related to social identity to approach its target, a strategy that focuses on a multidimensional approach and *is needed gender valued* involving the entire spectrum of society, including government, civil society, and family, as well as interstate cooperation.

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