

Citation analysis of academic literature on terrorism and social media in Indonesia

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Abstract

This research aims to evaluate the trends in publications regarding terrorism and social media in Indonesia in 2010 to 2023. The data is categorized by publication year, research topics, and fields of study. Researchers also calculated the citations received by each publication. By using citation analysis, the study seeks to uncover patterns of scholarly attention, identify the most cited works, and determine the degree to which Indonesian research is integrated into the global discourse on terrorism and digital media. This research is necessary because of limited bibliometric assessment of how this field has grown and how influential it has been. The research findings indicate that publication trends peaked in 2021 in several topics such as radicalization/propaganda, counter radicalism/deradicalization, and religious moderation. The fields of Islamic studies and Communication studies were the most prolific in publishing studies on this subject. Of the 165 articles analyzed, only 15 articles received more than 10 citations in the broader terrorism research. On average, social media and terrorism research were cited only six times per publication in the broader terrorism literature. These suggest a lack of integration with the broader terrorism literature.

Introduction

Published research on social media and terrorism in Indonesia has discussed a lot about the use of media in efforts to formulate policies for preventing and eradicating terrorism (Heath-Kelly, 2013), media involvement in terrorism cases (Prajarto, 2004), and the dilemma of the role of the media in handling terrorism cases (Sukarno, 2011). There is also research that evaluates international publication trends on social media and terrorism through bibliometric analysis (Chaudhari & Pawar, 2021). However, research that measures the impact or influence of literature on social media and terrorism in Indonesia is still rare. Although citations are a fundamental measure of the influence of a study, citations are also important in understanding and measuring the impact and significance of a particular topic or literature (Carpenter et al., 2014). The number of citations in an article is an indicator of the quality and impact of a study (Aksnes et al., 2019).

In a chilling revelation, countless studies have uncovered how terrorists and violent groups have turned social media into a weapon, using it to spread their deadly ideologies and manipulate the masses (Junaedi, 2017). But the shock doesn't end there—researchers argue that terrorism and media share a deeply toxic, mutually beneficial relationship, feeding off each other to amplify violence and fear (Ridho et al., 2022). The terrifying power of modern communication technology has unlocked a nightmare scenario, where anyone, from extremist groups to individuals with malicious intent, can own, access, and control media platforms, enabling them to reach millions with their dangerous messages (Zukhrufillah, 2018).

In Indonesia, the dominance of social media as the primary source of information is undeniable. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 221.56 million in 2024, representing a penetration rate of 79.5% of the total population. This extensive internet usage has led to a significant shift in information dissemination, with social media platforms overtaking traditional media outlets. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become the go-to sources for news and information, offering immediacy and interactivity that traditional media struggle to match.

This trend aligns with global patterns, where social media's role in news consumption continues to grow, reshaping the media landscape (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2024). Social media is considered more accessible, both in disseminating and receiving information by the wider audience (Alamsyah, 2021). It is important to note that terrorism would still exist even without the role of social media, but further research explains that social media plays a significant role in spreading terrorism ideologies and instilling fear through videos/texts related to violent actions (Ngange & Mokondo, 2019). Social media technology makes it easier to disseminate and gain attention for acts of terror and violent extremism (Nuruzzaman, 2018).

Social media technology development has had an impact on the growth of terrorism in Indonesia. Terrorist groups have been using various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp to recruit, spread ideology, and disseminate threats to society (Yumitro et al., 2022). Terrorist groups utilize social media platforms for recruiting, training, and communicating with their members because it is considered cheaper, easier, faster, and more effective (Hossain, 2015). Despite being a new field of research, particularly in Indonesia, studies on social media and terrorism have received a lot of attention (Schmidt, 2021).

However, amidst the many benefits, there are also numerous negative impacts associated with the development of the internet and social media in Indonesia. These include issues such as hoaxes, hate speech, fraud, and the emergence of new methods for propaganda and recruiting potential terrorists (Jamil et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2018; Yumitro et al., 2023). This forms the basis for the study of social media and terrorism in Indonesia, which is becoming an increasingly relevant and worthy subfield of terrorism studies, especially in Indonesia.

To address that research gap, this study aims to evaluate publication trends from 2010 to 2023 and measure the integration of social media studies and terrorism in Indonesia using the Google Scholar database. This is done to analyze annual scholarly production, topic groups, fields of study, citation counts, and citations in broader terrorism studies. To explore these aspects, we formulated the following research questions (RQs):

RQ 1: What are the research topics on social media and terrorism in Indonesia?

RQ 2: What research topics on social media and terrorism in Indonesia have been integrated into broader terrorism studies?

Terrorism and Social Media

The relationship between terrorism and social media has garnered increasing attention, particularly with the advancement of technology and the proliferation of online platforms. To understand the complexity of this issue, a literature review was conducted, which identified several key categories forming the basis of discussion. These categories include: (1) Citation Analysis in Terrorism Research, (2) Media's Role in Terrorism and Social Change, (3) Social Media and the Spread of Terrorist Ideologies, and (4) Social Media as a Counterterrorism Tool.

The selection of the four categories was guided by clear criteria of relevance and significance in the literature, as these themes frequently appear in credible academic sources and contribute both theoretically and empirically to understanding the role of social media in terrorism—ranging from the spread of violent ideologies to counter-extremism efforts, particularly in Southeast Asia and Indonesia. These categories not only reflect dominant topics but also represent distinct analytical frameworks: methodological approaches, media-driven social transformation, extremism propagation, and strategic counterterrorism use. This thematic and structural classification enables a multidimensional exploration of the topic.

Citation Analysis in Terrorism Research

Citation analysis is a bibliometric method used to track the impact and influence of academic publications, providing insights into the evolution of research in specific fields (Ashman, 2009; White, 2019). In the context of terrorism studies, citation analysis has been used to identify key articles, evaluate publication patterns, and understand intellectual trends within the field (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Donthu et al., 2021). Although citation analysis has been applied across diverse fields such as Education, Economics, and Sociology (Valencia-Hernandez et al., 2020), there has been limited focus on social media and terrorism in specific regions like Indonesia. The citation analysis research on terrorism, especially in relation to media, remains underexplored (Yumitro et al., 2023).

Media's Role in Terrorism and Social Change

The development of social media has significantly altered patterns of information consumption, with platforms facilitating greater freedom of expression and social advocacy (Achmad, 2021; Pillay & Maharaj, 2014). Social media allows individuals to engage with each other, fostering social change and amplifying voices that may otherwise be marginalized. However, this shift in communication also presents risks, as social media platforms have become channels for the spread of violent content, hate speech, and misinformation (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016; Lelisho et al., 2022; Chetty & Alathur, 2018). The dual nature of social media, as both a tool for positive social change and a vehicle for harmful ideologies, presents a critical area of study in the context of terrorism.

Social Media and the Spread of Terrorist Ideologies

The internet, especially social media, plays a crucial role in the dissemination of terrorist ideologies. Terrorist groups increasingly rely on online platforms to recruit new members, spread propaganda, plan attacks, and reinforce their messages (Meleagrou-

Hitchens et al., 2017; Pfefferbaum et al., 2018). This trend is not only global but also highly relevant to Indonesia, where individuals have been recruited by terrorist groups through social media, later expressing regret after their involvement (Kibtiah et al., 2020). The ability of social media to reach vast audiences rapidly makes it an attractive tool for terrorist organizations, presenting a significant challenge for counterterrorism efforts.

Social Media as a Counterterrorism Tool

While social media is exploited by terrorists, it also offers opportunities for counterterrorism initiatives. Researchers have pointed out that social media is increasingly used for preventing terrorism, as platforms can be harnessed to spread counter-narratives, monitor extremist activity, and engage with vulnerable populations to prevent radicalization (Bartlett & Reynolds, 2015). The dynamic nature of social media makes it both a challenge and a resource in the fight against terrorism, providing unique avenues for proactive measures.

The four categories in the literature review—(1) Citation Analysis in Terrorism Research, (2) The Role of Media in Terrorism and Social Change, (3) Social Media and the Spread of Terrorist Ideology, and (4) Social Media as a Counterterrorism Tool—were formed to build a conceptual framework that explains how social media interacts with the issue of terrorism. They represent a conceptual spectrum from methodological approaches (bibliometrics), to practical dynamics (ideology dissemination and counter-radicalization), which are used to read and interpret the meaning of the publications analyzed bibliometrically. In summary, the literature reveals several intertwined themes: the growing reliance on social media by terrorist groups, the risks posed by the spread of harmful ideologies, and the potential for using social media as a tool in counterterrorism.

Method

This bibliometric study aims to comprehensively explore research on the relationship between social media and terrorism in Indonesia. This study follows a systematic approach to identify, filter, and analyze relevant literature. Bibliometric analysis, as explained by Donthu et al. (2021), is a quantitative method used to evaluate and map the development of a scientific field based on scientific publication data, such as the number of citations, author collaborations, or journal distribution. By analyzing metadata from selected publications, this approach allows for mapping of intellectual structures and identifying dominant themes in a discipline. This approach is considered effective in revealing the dynamics and direction of research development, including in the context of media and terrorism in Indonesia.

Bibliometric analysis is chosen to evaluate and map the knowledge structure in a field based on publication data, such as citations, collaboration networks, and topic distributions, which allows for objective and systematic processing of large amounts of literature (Donthu et al., 2021). Although there are similar analyses that have existed before, namely, systematic literature reviews using qualitative or mixed approaches that rely on manual analysis (Snyder, 2019). Systematic reviews are more suitable for certain research areas with a limited number of studies (e.g. 40 literatures or less than 100), while bibliometrics can cover hundreds of publications with less interpretive bias.

Step 1: Identification of Relevant Articles

The first step in this research process was to identify relevant articles using Google Scholar as the primary data source. The search was conducted using a series of related keywords such as “social media,” “terrorism,” “radicalism,” “extremism,” “religious

violence,” “counter-narrative,” and “religious moderation” in both Indonesian and English. These keywords were chosen to capture a broad spectrum of studies related to ideologically and religiously motivated violence related to social media. Articles published between 2010 and 2023 were included to reflect recent developments in the field.

Google Scholar was selected based on contextual considerations. This study specifically focuses on the Indonesian context, where many local researchers have limited access to reputable international publications due to high publication costs, language barriers, and lack of institutional support. Nonetheless, many of these local publications offer rich field-based insights, in-depth understanding of the issues, and substantial competence in terrorism and social media studies, making them highly relevant to this research.

Therefore, Google Scholar was chosen to capture a broader and more representative range of local knowledge production, which may not be indexed in databases such as Scopus or Web of Science. To enhance credibility, this study applied additional screening criteria, including institutional affiliation of authors, reputation of publishers, and relevance of content to the research focus. Through this approach, the researcher attempted to maintain a balance between inclusiveness of local sources and academic validity, while recognizing the importance of bridging the gap between global literature and scholarly contributions from local contexts.

Step 2: Filtering and Curating Articles

Following the initial search, articles were filtered based on their direct relevance to terrorism and social media, focusing on themes such as radicalization, counter-terrorism, and the dissemination of violent ideologies. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and research reports were included to ensure credibility, with priority given to highly cited works. The study also emphasized contributions from both Indonesian and international scholars, particularly those addressing Indonesia or Southeast Asia. This process narrowed the selection from over 250 references to a focused set of the most relevant and influential studies for analysis.

Step 3: Data Analysis and Categorization

The final article selection was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and bibliometric methods to assess research trends from 2010 to 2023, identify active periods, and map shifts in focus. Articles were categorized by journal, author background, and citation count to highlight influential works and dominant research sources. Citation analysis within broader terrorism literature was also conducted to evaluate the prominence of social media studies in the field, offering a comprehensive view of the academic landscape.

Step 4: Data Interpretation and Visualization

Once the data was collected and categorized, it was interpreted and visualized to uncover key insights and trends. Microsoft Excel was used to create charts and graphs that display the development of literature, the most frequently cited articles, and the primary topics of discussion within the research community.

This methodology not only provides a detailed analysis of how social media has been studied in relation to terrorism in Indonesia but also offers a roadmap for further research in this rapidly evolving field. By categorizing the literature based on citations, publication trends, and research topics, this study sheds light on the growing body of knowledge surrounding the role of social media in terrorism, and its broader implications for counterterrorism efforts and social dynamics in Indonesia.

Bibliometric findings—such as citation trends, publication frequencies, and dominant

topics—provide empirical evidence of how scholarly attention to social media and terrorism has evolved over time, reflecting patterns consistent with the conceptual themes identified in the literature review (Xie et al., 2020). While the literature review explains why certain themes emerge, bibliometric data show how extensively those themes have been developed and disseminated within academic circles. The ethical considerations in this bibliometric study include maintaining the accuracy of data representation, ensuring proper attribution of all cited works, and minimizing potential bias or misinterpretation in the analysis of publication trends and scholarly impact. It is also acknowledged that, while citation analysis provides insight into the current academic influence of each article, it cannot predict future citation trajectories or guarantee continued scholarly attention to the works analyzed.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of publication trends shows that research on social media and terrorism in Indonesia began gaining momentum in 2017 and 2018, following limited scholarly focus before 2010 due to the low penetration of social media platforms at the time (Lim, 2013; Nugroho et al., 2012). Earlier studies on media and terrorism, dating back to the early 2000s, largely centered on traditional outlets like television and newspapers. However, the growing influence of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube after 2010 marked a turning point in how extremist content was disseminated and studied. A notable surge in academic interest occurred in parallel with the rise in social media use and key events such as the 2018 Surabaya church bombings, which further highlighted the relevance of social media in the context of terrorism (Figure 1).

The increase in research in 2018 is related to terrorism cases in Indonesia, coinciding with the rise in internet usage in Indonesia. In 2018, there was a church bombing incident in Surabaya (Tamawiwiy, 2019). Additionally, this increase follows the surge in internet usage in Indonesia in 2018 (Sutarsih et al., 2019). In fact, there was an increase in internet users in Indonesia from 143.26 million in 2017 to 171.17 million in 2018 (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia & Polling Indonesia, 2018).

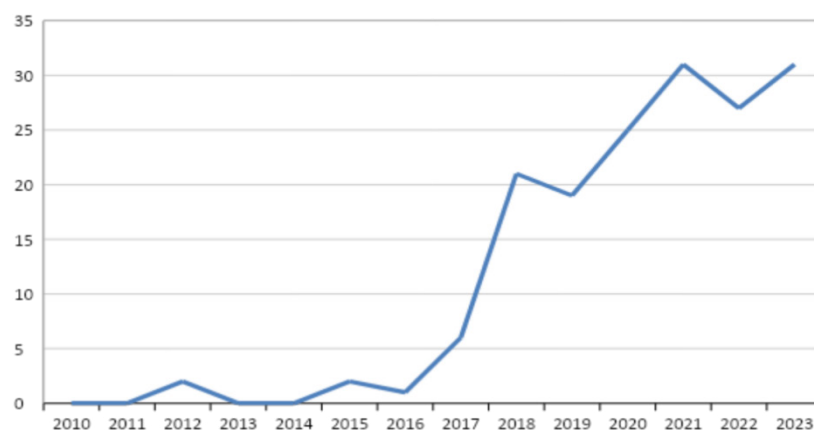


Figure 1. Literature Development, 2010–2023 (Source: Research Result, 2023)

This research shows that in 2021 and 2023, there was the highest number of publications, totaling 31 articles. The research published in that year focused on issues related to radicalization, counter-radicalism/deradicalization, as well as religious moderation utilizing social media. Additionally, when examining social phenomena that

may have influenced the increased publications in 2021, it was not only due to the bombing incidents in Surabaya in 2018 but also a series of terror events in Indonesia in 2019.

Throughout 2019, Indonesia experienced at least eight terror incidents with diverse political and religious motives, alongside the arrest of 275 suspected terrorists (Wardah, 2019), including the widely publicized stabbing of former Minister Wiranto in Pandeglang (Halim & Carina, 2019). In 2020, Densus 88 arrested 232 suspects linked to 13 terror incidents (Aji & Febriyan, 2022), followed by 370 arrests in six cases in 2021 (Safitri, 2022). One of the most cited 2021 publications analyzed Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), a group banned by the Indonesian government in 2017, highlighting its continued ideological dissemination through social media (Setia & Rahman, 2021). Other studies focused on the role of social media and the internet in supporting deradicalization efforts.

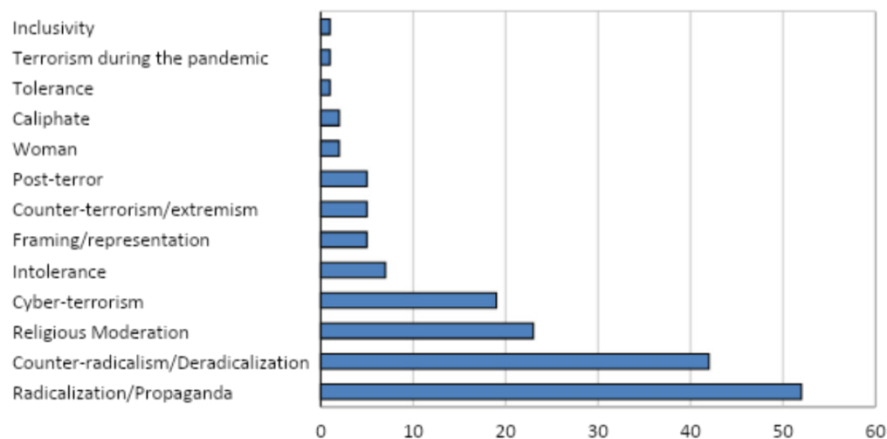


Figure 2. Research Topics in the Subfield (*Source: Research Result, 2023*)

After the publication year findings, this research then analyzed the categorization of research topics to determine the breadth of the study on social media and terrorism that had been previously examined. This categorization also aimed to assess the research saturation from a specific perspective. The research results showed that a total of 165 studies were analyzed, and categorized into 13 topic categories. In this study, it was found that the issues of radicalization/propaganda and counter-radicalism/deradicalization received the most attention from researchers. Radicalization is considered the initial motive behind the emergence of terrorism cases in Indonesia (Zarzani et al., 2018).

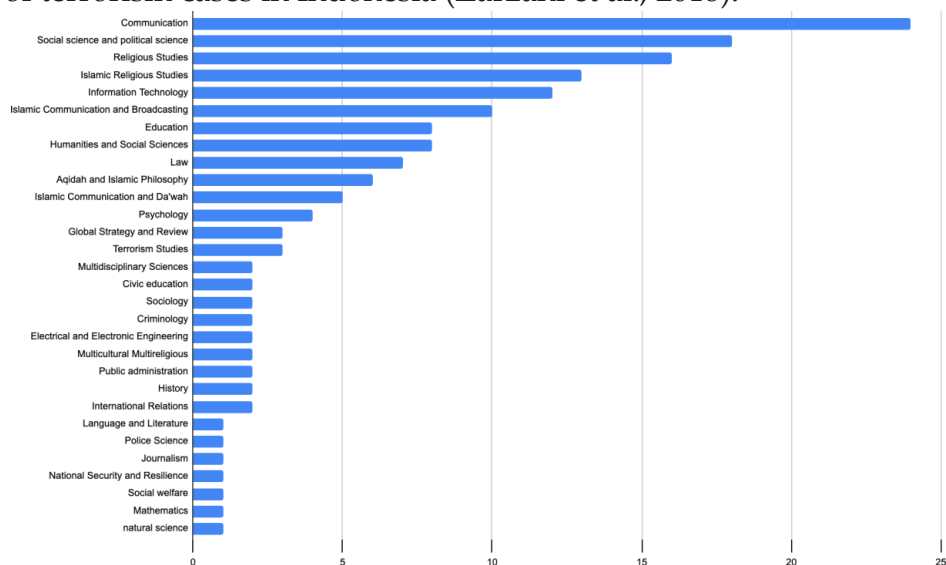


Figure 3. Publishers by Fields of Study (*Source: Research Result, 2023*)

Based on the background of the field of literature publishing being analyzed, it is known that the study of social media and terrorism in Indonesia has been extensively researched in the fields of Islamic Studies, Communication, Islamic Preaching (Da'wah) Communication, Interreligious Studies, and Social-political studies. The inclusion of the discussion of social media as a central issue in this research makes fields of study like Communication, Islamic Broadcasting Communication, and Information Technology more dominant.

In Islamic studies, research addresses counter-narratives by social media content creators (Rosa et al., 2022), religious moderation through Qur'anic interpretations online (Budin et al., 2022), deradicalization efforts in universities (Arnus, 2017), and the media use of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (Setia & Rahman, 2021). In communication studies, the focus includes online counter-radical narratives (Prayitno, 2022; Rustandi & Muchtar, 2020), the Twitter campaign #kamitidaktakut (Fahmi, 2018; Oktavianus, 2019), and film representations of radicalization (Auliya, 2021). Notably, 60 of the analyzed publications have not yet received scholarly citations, largely due to their recent publication between 2020 and 2022, which contributes to the citation gap (Figure 4).

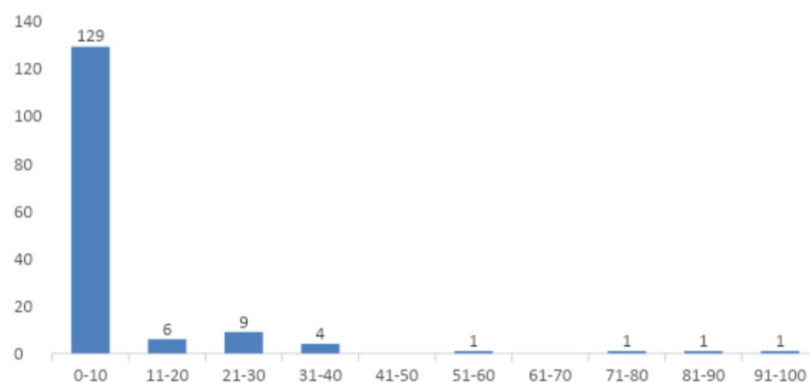


Figure 4. Number of Citations (*Source: Research Result, 2023*)

In the data analysis results of this research, it is found that the article with the theme "Islamic Radicalism and Its Movements on Social Media" (Muthohirin, 2015) is the most cited research. Literature citing this research includes publications that discuss the prevention or mitigation of radical narratives, digital literacy, and religious moderation. It is known that there are few publications on the study of social media and terrorism in Indonesia that have the "highest" influence. Conversely, most studies are cited in small numbers.

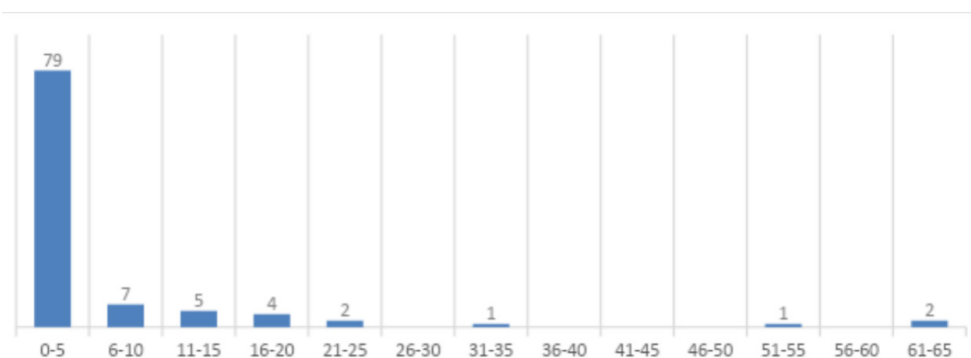


Figure 5. Citations in the Terrorism Literature (*Source: Research Result, 2023*).

Only a small portion of research is cited more than 10 times in terrorism studies. Out of 104 articles with citations, 22 articles are not cited in terrorism research. Meanwhile, among the 82 articles cited in broader terrorism research, only 15 articles are cited more than 10 times. Publications with 1-10 citations average 49% of citations in the broader terrorism literature, whereas publications with more than 10 citations average 70% of citations in terrorism research. Comparing citations between the general field and publications in terrorism studies is necessary to understand how many citations are accepted and utilized in the same study.

Table 1. Most cited articles in terrorism studies

No	Research title	Year of publication	Publisher journal	Number of citations in terrorism studies
1	Kampanye Moderasi Beragama di Facebook: Bentuk dan Strategi Pesan	2019	Eduagama: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Sosial Keagamaan	62
2	Radikalisme Islam dan Pergerakannya di Media Sosial	2015	Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies	61
3	Literasi Media Sosial dalam Pemasyarakatan Sikap Moderasi Beragama	2019	Jurnal Bimas Islam	52
4	Melawan Radikalisme melalui Website	2018	Jurnal AspiKom	33
5	Dampak Media Sosial Terhadap Paham Radikalisme.	2017	Nuansa: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Kemasyarakatan	25
6	Internet dan Terorisme: Menguatnya Aksi Global Cyber-Terrorism New Media.	2018	Jurnal Gama Societa	21
7	Melawan Radikalisme Melalui Kontra Narasi Online.	2019	Journal of Terrorism Studies	20
8	Swa-radikalisasi Melalui Media Sosial di Indonesia.	2019	Jurnal Jurnalisa	20
9	Menyoal radikalisme di media digital.	2019	Dakwatuna: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam	19
10	Pergeseran Literasi pada Generasi Milenial Akibat Penyebaran Radikalisme di Media Sosial.	2021	Millah: Journal of Religious Studies	17
11	Kekhilafahan Islam, Globalisasi dan Gerilya Maya: Studi Kasus Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia.	2018	Fikrah: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah Dan Studi Keagamaan	14
12	Fenomena intoleransi antar umat beragama serta peran sosial media akun instagram jaringan gusdurian indonesia dalam menyampaikan pesan toleransi.	2021	Syiar: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam	13

No	Research title	Year of publication	Publisher journal	Number of citations in terrorism studies
13	Bahaya Radikalisme terhadap Moralitas Remaja melalui Teknologi Informasi (Media Sosial). Generasi Milenial dan Moderasi Beragama: Promosi Moderasi Beragama oleh Peace Generation di Media Sosial.	2020	Aplikasia: Jurnal Aplikasi Ilmu-Ilmu Agama	12
14	Radikalisme Islam dalam Media Sosial (Konteks; Channel Youtube).	2021	JISPO Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik	12
15		2018	Jurnal Sosiologi Agama	12

This study's findings align with existing literature on the intersection of terrorism and social media, particularly in highlighting the dominance of radicalization research in Indonesia, which reflects global patterns. The literature underscores how social media has transformed information consumption and dissemination, enabling both positive social movements and the spread of extremist ideologies (Achmad, 2021; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). In the Indonesian context, social media functions dually—as a medium for promoting religious moderation and as a channel for extremist propaganda—echoing observations in studies on radicalization and deradicalization (Azisi et al., 2023; Syahputra, 2020). This duality supports broader scholarly perspectives that recognize social media's role in both amplifying marginalized voices and facilitating radical content.

The study also emphasizes the significant role social media plays in recruiting members, spreading propaganda, and reinforcing terrorist ideologies, particularly in Indonesia, which is consistent with the findings of researchers such as Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. (2017) and Pfefferbaum et al. (2018). The ability of social media platforms to rapidly reach large audiences has made them a vital tool for terrorist groups, a point reflected in the high number of publications discussing radicalization and the use of social media in terrorist propaganda. As noted in the study, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been key in the dissemination of terrorist messages and in recruiting individuals into extremist networks (Kwok et al., 2018). However, the study also highlights the gap in citations related to terrorism studies, with many publications on social media and terrorism not being fully integrated into the broader terrorism literature, reflecting the underexplored focus on the intersection of social media and terrorism within the Indonesian context (Yumitro et al., 2023).

In terms of counterterrorism efforts, the study underscores the growing recognition of social media as a tool for prevention. The analysis showed that the research in terrorism literature focused on social media's role in deradicalization and counter-narratives, aligning with the findings of Bartlett and Reynolds (2015). By engaging vulnerable populations and monitoring extremist activity, social media platforms are being utilized not only by terrorists but also by governments and organizations to counteract terrorism. The study found that articles on religious moderation and deradicalization were among the most cited, reflecting the trend identified in the literature that social media, despite its risks, offers unique opportunities for counterterrorism initiatives (Bartlett & Reynolds, 2015).

While there has been extensive research into radicalization and the use of social media by terrorist groups, the integration of these studies into the broader terrorism literature remains limited. This gap highlights the need for further exploration of the nuanced roles

that social media plays in both fostering terrorism and offering solutions for its prevention. As the literature review suggests, the dynamic and evolving nature of social media presents both challenges and opportunities in the fight against terrorism, making it a critical area for ongoing research and intervention.

Conclusion

The growing body of literature on social media and terrorism in Indonesia presents both a strategic opportunity and an academic responsibility. While scholars have explored key themes such as radicalization, counter-radicalization, religious moderation, and cyberterrorism, the discourse remains heavily framed by the concept of “radicalism,” particularly in religious contexts. Although this area of research continues to expand, its overall citation impact remains limited—likely due, in part, to the recency of many publications. This underscores the need for scholars to not only produce knowledge but also engage more directly with societal challenges posed by digital extremism.

The rapid expansion of internet and social media usage in Indonesia should serve as a critical impetus for advancing terrorism research through multidisciplinary approaches. This digital transformation has significantly reshaped the channels through which violent ideologies are disseminated, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive investigations into extremist narratives, algorithmic influence, platform dynamics, and their impacts on vulnerable populations. However, the limited integration of social media and terrorism research within the broader field of terrorism studies reflects a persistent lack of interdisciplinary engagement and analytical diversity. Current scholarship remains largely focused on religiously motivated radicalism, often through normative lenses, thereby overlooking crucial dimensions of digital radicalization processes. This narrow scope not only results in repetitive and descriptive analyses but also hinders the development of more critical, contextually grounded, and evidence-based frameworks needed to formulate effective counter-radicalization strategies and public policies that enhance societal resilience against digital extremism in Indonesia.

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