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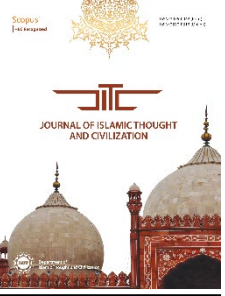|	
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Dark Side of the Web in the Context of Online Radicalization

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Abstract

Radicalization refers to the mental process that legitimizes violence or violent actions under the influence of social, cognitive and economic factors. With the advent of the Internet, radical groups have also changed their methods of action by adapting to the new conjuncture. The Internet is no longer just a part of the spectrum of extremist activities, however, it also become the primary arena and operational environment where political ideologies are shaped, attacks are planned and extraordinary social movements begin to emerge. Group members come together on online platforms to have discussions about faith and use these platforms to expand the spectrum of activism at both individual and organizational levels in order to spread their political ideologies, to recruit staff, and to plan attacks. In the current study, conceptual framework, individual and group dynamic causes of radicalization, metaphors explaining radicalization, religiously motivated radicalization, online radicalization and case examples are emphasized.

Keywords: causes of radicalization, metaphors explaining radicalization, online radicalization, radicalization, religiously motivated radicalization.

Introduction

Radicalization is the mental process that advocates large scale social change and legitimizes violence and violent acts with the impact of economic, social, cognitive, behavioral and religious factors. During the recent years, the internet has been used for activities for instance, recruiting for radical and terrorist groups generating propaganda, planning attacks, and financial gain. Online platforms are the biggest sources that spread violent extremism and radical ideologies. These platforms have become a suitable environment for many young people who have tendencies to radicalize, as well as to come into contact with pro-violence and potentially extremist individuals. Digital platforms facilitate and accelerate the online radicalization process. Anonymity of the internet and its ease of reaching the masses offers other opportunities that open new doors to radical groups. Individuals who try to find answers to their questions, especially on theological issues, are unconsciously involved in the first stage of the radicalization process in online forum. By utilizing the domestic and foreign literature for different cases, this study analyzes radicalism, the concepts related to radicalism, the causes of radicalization, metaphors explaining the radicalization, the aims of radicalization, the causes of religiously motivated radicalization, and online and offline radicalizing activities. This study attempts to analyze the situations in which individuals and groups turn to radicalism by producing a descriptive analysis of the concepts of radicalism, extremism and religious radicalism. This study employs document analysis as a qualitative method for research purposes.

2. Radicalism and Related Concepts

The term radicalism carries the same lexiconic meaning as that of fundamentalism. It is also used to describe several different organizations such as religious communities or ethnic, separatists and ideological groups. Groups that use political violence as a means for a radical change are considered as "violent revolutionary groups" in the literature.

Nowadays, "extremism" which is defined as objecting/opposing the existing values and beliefs of society, is also known as a type of radicalism. Wintrobe defines three categories of extremism,

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that is, groups or individuals with extreme goals and use extreme means, those with extreme goals but not using extreme means, and thirdly those with traditional goals but use extreme means to reach them. What is known today as violent extremism is located under Wintrobe's first category, while nonviolent extremism is located under the second category.[1]

Although the concept of radicalization seems to be related only to the concepts of terrorism and security, it can also be discussed as a part of different matters of political science, sociology, psychology and even history in the world literature.[2] Radicalization has been defined as a process shaped by individuals' experiences of emotional instabilities, anxiety and anger in line with extremist beliefs and behaviors.[3] Additionally, individuals,' especially teenagers' sense of group belonging and exhibiting extremist actions for peer acceptance also increase their tendency to radicalize. According to Saiful Umam, a radical individual not only believes in an idea, an ideology, but also advocates for it. These are two different concepts between themselves. Because advocating for something means increasing its supporters and allies. Thus, the radicalized individual sees terrorist acts as legitimate in order to provoke the target audience in the group and to get a reaction from them.[4] Sedgwick distinguishes three different radical groups: Those who condemn the prevalent system and think it is not legitimate; those who want to overthrow the prevalent system; and those dream of a utopia as a substitute of the prevalent system.[5]

The September 9/11 attacks were a turning point for the concepts of terrorism and radicalization as in multiple different fields and concepts. The reason is that there are certain Muslims who refer to the Holy Quran and Islam as the source of the violent acts. By using these as references, radical groups give the impression that violence is necessary, legitimate and acceptable, and they gain supporters.

However, in Kundnani's literature review on the works that attribute to radicalization concept, 2012 considered a breaking point. Since studies before 2012 considered radicalization mostly as a type of cultural and psychological behavior. When the literature after 2012 is contemplated, there is an increase in the studies on these *religious and socio-psychological processes*, with the propaganda and activities of DAESH terrorist organization occupying the world agenda. After this period, with the increase in participation in DAESH terrorist organization, research on religious-motivated movements has gradually increased.[6]

Horgan, in his studies on radicalization, argued that the behavioral radicalization of a person would increase the likelihood that he would become a potential terrorist. For this reason, he put the question of "how" before the question of "why" in the radicalization process. Understanding this process prevents the individual radicalization and the possibility of radical individuals becoming terrorists. According to him, cognitive radicalization is only one of the paths to terrorism. The most

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[1]Ronald Wintrobe, *Rational Extremism - The Political Economy of Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 207.

[2]Magnus Ranstorp, "Introduction," Understanding Violent Radicalization in Ranstorp Magnus (Ed.), *Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist And Jihadist Movements In Europe* (Routledge: 2010), 1-19.

[3]S. Trip, H. C. Bora, M. Marian, A. Halmajan and I. M. Drugas, "Psychological Mechanisms Involved in Radicalization and Extremism. A Rational Emotive Behavioral Conceptualization," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (437), (2019): 1-8. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00437.

[4]Saiful Umam, "Radikal Muslims in Indonesia: The Case of Ja'far Umar Thalib and The Laskhar Jihād," *Explanations in Southeast Asian Studies* 6, no.1 (2006): 1-16.

[5]Mark Sedgwick, "Al Qaeda and the Nature of Religious Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (2004): 795-814.

[6]Kundnani Arun, and Ben Hayes, *The Globalisation of Countering Violent Extremism Policies* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute Press, 2018).

important thing is the answers of the questions "how are people radicalized" rather than "why do people become radicalized." When radicalization is reinforced by social identity and social ties inspired by individual motivations, eventually turning into violent actions, the radicalization process Horgan emphasizes is completed. Studies on this subject are divided into two in the literature as individual causes and group dynamics.[7]

3. Individual and Group Dynamic Causes of Radicalization

It is seen that the main discussions on the individual causes of radicalization begins with the factors arising from the personal/essential characteristics of the individual and are shaped around the transformation processes in the individual's life experience. For instance, the reflection of mental and behavioral disorders on cognition and behavior is one of them. Another psychopathological factor discussed under individual causes is antisocial personality disorder. When the relationship between antisocial personality disorders and radicalization is determined, features such as not being able to socialize, alienation and hostility are seen among the main reasons that lead people to radicalization is determined, Yet, it is not accurate to say that all terrorists and individuals who advocate violent radicalization suffer from antisocial personality disorder.[8]

Radicalization seems to be related not only to individual causes, but also to group dynamics too. The most important works on this subject are written by Quintan Wiktorowicz. Wictorowicz's holistic approach, which deals with the personality transformation of the individual and their social environment, especially in participation in terrorist organizations with religious motives, is important in terms of his contributions to the literature. According to him, radicalization consists of a successive and self-sustaining process. The first stage is *"cognitive expansion."* Cognitive expansion arises from the moment of a personal crisis. For instance, an individual who lost a relative, broke up with his lover, and fell into an economic depression begins to question life. As a result of this situation, existing beliefs and values are shaken. Messages/behaviors that normally seem illogical may seem positive and logical to the person after a crisis. These messages can play a supplementary role in building their new identity. Thus, radical messages have a positive effect on the individual, and a message-based bond is established between the individual and the group. Messages from the group now guide the individual. Wictorowicz defines the second stage that comes after this as *"religious quest."* The individual seeks to develop a religious meaning system for himself in order to solve the problem he lives in and to relieve his displeasure. In order to understand religion more deeply and to find solutions to the questions in his mind, he tries to benefit from his social environment, family and friends, and wants to have a guide with all the resources he has. Therefore, a re-socialization process emerges here. Since it is also possible for him to establish a bond with the person he wants to have as a guide. Wictorowicz calls this process *"adaptation to the environment."* Now, in the next phase, the individual becomes ready to be guided by the group with which he is connected. The realities and ideology of the group become a roadmap for him. In the last phase, the individual has completely adopted the group ideology and has become a member of a violent extremist group by transitioning from individuality to socialization.[9] In studies on the subject, ladder and pyramid metaphors about radicalization are considered important in terms of understanding the concept.

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[7]John G. Horgan, and Kurt Braddock, "Rehabilitating The Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-Radicalization Programs," *Political Violence* 22 (2), (2010): 267-291.

[8]Martha Crenshaw, "Questions to Be Answered, Research to Be Done, Knowledge to Be Applied," In Walter Reich (Ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990).

[9]Quintan Wictorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

4. The Ladder and Pyramid Metaphor Explaining Radicalization

Fatali Moghaddam's ladder metaphor which explains the radicalization process, has been one of the most used concepts in the literature in recent years. Moghaddam defines the process of joining terrorist organizations as a six-story staircase narrowing upwards, each step of which describes a different mental process. On the ground floor, there are individuals' perceptions of justice and their feelings of relative deprivation. The individual who turns towards radicalization ascends the first step of the ladder. In the first step, individuals seek justice to solve the problems they face. At times, the person defines institutions and individuals as the source of the problem, in other words, as responsible for injustice. This definition causes the individual to opt for the second step. Disappointment and anger now prevail. The individual feels angry towards a certain target by defining the actors at a lower step as enemies. When the individual reaches the third step, he starts thinking that changing people and institutions by terror is a just cause. He perceives acts of violence as legitimate without question and develops a moral commitment to the group's values. In the next step, the fourth step, the individual now sees the world from only two different perspectives: "Us" and "them." This perspective proves that he has become an active militant. Therefore, the individual who has reached the fifth step, which is the last stage, and who is an active militant, can now commit all kinds of vicious terrorist acts. At this phase, the individual has become an adjutant who lacks empathy for the victims and is ready for duty.[10]

The aim of the pyramid metaphor used by McCauley and Moskalenko, is to understand the origins of terrorism. He tried to explain the change in beliefs, emotions and behaviors in order to defend a group and to legitimize violence between groups. According to McCauley and Moskalenko, the mechanisms of radicalization of individuals, groups and masses at all levels are different from each other. Albeit, the first study by Moskalenko and McCauley focused on the radicalization processes, while in another important study, there are two pyramids: the "pyramid of thought" and the "pyramid of action." The thought pyramid has three levels. There are neutrals at the bottom, sympathizers in the middle, and justificationists who see violence as a moral responsibility in the context of political reasons at the top. Neutrals at the bottom of the pyramid are individuals who do not think that events are caused by political reasons. As one goes up, it is seen that pro-violent thoughts dominate and radicalization increases. On the other hand, there are passive people at the bottom of this pyramid and there are activists who take action by using legal political means for their goals. Above them, there are radicals who carry out illegal acts, while at the top of the pyramid are terrorists who target civilians for their purposes.[11]

Radicalization is the act of indoctrinating individuals to commit violent acts against symbolic targets that are important to society. In this process, the individual also attains the psychological motivation to sacrifice himself for the realization of the goals of the group to which he belongs.

5. Religiously Motivated Radicalization

Radicalization has different aspects that tend to affect each individual differently. In literature, radical groups have been classified under five groups in terms of their purposes. Among these, nationalist and separatist groups such as Tamil Tigers, ETA, IRA and PKK occupy the first place. These groups intend to obtain a safe area or a piece of land under their control for the community they represent. Extreme right-wing groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Pegida, occupy the second place, showing a rising reaction against immigrants and asylum seekers and work achieve goals in

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[10]Fathali M Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *American Psychologist* 60 (2), (2005): 161-170.

[11]McCauley Clark, and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (3), (2008): 415-433. Doi: 10.1080/09546550802073367.

order to protect the white race. In the third, extreme left-wing groups take place taking different names such as the Red Brigades, the Red Army Faction and the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, these groups aim to fight against capitalism and advocate a fair distribution of income. Fourthly, there are groups that focus on a single issue, such as the Army of God Group and the Animal Liberation Front, these groups focus on one specific issue. Fifth and last, there are religiously motivated radical groups. They are groups such as *DAESH* and Al Qaeda that use a strict interpretation of religion depending on religious priorities and try to legitimize their actions in this way.[12]

Religiously motivated radical groups can be classified as "false and inappropriate interpretations of religious doctrines and the desire to achieve political goals and implement ideologies". Therefore, the abuse and interpretation of religious teachings is an important step towards religious motivation.

There is the use of distorted versions of religious facts and events by deviating from the truth.[13] Additionally, individuals can become radicalized because of several personal and social reasons. With problems such as unemployment, lack of education, exclusion from society, homelessness, and lack of social services, despair of individuals' increases exponentially and this situation paves the way for radicalism.

It is seen that religiously motivated radicalization depends on different reasons such as economic, political, social and educational. The likelihood of radicalization is high in countries are under development, where internal conflicts are recurrent, where ideological polarizations and opposition to imperialism are predominantly manifested. However, it is possible for individuals with low economic opportunities to be radicalized, as well as individuals with high economic opportunities.

Due to political reasons, the religion of Islam is followed by the West, especially due to its jihādist discourse, and is seen as the source of Islamic-motivated terrorist organizations. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, it has been seen that the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and North Africa have moved to a new order through the Soviet influence and political Islam. The inevitable result in this order is that political Islam gained a military feature. Because of the bureaucratic elites in the 1979 Iranian revolution, the revolution was institutionalized and a great tension arose between Iran and West. In the following periods, Khomeini's death fatwa due to Salman Rushdie's work, *The Satanic Verses* created tension on the international scale. The export issue of the Islamic revolution has dominated the Middle East policy for many years. The intolerant and rigid rules in Iran have also paved the way for the spread of an Islamic terrorism threat on a world scale. The issue of the export of revolution has been a source of great concern for both Western and other Muslim countries due to fundamentalist initiatives and propaganda.[14] Rapid corruption in social and cultural values causes various deviations. Particularly in times of distress and depression, supporters of violence are fed by this situation and turn to behaviors that increase radicalization. Resultantly, individuals not receiving adequate education, ideologies and elements of violence fill the voids here.

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[12]Doosje Bertsan, and Fathali Moghaddam, "Terrorism, Radicalization and Deradicalization," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 11, (2016): 80.

[13]Halil Aydınalp, "İntihar Eylemlerinde Dinin Anlamı ve Sınırları", [The Meaning and Limits of Religion in Suicide], *M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 37, (2009): 129-146.

[14]John L. Esposito, *İslam Tehdidi Efsanesi*, [The Myth of the Islamic Threat]. (çev.) Ömer Baldık, Ali Köse, Talip Küçükcan (İstanbul: Ufuk Kitapları, 2002).

6. Online Radicalization and Social Landscape

Online platforms that have developed due to the digital revolution have entered every aspect of human lives. Online platforms have now become a medium used by extremists and radical groups to spread their political ideologies and initiate social movements.

Terrorist organizations, use political communication and propaganda methods in order to establish and maintain a relationship with the target audience. They have increased their perception and propaganda power in online areas with the development and diversification of mass media tools relying on technology.

According to Shortland, radical organizations use the internet for certain purposes. For instance, propaganda, recruitment, logistics and financing. According to Shortland, jihādist radical groups gather on the Internet via social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Telegram and gain sympathizers by organizing spiritual discussions. Especially after September 9/11 attacks, more public and accessible networks instead of closed forums for jihādist groups have become salient. However, in response to the increasing anti-terrorist actions, many members of terrorist organizations have turned to the internet and posted encouraging messages on the sites they use. It can is comprehensible that September 11 is a turning point in terms of the use of social networks and online environments as a medium for terrorist activities. After this date, terrorism and anti-terrorist wars, intelligence and law enforcement activities concentrated on these networks. The answer to why terrorist organizations are so interested in social media lies in the number of active internet users. In 2021, there are 4.9 billion active internet users in the world Access 12.10.2022). The Brookings Institution's 2019 report on ISIS supporters on Twitter men (https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/bmden-internet-raporu, mentions that there are at least 55,000 Twitter accounts used by ISIS supporters. (https://www.brookings.edu, Access 12.10. 2022).

It has been observed that the majority of individuals who spend time on online platforms are not interested in information that may challenge extremist views, but instead continue to follow ideas that confirm or are based on their current beliefs. In this sense, the internet serves as an echo chamber, offering an even more polarized and radicalized environment where like-minded people are disproportionately exposed to persuasive arguments for radicalization, ignoring opposing views.[15]

At every stage of radicalization, people seek solutions to different types of needs on these platforms. As people meet their spiritual needs, they move on to the next stage of the radicalization process due to mutual interaction. At this stage, according to social learning theory, when people are exposed to deviant attitudes through different channels, they are more likely to engage in delinquent or deviant behavior. In addition, it is known that the new social media allows its users to isolate themselves from similar ideological groups, and the possibility of being exposed to violent ideologies increases, especially as vulnerable young people use these channels more frequently. Since users on these platforms engage with extremist messages on the new social media, they are beginning to describe political violence and related actions in a positive or neutral way. Considering that violence and pro-violent actions are necessary as the process extends, young people take the next step of radicalization.[16]

In a report (2018) on radicalization and terrorism published by the International Center for Combating Terrorism included, "It is seen that those who converted to Islam in Western countries,

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[15]Charlie Winter, Peter Neumann, Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Magnus Ranstorp, Lorenzo Vidino, Johanna Fürst, "Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization, and Counter-Strategies," *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 14 (2), (2020): 8. Doi.10.4119/ijcv-3809.

[16]Rik Coolsaet, "What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Is? Insights from the Belgian Case," *Egmont Papers* 75, March (2015): 6-33.

especially in the United States, advocate extremism in the jihādist understanding and participate in overseas activities as foreign fighters". In the United States, a study conducted by Wintrobe determined that 29% of a local sample of jihādists were converts. The examination of 124 radicalized samples of converts, revealed that their average age was 25. These individuals observed that Western countries were waging a war against the Muslim world. Al-Qaeda terrorist organization's member Jahanzeb Malik, who was planning to blow up the United States consulate in Toronto, said that he believes Muslims around the world are attacked by western countries and called on Canadians to help the Muslim world on online platforms.[17]

In 2019, John Maguire invited Canadians to jihād against the west in a propaganda video published on social media accounts and jihādist platforms. He accused the Canadian Government of joining the coalition against ISIS and stated that jihād is an obligation for all Muslims. In his speech, he praised two recent terrorist attacks in Canada and said that Canadians deserved these attacks because they participated in a military operation against Muslims.[18]

In a study conducted by Kleinmann, it was concluded that one-third (17 people) of those who became radicalized and participated in terrorist activities (51 people) converted to another religion. As a result, it can be said that radicalization at the individual level is more common among converts.[19]

In a sample of 223 convicted terrorists in the United Kingdom, the role of the Internet in terrorist activities was examined. As a result, the Internet has been demonstrated to a large extent as a facilitating tool that offers opportunities for violent radicalization and attack planning. In addition, it has been concluded that making a distinction may create a false dilemma since extremist activities are used in both areas and these two areas reinforce each other.[20]

7. Omar Al-Hamimi Face to Face, Coleen Larose and Hasan's Case of Online Radicalization

It has been revealed that the methods of recruiting personnel through physical meetings of extremist groups were consolidated on online platforms. These offline political activities accelerated the online indoctrination process and that there was a strong relationship between the two. The Internet is favored among radical groups as it is accessible to a large number of people from different backgrounds, groups, ethnicities and genders. Online platforms, which offer like-minded individuals the opportunity to easily connect from all sides, increase interactions in these groups and initiate a process hard to reverse in radicalization. Weinmann states that the internet has become a tool for radical groups, especially those dealing with terrorism. As the internet is an anonymous forum where it is used to carry out psychological warfare, produce and disseminate propaganda, steal sensitive data, collect donations and collect resources, recruit and mobilize supporters by easily reaching human resources, networking with other like-minded groups, sharing logistics information, planning and coordinating attacks and to conduct many different activities.[21] The radicalization processes of Omar Al-Hamimi and Coleen Larose have been explained below.

Born in 1984 in Alabama, Hamimi was the son of Christian mother and a Muslim father. Although interracial and interfaith marriages are not common in his hometown, Hamimi was a fairly

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[17]Ronald Wintrobe, *Rational Extremism*, 231-233.

[18]Charlie Winter, "Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization and Counter-Strategies," 5.

[19]Scott Matthew Kleinmann, "Radicalization of Homegrown Sunni Militants İn the United States: Comparing Converts and Non-Converts," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 62/4, (2012): 283-286.

[20]Mark Sageman, "A Strategy for Fighting International Islamist Terrorists," *The Annals of American Academy of Political And Social Science* 618 (2008): 225.

[21]Gabriel Weimann, *New Terrorism and New Media* (Washington DC: Wilson Center, 2014), 7.

normal, middle-class child who was raised as a Christian Baptist. Hamimi, who went to church and attended religious services with his mother, was a successful and popular boy in high school. Desired to be a doctor or engineer, he saw himself as a true American in American society. He was a child who was at peace with his social environment and family. For a while, Hamimi began to deal with the difficulties of his father's relatives living in Syria. For this reason, he felt the need to analyze the religion that his father followed. He was 17 years old when he researched the religion of Islam due to the troubles of his relatives in Syria, met with Islam and started to communicate with his relatives in Syria. Hamimi's father was not a religious or tough man. He was a father focused on his education and work. The relatives of his father, with whom Hamimi communicated, were imprisoned in Syria for joining the Muslim brotherhood. A debate was organized in school at the time when Hamimi began to communicate with them. In this debate organized among the students, unlike the other students, he favored Muslims. In this period, it can be seen that he tried to learn the details of Islam from the internet and books. It is understood that in the last years of high school, Hamimi built an Islamist character and changed his religion. He wanted to visit his relatives in Syria for the first time during this period and began to see himself as a spirit devoted to Islam. His conversion to Islam coincided with the time his father built a mosque in Alabama. However, his father never doubted his son, who converted to Islam, in terms of jihādism. At times he supported his son's research on Salafism and other times ignored it. Hamimi deepened the subject of jihād and Salafism during these researches. Hamimi's acquaintances who came to the mosque and the people he spent time with changed after a while to immigrants with radical approaches. Hamimi, who no longer spends much time with his father, started to disassociate from his non-Muslim friends as he met people with radical approaches, and this disassociation manifested itself both physically and emotionally. He has then started to wear traditional Muslim clothes. Hamimi explained Islam to his Christian friends and tried to convert them too. Hamimi's family saw this change as a theological issue. However, his mother tried to educate him about Jesus for a while and tried to lead him back to Christianity. Yet, Hamimi did not give up on the religion of Islam due to being influence by his new social environment. The motivation for radicalization, which continues to increase day by day, was not noticed by his family. In the following process, it was seen that Hamimi's relations with his family and friends deteriorated and he constantly had an affray. At one point, his father sent him away from home due to their conflicts, and he had a reaction against him for a while. Still, his family made it possible for him to attend university, and Hamimi started studying at University of Alabama. It is seen that his radicalization continued throughout his university life. Here he became the president of the Muslim Students Union and gained leadership status. Hamimi, whose self-confidence increased, embarked on the path that he would be appointed as the head of the Al Shabab organization in near future. Hamimi now sees terrorist attacks as normal and argues with his friends, family and teachers with an increasing Salafism. Hamimi, who spent his time mostly in al-Qaeda-related forums, engaged in various discussions and talked about Salafism and jihādism in these forums. He also went to a bookstore with his Afghan friends and had daily meetings there. After a while, he joined the Al Shabāb organization and started to run the social media part of the organization. He became a social media star within the organization and made YouTube videos himself and gave speeches about what jihād is for. He prepared an assassination and even shared the photos and wounds of this first assassination on his Twitter account. He was later killed by another intra-organizational assassination.[22]

In Coleen La Rose's online radicalization case however, Coleen LaRose, 23, living in the USA, does not have any Islamic knowledge. Her radicalization took place, not in mosques, courses, religious meetings, but online, over the internet. LaRose, who changed her name to Fatma, started to use the pages she used online mostly to find a partner for herself. She created a new identity for

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[22]Elena Mastors, and Rhea Siers, "Omar Al-Hammami: A Case Study in Radicalization," *National Library of Medicine* 32 (3), (2014): 377-88. Doi: 10.1002/bsl.2108.

herself on the internet and started to act like someone who is not in her normal life. Fatma, who she is radicalized through this identity, pursues a personal purpose rather than a religious or organizational one. Fatma, who posted her photos with hijabs on her online accounts, attracted the attention of some radical-minded men in these accounts. Fatma, who liked this communication and interaction process, continued to use these sites with increasing enthusiasm as she attracted attention, and, being influenced by her friends there, she turned to Islam. She studied Islam and also continued to use online sites to find a partner. As this process progressed, Fatma, who assumed the false identity she created and internalized this identity, learned the radical views of the men she met online, adopted their ideologies and became increasingly radicalized through these people. After a while, she set up a YouTube page for herself and started shooting videos there. In these videos, she started to voice her thoughts on Palestine, why jihād is necessary, and pro-jihād rhetoric. She communicated with people in Asia and Europe and declared non-Muslims infidels online. Not only that, she made statements and shared videos about the killing of infidels. She was arrested in an operation carried out because of these videos and there was no news from her afterwards. Paradoxical, Fatma, who first started talking to men online to find a partner, was influenced by their views and internalized these views. Therefore, the indoctrination process was completed spontaneously in a short period of time. Later, she started to convey her ideological views to others on social media and made pro-jihād videos.[23]

If another radicalization process should be referred to, Hasan, who grew up in the Middle East, received his religious education in accordance with the Salafi method. In the mid-1990s, he began to learn about radical Islam from his friends and close circle when internet usage was not widespread. He decides to follow a radical group. In the mid-1990s, he decides to go to Bosnia and Herzegovina, when the war was ongoing there, with a group of friends. Witnessing thousands of civilian deaths in Bosnia (The war between Bosnia and Herzegovina, which seceded from Yugoslavia, and the Serbs, which were affiliated with Yugoslavia, resulted in the death of approximately 100,000 people between 1992-1995 and the forced migration of 2 million people from their place of residence), Hasan describes the radicalization process when he returned in the following words, "One does not want to return to normal life after all the incidents that he has witnessed. After so many near-death experiences, one feels cut off from social life. Now I regard people's lives and conversations as meaningless, and I was witnessing that they had no plans beyond their daily lives. Over time, I began to think of myself as a chosen leader awaited by people."

As for Hasan's online radicalization process, Hasan realized the potential of the internet in the radicalization process and started to follow the radicalization step by step on the platforms there. Using the Internet, he translated violent and extremist messages from different languages to English and started uploading them to extremist websites. Hasan realizes that the internet is crucial and over time explored the use of online video to overcome the limitations of facilitating radicalization.

Finally, Hasan was recognized as a good preacher, employer and donor after he returned from Bosnia. Before leaving his country, Hasan continues his terrorist activities by taking active duties for 12 years.[24]

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[23]Jeffry R. Halverson, and Way Amy K, "The Curious Case of Colleen Larose: Social Margins, New Media, And Online Radicalization," *SAGE Journals* 5 (2), (2012), https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635212440917.

[24]Ines von Behr, Anais Reding, Charlie Edwards, Luke Gribbon, *Radicalisation in the Digital Era the Use of the Internet in 15 Cases of Terrorism and Extremism* (United Kingtom: RAND Corporation, 2013).

8. Conclusion

In this research, radicalization, its causes and courses, and the differences between radicalization in online and face-to-face forum are tried to be pointed out. The most distinctive issue here is that radicalization has many different layers and causes. Radicalization processes differ in line with the education, socio-economic status and political views of the individual. In some individuals, this process takes place over a long period of time, while in others it is shorter and more difficult to notice. However, there are certain situations that affect the radicalization and these factors include individual victimization, social exclusion, feeling of not belonging to the society, and inability to express one's self. On the other hand, in failed state models, where social integration is weak, individuals see radicalization as a solution.

Additionally, the totalitarian regimes in the Middle East have become a source where religious radicalization grows. Resultantly, the- lack of functional institutions- such as disruption in public services, bribery, embezzlement, discrimination in state institutions, and human rights violations, individuals see membership in radical groups and adopting their views as the only way out. With the widespread use of the Internet, radical groups have opened up a new field of action for themselves. These groups have started to recruit personnel and planned attacks not only in the Middle East but also in many parts of the world. There is an expansion towards online platforms in the fields of operation of radical groups. The Internet is no longer just a part of the spectrum of extremist activity it has also become the primary arena and operational environment where political ideologies are made real, attacks are planned and extraordinary social movements begin to emerge. It has been observed that most of the individuals who met and spent time in these environments could not raise antithesis against extremist views. These individuals followed ideas that affirmed and were based on their current beliefs rather than evaluating different perspectives. Moreove, radicalization at individual level was more common among religious converts.

It is important to note that face-to-face radicalization takes a longer period of time than online radicalization. It is now seen that face-to-face radicalization has been replaced by online radicalization. As in the case of Hamimi, it is easier for the person's family or social circle to notice radicalization. The individual reflects the process he goes through to the people around him in different ways. However, as in the example of Coleen Larose, in online radicalization, the individual becomes radicalized in a very short time by imposing their ideas in online environments through the people they communicate with. In Hamimi's case, radicalization also occurs for a relatively longer period of time than in online radicalization cases. It continues to increase throughout the high school and university education. While the process is easier to be noticed by family, friends and teachers and easier to prevent, yet in the case of Coleen Larose, it is seen that the individual is exposed to violence and extremism while browsing online platforms and normalizes it. The radicalization that is completed in a short time does not facilitate the opportunity of her family and friends to notice. This case actually provides a very good sample for us to see the speed of radicalization in online forum. Since Coleen Larose is taking steps to radicalize herself, not under the direction of anyone from the outside. She gets involved with these sites for the first time in order to find a partner, perhaps because she feels lonely. Therefore, in online platforms that are used unconsciously, it is possible for individuals to lose themselves, let alone find what they are looking for. On the other hand, in Hamimi's case, face-to-face radicalization started offline, with real-life contacts from the social environment, but was reinforced online and he joined the organization. In the case of Hasan, Hasan realized the potential of the internet in the radicalization process and began to follow the radicalization on the platforms there. Through internet, he translated violent and extremist messages in different languages into English and uploaded them to extremist websites. He reinforces the radicalization process with the help of online video.

9. Suggestions

It has been seen that radicalization can occur at different times and under different conditions. It is quite easy for vulnerable individuals to be exposed to this situation unknowingly and to acquire an ideology by internalizing extremist thoughts on the basis of social learning theory. The main way to prevent this situation is to inform individuals about these issues before radicalization begins.

The lack of information-based reporting on risky online content and cyber security, especially for children and teenagers, must be ceased. Since it is very important for the individual to recognize extremism that leads to violence, to learn about radicalism, to increase awareness for them and to defend himself.

As emphasized before, the role of the internet in radicalization processes is becoming more evident day by day, however, personal interactions are also increasing. For this reason, the increase in the number of radical actions related to online environments, especially by children and young people, must be carefully monitored. Especially during their youth, individuals with familial problems, low economic status and low education level are targets for radical groups.

The field of implementation of strategies to combat radicalization and violent extremism at national level must be included. For this, instead of focusing only on political solutions, an approach should be developed with multi-stakeholder and holistic methods that complement each other in fields such as education, health, socio-culture and economy, including non-governmental organizations.

Conflict of Interest

Author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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