

PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT  
EXTREMISM PROGRAMMING FOR RADICALISED  
INDIVIDUALS AND YOUTHS IN MALAYSIA

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the  
degree of Doctor Philosophy of Arts in Islamic Thought and  
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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to suggest Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) programs targeted at radicalised individuals and youth in Malaysia. This program is informed by findings on youth radicalisation pathways in Malaysia between 2013-2020 and an analysis of PCVE youth programs, particularly awareness talks conducted from 2017 to 2023. The study employs a qualitative methodology for data collection, utilising content analysis and interviews with various stakeholders, including government agencies, think-tanks, academicians, NGOs and youth clubs. In examining these pathways, the research analysed demographic such as gender, age, marital status; recruitment strategies including recruiters, roles and expertise within groups; and ideological dimension. The findings indicate that radicalised youth in Malaysia are both male and female, spanning secondary, tertiary and working-age youth, both single, married and re-married. Recruitment pathways reveal that recruiters include spouses, family members, boyfriends, social media, teachers and *usrah* groups affiliated with VE groups. The roles within these groups include leaders, followers and loosely associated members, with some possessing specialised expertise as recruiters, financiers, suicide bombers, weapons experts, medical practitioners, participants in in-house attacks and combatants in Syria, while others participate as *jihad al-nikah*. Ideologically, these individuals exhibit high, medium, or low commitment to extremist beliefs. For the PCVE program, the study suggests peace program, webinar sharing, social media campaign, sport, ICONS simulation and Training of Trainer (ToT). Hence, the findings will help to inform and compliment future Malaysia Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (MyPCVE).

Keywords: *Profiling, Individual radicalisation, pathways, radicalisation, Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE), Malaysia Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (MyPCVE)*

(247 words)

## خلاصة البحث

وصل عدد الشباب المحتجزين بتهمة ارتكاب جرائم تتعلق بالإرهاب إلى مستوى مقلق (أيوب خان، 2020). تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اقتراح برامج منع ومكافحة التطرف العنيف (PCVE) التي تستهدف الأفراد المتطرفين والشباب في ماليزيا. يعتمد هذا البرنامج على النتائج المتعلقة بمسارات تطرف الشباب في ماليزيا بين عامي 2013 و 2020 وتحليل برامج منع ومكافحة التطرف العنيف للشباب، وخاصة محادثات التوعية التي أجريت من عام 2017 إلى عام 2023. تستخدم الدراسة منهجية نوعية لجمع البيانات، باستخدام تحليل المحتوى والمقابلات مع مختلف أصحاب المصلحة، بما في ذلك الوكالات الحكومية ومراكز الفكر والأكاديميين والمنظمات غير الحكومية والنوادي الشبابية. عند فحص هذه المسارات، قام البحث بتحليل التركيبة السكانية مثل الجنس والعمر والحالة الاجتماعية؛ واستراتيجيات التجنيد بما في ذلك المجندين والأدوار والخبرة داخل المجموعات؛ والبعد الأيديولوجي. تشير النتائج إلى أن الشباب المتطرفين في ماليزيا هم من الذكور والإناث، ويمتدون إلى الشباب الثانوي والعالي وفي سن العمل، سواء أعزب أو متزوج أو متزوج مرة أخرى. تكشف مسارات التجنيد أن المجندين يشملون الأزواج وأفراد الأسرة والأصدقاء ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والمعلمين ومجموعات الأسر التابعة لأعضاء داعش. تشمل الأدوار داخل هذه المجموعات القادة والأتباع والأعضاء المرتبطين بشكل فضفاض، مع امتلاك البعض خبرة متخصصة كمجندين وممولين ومفجرين انتحاريين وخبراء أسلحة ومسعفين ومشاركين في هجمات داخلية ومقاتلين في سوريا، بينما يشارك آخرون في جهاد النكاح. من الناحية الأيديولوجية، يُظهر هؤلاء الأفراد التزامًا عاليًا أو متوسطًا أو منخفضًا بالمعتقدات المتطرفة. بالنسبة لبرنامج منع التطرف العنيف ومكافحته، تقترح الدراسة برنامج سلام، ندوة عبر الإنترنت، حملة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، رياضة، محاكاة ICONS وتدريب المدربين. وبالتالي، ستساعد النتائج في إعلام واستكمال برنامج NAPPCVE المستقبلي في ماليزيا.

الكلمات الرئيسية: تحديد الملفات الشخصية، التطرف الفردي، المسارات، التطرف، منع التطرف العنيف ومكافحته، NAPPCVE.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor Philosophy of Arts in Islamic Thought and Civilization.

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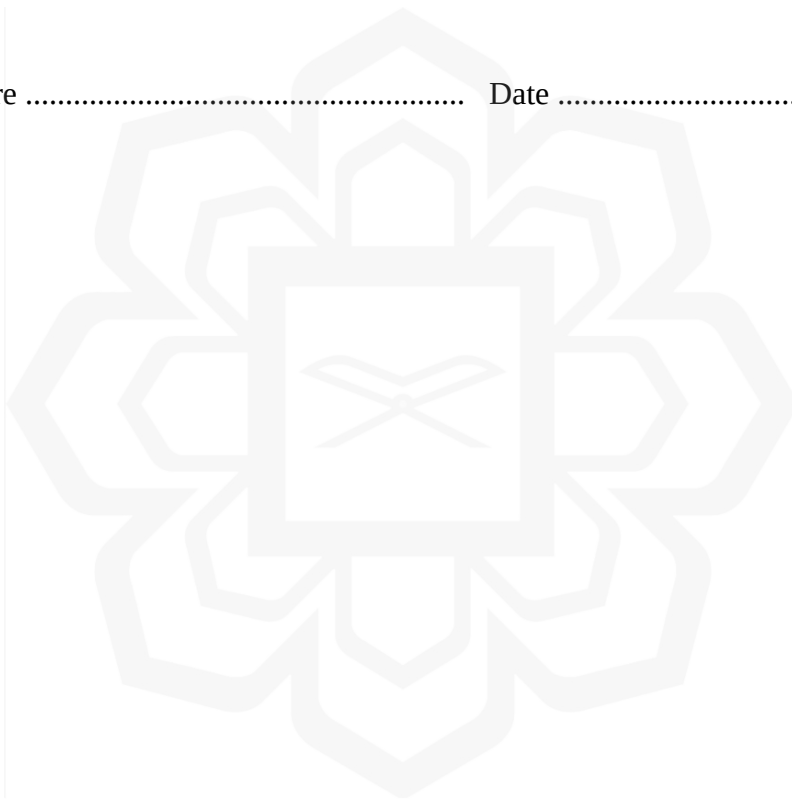
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## DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to those who have been my unwavering pillars of strength and support throughout this journey. To my beloved parents, Omar bin Razak and Jauriah binti Idrus, for their unconditional love, prayers, and sacrifices that have shaped me into who I am today. Your unwavering belief in me has been my greatest source of motivation.

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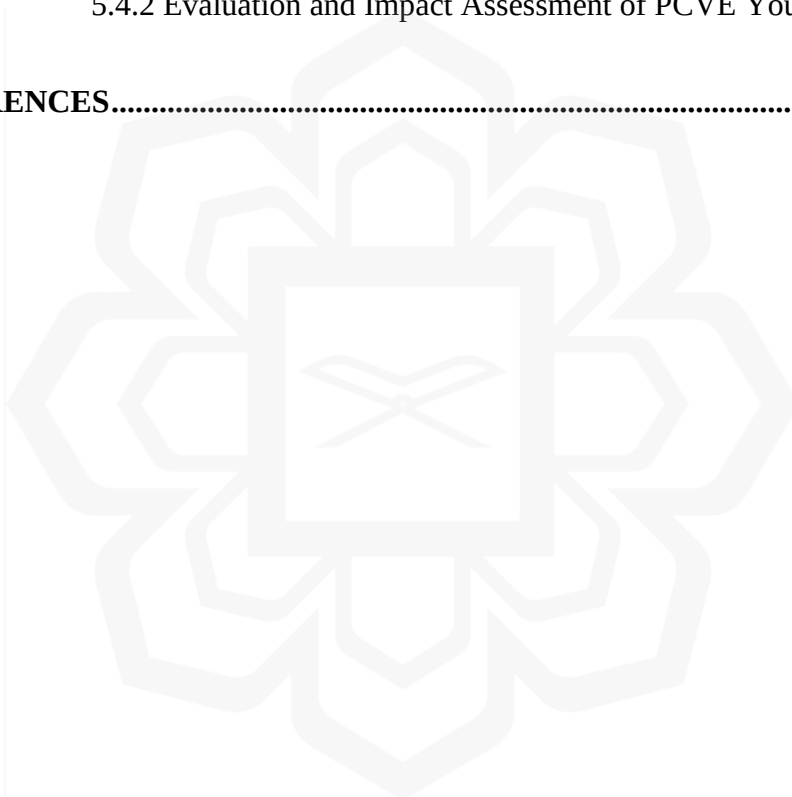
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## LIST OF MALAYSIAN ACTS

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>130B</b>                                               | 130B.(1) in this Chapter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Interpretation<br/>in relation to<br/>this Chapter</b> | <p>“entity” means a person, group, trust, partnership or fund;</p> <p>“explosive or other lethal device” means—</p> <p>(a) an explosive or incendiary weapon or device that is designed or has the capability to cause death, serious bodily injury or substantial material damage; or</p> <p>(b) a weapon or device that is designed or has the capability to cause death, serious bodily injury or substantial material damage through the release, dissemination or impact of toxic chemicals, biological agents or toxins or similar substances or radiation or radioactive material;</p> <p>“harbour” includes supplying a person with shelter, food, drink, money or clothes; or, except by a person employed in a government hospital, medicine, bandages, surgical dressings or any other form of aid to a person wounded; or arms, ammunition or means of conveyance, or assisting a person in any way to evade apprehension;</p> <p>“Imprisonment for life” means (subject to the provisions of any written law conferring power to grant pardons, reprieves or respites or suspension or remission of punishments) imprisonment until the death of the person on whom the sentence is imposed;</p> <p>“master”, in relation to a vessel, means the owner or person (except a harbour master or pilot) having for the time being command or charge of the vessel;</p> <p>“operator”, in relation to an aircraft, means the owner or person for the time being in charge or command or control of the aircraft;</p> <p>“property” means—</p> <p>(a) assets of every kind, whether corporeal or incorporeal, movable or immovable, tangible or intangible, however acquired; or</p> <p>(b) legal documents or instruments in any form, including electronic or digital, evidencing title to, or interest in, such assets, including bank credits, traveller’s cheques, bank cheques, money orders, shares, securities, bonds, drafts and letters of credit;</p> |

“terrorism financing offence” means any offence under section 130N, 130O, 130P or 130Q;

“terrorist” means any person who—

(a) commits, or attempts to commit, any terrorist act; or

(b) participates in or facilitates the commission of any terrorist act,

and includes a specified entity under section 66B or 66C of the \*Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001 [Act 613];

“Terrorist entity” means any entity owned or controlled by any terrorist or terrorist group and includes an association of such entities;

“Terrorist group” means—

(a) an entity that has as one of its activities and purposes the committing of, or the facilitation of the commission of, a terrorist act; or

(b) a specified entity under section 66B or 66C of the \*Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001;

\*NOTE—Previously known as the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001. Change in short title vide section 2 of the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing (Amendment) Act 2014 [Act A1467] w.e.f. 1 September 2014—see P.U. (B) 400/2014.

“Terrorist property” means—

(a) proceeds from the commission of a terrorist act;

(b) property that has been, is being, or is likely to be used to commit a terrorist act;

(c) property that has been, is being, or is likely to be used by a terrorist, terrorist entity or terrorist group;

(d) property owned or controlled by or on behalf of a terrorist, terrorist entity or terrorist group, including funds derived or generated from such property; or

(e) property that has been collected for the purpose of providing support to a terrorist, terrorist entity or terrorist group or funding a terrorist act.

(2) For the purposes of this Chapter, “terrorist act” means an act or threat of action within or beyond Malaysia where—

(a) the act or threat falls within subsection (3) and does not fall within subsection (4);

(b) the act is done or the threat is made with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause; and

(c) the act or threat is intended or may reasonably be regarded as being intended to—

(i) intimidate the public or a section of the public; or

(ii) influence or compel the Government of Malaysia or the Government of any State in Malaysia, any other government, or any international organization to do or refrain from doing any act.

(3) An act or threat of action falls within this subsection if it—

(a) involves serious bodily injury to a person;

(b) endangers a person’s life;

(c) causes a person’s death;

(d) creates a serious risk to the health or the safety of the public or a section of the public;

(e) involves serious damage to property;

(f) involves the use of firearms, explosives or other lethal devices;

(g) involves releasing into the environment or any part of the environment or distributing or exposing the public or a section of the public to—

(i) any dangerous, hazardous, radioactive or harmful substance;

(ii) any toxic chemical; or

(iii) any microbial or other biological agent or toxin;

(h) is designed or intended to disrupt or seriously interfere with, any computer systems or the provision of any services directly related to communications infrastructure, banking or financial services, utilities, transportation or other essential infrastructure;

(i) is designed or intended to disrupt, or seriously interfere with, the provision of essential emergency services such as police, civil defence or medical services;

(j) involves prejudice to national security or public safety;

(k) involves any combination of any of the acts specified in paragraphs (a) to (j),

and includes any act or omission constituting an offence under the Aviation Offences Act 1984 [Act 307].



(4) An act or threat of action falls within this subsection if it—  
 (a) is advocacy, protest, dissent or industrial action; and  
 (b) is not intended—  
 (i) to cause serious bodily injury to a person;  
 (ii) to endanger the life of a person;  
 (iii) to cause a person's death; or  
 (iv) to create a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public.

(5) For the purposes of subsection (2)—  
 (a) a reference to any person or property is a reference to any person or property wherever situated, within or outside Malaysia; and  
 (b) a reference to the public includes a reference to the public of a country or territory other than Malaysia.

### **Suppression of Terrorist Act and Support for Terrorist Act**

#### **130C. Committing Terrorist Act**

130C. (1) Whoever, by any means, directly or indirectly, commits a terrorist act shall be punished—

(a) if the act results in death, with death; and  
 (b) in any other case, with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years but not exceeding thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

(2) Where in any criminal proceeding it is necessary to decide whether any item or substance is a weapon, a hazardous, radioactive or harmful substance, a toxic chemical or a microbial or other biological agent or toxin, a certificate purporting to be signed by an appropriate authority to the effect that the item or substance described in the certificate is a weapon, a hazardous, radioactive or harmful substance, a toxic chemical or a microbial or other biological agent or toxin shall be sufficient evidence of the facts stated in it.

#### **130D. Providing Devices to Terrorist Groups**

130D. Whoever knowingly provides or offers to provide any explosive or other lethal device to—

(a) a terrorist group;  
 (b) a member of a terrorist group; or  
 (c) any other person for use by, or for the benefit of, a terrorist group or a member of a terrorist group,

shall be punished with imprisonment for life or imprisonment for a term not exceeding thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130E.  
Recruiting  
Persons to be  
Members of  
Terrorist  
Groups or to  
Participate in  
Terrorist Acts**

130E. Whoever knowingly recruits, or agrees to recruit, another person to be a member of a terrorist group or to participate in the commission of a terrorist act shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130F.  
Providing  
Training and  
Instruction to  
Terrorist  
Groups and  
Persons  
Committing  
Terrorist Acts**

130F. Whoever knowingly provides training or instruction, or agrees to provide training or instruction—

- (a) in the making or use of any explosive or other lethal device;
- (b) in carrying out a terrorist act; or
- (c) in the practice of military exercises or movements,

to a member of a terrorist group or a person engaging in, or preparing to engage in, the commission of a terrorist act shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130G.  
Inciting,  
Promoting or  
Soliciting  
Property for  
the  
Commission of  
Terrorist Acts**

130G. Whoever knowingly—

- (a) incites or promotes the commission of a terrorist act;
- (b) incites or promotes membership in a terrorist group; or
- (c) solicits property for the benefit of a terrorist group or for the commission of a terrorist act,

shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130H.  
Providing  
Facilities in  
Support of  
Terrorist Acts**

130H. Whoever being—

- (a) the owner, occupier, lessee or person in charge of any building, premises, room or place knowingly permits a meeting of persons to be held in that building, premises, room or place;

(b) the master, charterer, lessee, operator or agent of a vessel or the operator, charterer, lessee, agent or pilot in charge of an aircraft knowingly permits that vessel or aircraft to be used; or

(c) the owner, lessee or person in charge of any equipment or facility that allows for recording or conferencing or meetings via technology knowingly permits that equipment or facility to be used,

for the purposes of committing an offence under this Chapter, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130I.  
Directing  
Activities of  
Terrorist  
Groups**

130I. Whoever intentionally directs the activities of a terrorist group shall be punished—

(a) if the act results in death, with death; and

(b) in any other case, with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years but not exceeding thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130J**  
Soliciting or  
giving support  
to terrorist  
groups or for  
the commission  
of terrorist acts.

(1) 130J.(1) Whoever knowingly and in any manner solicits support for, or gives support to –

(a) any terrorist group; or

(b) the commission of a terrorist act, shall be punished with imprisonment for life or imprisonment for a term not exceeding thirty years, or with fine, and shall also be liable to forfeiture of any property used or intended to be used in connection with the commission of the offence.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “support” includes –

(a) an offer to provide, or the provision of, forged or falsified travel documents, to a member of a terrorist group;

(b) an offer to provide, or the provision of, a skill or an expertise for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with a terrorist group;

(c) entering or remaining in any country for the benefit of, or at the direction of or in association with a terrorist group;

(d) becoming a member of or professing membership of a terrorist group;

(e) arranging, managing or assisting in arranging or managing a meeting to further the activities of a terrorist group; or

(f) using or possessing property for the purpose of committing or facilitating the commission of a terrorist act.

**130K.  
Harbouring  
persons  
committing  
terrorist acts**

130K. Whoever harbours, or prevents, hinders or interferes with the arrest of any person knowing or having reason to believe that such person—

(a) has committed or is planning or is likely to commit a terrorist act; or

(b) is a member of a terrorist group,  
shall be punished with imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine; or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to twenty years, or with fine.

**130KA.  
Member of a  
terrorist group**

130KA. Whoever is a member of a terrorist group shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to a fine.

**130L.  
Criminal  
conspiracy**

130L. (1) Whoever conspires with another person who is in Malaysia to do any act without and beyond Malaysia, being an act, which if done in Malaysia would have constituted an offence under this Chapter shall be deemed to have criminally conspired to do that act in Malaysia.

(2) Whoever conspires with another person in any place without and beyond Malaysia to do any act in Malaysia that constitutes an offence under this Chapter shall be deemed to have criminally conspired in Malaysia to do that act.

**130M.  
Intentional  
omission to  
give  
information  
relating to  
terrorist acts**

130M. Whoever knowing or having reason to believe that any offence punishable under sections 130C to 130L has been or will be committed intentionally omits to give any information respecting that offence, which he is legally bound to give, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years or with fine or with both.

**Suppression of Financing of Terrorist Act**

**130N.  
Providing or  
collecting  
property for  
terrorist acts**

130N. Whoever, by any means, directly or indirectly, provides or collects or makes available any property intending, knowing or having reasonable grounds to believe that the property will be used, in whole or in part, to commit a terrorist act shall be punished—

(a) if the act results in death, with death; and

(b) in any other case, with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years but not exceeding thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine,

and shall also be liable to forfeiture of any property so provided or collected or made available.

**130O.  
Providing  
services for  
terrorist  
purposes**

130O. (1) Whoever, directly or indirectly, provides or makes available financial services or facilities—

(a) intending that the services or facilities be used, or knowing or having reasonable grounds to believe that the services or facilities will be used, in whole or in part, for the purpose of committing or facilitating the commission of a terrorist act, or for the purpose of benefiting any person who is committing or facilitating the commission of a terrorist act; or

(b) knowing or having reasonable grounds to believe that, in whole or in part, the services or facilities will be used by or will benefit any terrorist, terrorist entity or terrorist group, shall be punished—

(aa) if the act results in death, with death; and

(bb) in any other case, with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years but not exceeding thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “financial services or facilities” includes the services and facilities offered by lawyers and accountants acting as nominees or agents for their clients.

**130P.  
Arranging for  
retention or  
control of  
terrorist  
property**

130P. Whoever knowingly enters into an arrangement that facilitates the acquisition, retention or control by or on behalf of another person of terrorist property by concealment, by a removal out of jurisdiction, by transfer to a nominee or in any other way shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine and to forfeiture of any property so acquired, retained or controlled.

**130Q.**

(1) Whoever knowingly deals, directly or indirectly, in any terrorist property shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to twenty years, or with fine and shall also be liable to forfeiture of any property so dealt with.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “deals in “ includes –

- (a) acquiring or possessing any terrorist property;
- (b) entering into or facilitating, directly or indirectly, any transaction in respect of terrorist property;
- (c) converting, concealing or disguising terrorist property; or
- (d) providing any financial or other services in respect of any terrorist property to or for the benefit of, or at the direction or order of, any terrorist, terrorist entity or terrorist group.

**130QA.  
Accepting  
gratification to  
facilitate or  
enable terrorist  
acts**

130QA. Whoever accepts gratification to facilitate or enable the commission of any terrorist act shall be punished—  
 (a) if the act results in death, with death; and  
 (b) in any other case, with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years but not exceeding thirty years, and shall also be liable to fine.

**130R.  
Intentional  
omission to  
give  
information  
about terrorist  
property**

130R. Whoever—  
 (a) having possession, custody or control of any terrorist property; or  
 (b) having information about any transaction or proposed transaction in respect of any terrorist property, intentionally omits to give any information respecting that matter, which he is legally bound to give, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years or with fine or with both.

**130S.  
Intentional  
omission to  
give  
information  
relating to  
terrorism  
financing  
offence**

130S. Whoever knowing or having reason to believe that any offence punishable under section 130N, 130O, 130P or 130Q has been or will be committed intentionally omits to give any information respecting that offence, which he is legally bound to give, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years or with fine or with both.

**130T.  
Offences by  
body corporate**

130T. Where an offence under section 130N, 130O, 130P or 130Q has been committed by a body corporate, any person who, at the time of the commission of the offence, was a person responsible for the management or control of the body corporate, which includes a director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate or a person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, shall be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to

be proceeded against and punished accordingly unless he proves that—

(a) the offence was committed without his consent or connivance; and

(b) he had exercised all such due diligence to prevent the commission of the offence as he ought to have exercised, having regard to the nature of his functions in that capacity and to all the circumstances.

**Prevention of  
Crime Act  
1959 (POCA)**

An Act to provide for the more effectual prevention of crime in Peninsular Malaysia and for the control of criminals, members of secret societies and other undesirable persons, and for matters incidental thereto.

**Security  
Offences  
(Special  
Measures) Act  
2012  
(SOSMA)**

An Act to provide for special measures relating to security offences for the purpose of maintaining public order and security and for connected matters.

**Internal  
Security Act  
1960  
(ISA)**

An Act to provide for the internal security of Malaysia, preventive detention, the prevention of subversion, the suppression of organized violence against persons and property in specified areas of Malaysia, and for matters incidental thereto.

**Prevention of  
Terrorism Act  
2015  
(POTA)**

An Act to provide for the prevention of the commission or support of terrorist acts involving listed terrorist organization in a foreign country or any part of a foreign country for the control of persons engaged in such acts and for related matters.

## ABBREVIATIONS

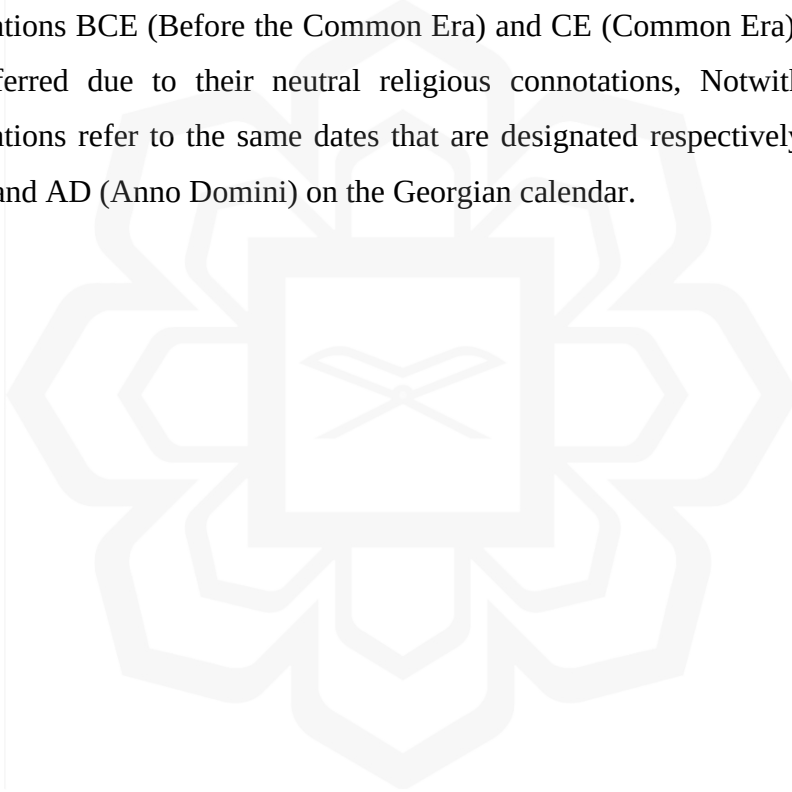
|         |                                                                         |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ASG     | Abu Sayyaf Group                                                        |
| ABIM    | Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia<br>(Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)     |
| AQ      | Al-Qa'ida                                                               |
| AQAP    | Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula                                      |
| AQI     | Al-Qa'ida in Iraq                                                       |
| AQIM    | Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb                                        |
| AS      | Al-Shabaab                                                              |
| AMLA    | Anti-Money Laundering Act                                               |
| BH      | Boko Haram                                                              |
| BARMM   | Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of<br>Muslim Mindanao                      |
| CPP/NPA | Communist Party of Philippines/New<br>People's Army                     |
| CIA     | Central Intelligence Agency                                             |
| CRT     | Country Reports on Terrorism                                            |
| CVE     | Countering Violent Extremism                                            |
| DAESH   | Daulah Islamiyah fil Iraq wal Sham /<br>Islamic State                   |
| DIM     | Daulah Islam Malizia                                                    |
| EU      | European Unions                                                         |
| FTF     | Foreign Terrorist Fighter                                               |
| FTO     | Foreign Terrorist Organization                                          |
| GTD     | Global Terrorism Database                                               |
| GCTF    | Global Counter-terrorism Forum                                          |
| ISA     | Internal Security Act                                                   |
| IS      | Islamic State                                                           |
| ISIL    | Islamic State of Levant                                                 |
| ISIS    | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria                                         |
| ICEPCVE | Center of Excellence for Preventing and<br>Countering Violent Extremism |
| JI      | Jemaah Islamiyah                                                        |
| JN      | <i>Jabhat al-Nusra</i>                                                  |
| GTD     | Global Terrorism Database                                               |
| GCTF    | Global Counter-terrorism Forum                                          |
| JAD     | Jammah Ansharud Daulah                                                  |
| JAT     | Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid                                                  |
| JTJ     | <i>Jammah at-Tawhid wa al-Jihad</i>                                     |
| KMMM    | Kumpulan Militan Mujahidin Malaysia                                     |
| KBKW    | Kumpulan Briged Khalid al-Walid                                         |
| KF      | Kumpulan Fisabililah                                                    |
| KGK     | Kumpulan Gunung Nuang                                                   |
| KMI     | Kumpulan Mujahidin Indonesia                                            |
| KMK     | Kumpulan Mujahidin Kedah                                                |
| KBKW    | Kumpulan Briged Khalid al-Walid                                         |



|            |                                                                        |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KF         | Kumpulan FIsabilillah                                                  |
| KGn        | Kumpulan Gunung Nuang                                                  |
| KMI        | Kumpulan Mujahidin Indone                                              |
| KMK        | Kumpulan Mujahidin Kedah                                               |
| KMM        | Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia                                            |
| KMMM       | Kumpulan Militan Mujahidin Malaysia                                    |
| KBKW       | Kumpulan Briged Khalid al-Walid                                        |
| KF         | Kumpulan FIsabilillah                                                  |
| KGn        | Kumpulan Gunung Nuang                                                  |
| KMI        | Kumpulan Mujahidin Indone                                              |
| KMK        | Kumpulan Mujahidin Kedah                                               |
| KMM        | Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia                                            |
| PKK        | Kurdistan Workers' Party                                               |
| IM         | Ikhwanul Muslimin                                                      |
| MLJ        | Malaysian Law Journals                                                 |
| ME         | Middle-East                                                            |
| MILF       | Moro Islamic Liberation Front                                          |
| MINDEF     | Ministry of Defence Malaysia                                           |
| MyPCVE     | Malaysia Action Plan on Preventing and<br>Countering Violent Extremism |
| NGO        | Non-Governmental Organisation                                          |
| PAS        | <i>Parti Islam SeMalaysia</i>                                          |
| PCVE       | Preventing and Countering Violent<br>Extremism                         |
| Revo Group | <i>Revolusi Islam</i>                                                  |
| RMP        | Royal Malaysia Police                                                  |
| SEA        | Southeast Asia                                                         |
| SEARCCT    | Southeast Asia Regional Centre for<br>Counter-Terrorism                |
| SMATA      | The Special Measures Against Terrorism<br>in Foreign Countries Act     |
| SOSMA      | Security Offences (Special Measures) Act                               |
| UN         | United Nations                                                         |

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND THE DATING SYSTEM

Any work dealing with Islamic concepts and the Muslim world faces the challenge of the transliteration of words from one alphabet to another. For the sake of consistency and ease of use, this research adopts a simplified form of Arabic transliteration without diacritical marks. *Hamzahs* have been omitted; words ending in *ta' marbutah* are spelt with *h* (e.g., *Ummah*); and the symbol ' has been used for 'ain (e.g., *ilm*). In most cases, the plural of words has been formed by adding an *s* (e.g., *tariqahs*). An exception is the plural of *'alim*, which is rendered as *'ulama*. In regards to the dating system, the abbreviations BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) are used. These are preferred due to their neutral religious connotations, Notwithstanding, these abbreviations refer to the same dates that are designated respectively as BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini) on the Georgian calendar.



## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since 2014, the Islamic State (IS) has remained one of the most significant threats to Malaysia, as well as to the wider region and globally. This began with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's announcement of the establishment of IS, aiming to unify all Muslim countries used to be under Ottoman empire under one single caliphate ruled from Syria under his leadership. It is in line with its slogan "one God, one Ummah, one direction and one leadership" (Esposito, 2015; El-Muhammady et al., 2019). The group's objective was to emulate the era of the Prophet Muhammad SAW known as "Al khilafah 'ala manhaj al-nubuwwah" and his companions, where a single caliphate governed the entire *ummah*.

IS sought to abolish the notion of the nation-state, claiming it contradicts Islamic teachings. According to IS, nation-states divide the Muslim *ummah* and foster disunity, which goes against the purpose of the *ummah* in Islam to promote unity and cohesion. This narrative attracted both Muslims and non-Muslims who believed that restoring the Islamic Caliphate would revive the golden era of Islam (Ahmad El-Muhammady et al., 2019).

However, this idea faced strong opposition not only from non-Muslim countries but also from Muslim-majority nations. Critics, including many Muslim scholars and leaders, such as Said Ramadhan al-Buti, al-Qardhawi, Hamzah Yusuf, Ibn Bayyah and others oppose that the modern era cannot sustain a single caliphate due to the vast differences in populations, local contexts, cultures and governance needs across countries. They argue that these differences make it impractical and potentially harmful to impose a one-size-fits-all system of governance on diverse nations.

Regardless of opposition, IS continues to pursue its mission of establishing an Islamic Caliphate. To achieve this, they actively recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds, regardless of age, race, religion, or nationality. They disseminate their ideology through various channels, including spouses, family members, teachers, *usrah* groups, friends and social media platforms all of whom are members of IS. Additionally, they promote their distorted ideology by declaring that governments practicing democracy are considered *taghut* since it as they derive authority from the people rather than solely from Allah SWT and Islamic *shariah* and consequently considered as against with the *Tawhid al-Hakimiyyah* (El-Muhammady et al., 2019).

To reinforce this narrative, IS introduced the doctrine of “Darul Islam vs. Darul Kufr” and the concept of “us versus them,” which legitimised *jihad qital* against those who did not align with their group. These ideologies were rooted in Salafist-jihadist teachings propagated by Islamic figures such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Abdul Wahhab and Sayyid Qutb. To justify their views, IS selectively misinterpreted and manipulated Quranic verses and *Hadith*, using them to support their extremist ideology and provide religious justification for their violent actions.

This distorted ideology has compelled many individuals, particularly youths, to join IS out of blind adherence and fear of straying from what they perceive as Islamic teachings. Statistics from the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) reveal that between 2014 and 2020, 347 youths associated with Daesh were arrested under Security Offences (Special Measure) Act 2012 (SOSMA) for terrorism-related offenses, compared to 137 adults during the same period (Royal Malaysia Police, 2020). Alarmingly, the youngest arrested member was just 14 years old (Che Nordin & Mhd Nazer, 2020).

According to Abdullah (2009), several factors contribute to individuals joining IS groups. These include a lack of understanding of Islamic teachings, the advancement of technology, the rise of social media platforms as recruitment tools, domestic recruitment agents, such as local branches of Darul Islam Malizia, Black Crow and Briged Khalid al Walid, Malaysia’s strategic location in Southeast Asia serves as a safe haven and transit point for visitors from the Philippines and Indonesia, external events, including the Syrian civil war, Israel-Palestine war, the insurgency in the southern

Philippines and the 9/11 attacks (Osman, 2005; Haddad & Khashan, 2002; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007)

In response to the increasing number of youths joining IS, Malaysia has adopted a combination of soft and hard approaches to address the issue. The hard approach includes measures such as the introduction of a White Paper in 2015 and the enforcement of various legal frameworks, including the Prevention of Crime Act 1959 (POCA), the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA), the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001 (AMLATFA), the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA). Additionally, the Majlis Fatwa Kebangsaan has banned VE groups and their affiliates for promoting misleading ideologies (Jusop & Othman, 2020). These hard measures have been effective, with the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) successfully thwarting 19 terrorist plots between 2013 and 2017.

In 2017, Malaysia shifted its strategy to counter extremism by incorporating a soft approach, adopting a “winning hearts and minds” strategy (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2020; Ayob Khan, 2020; Wan Mat Rusoff, 2020). This approach involved initiatives led by government sectors, think tanks, NGOs and youth clubs to raise awareness through education among young people. These efforts significantly reduced the number of youths detained for terrorism-related offenses. For instance, between 2014 and 2017, 272 youths were detained for such offenses, but from 2017 to 2020, the number dropped to 75 (Royal Malaysia Police Statistics, 2020). This decline underscores the effectiveness of soft-approach awareness programs in addressing youth radicalisation. Further evidence of the strategy’s success is reflected in Malaysia’s improved ranking on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) in 2019, where it moved up two levels among 135 countries compared to the previous year’s index (Global Terrorism Index, 2019).

Building on this foundation, this research aims to design and propose various PCVE youth programs in Malaysia using a soft-approach framework. These programs will be informed by the identified pathways of youth radicalisation from 2014 to 2020 and an analysis of previous PCVE youth initiatives implemented between 2017 and

2023. The findings will be presented as recommendations for inclusion in the Malaysia Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (MyPCVE).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The study addresses the problems outlined below.

Firstly, in Malaysia, youth make up the majority of those detained for terrorism-related offenses (Ayob Khan, 2020). According to Royal Malaysian Police statistics, between 2014 and 2019, 347 youths were arrested under the Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), compared to 137 adults (Royal Malaysia Police Statistic, 2020). To address the increasing number of youths joining IS groups, this research aims to identify the pathways of youth radicalisation in Malaysia from 2013 to 2020. By studying these pathways, the research will identify key traits and indicators that can help prevent further youth involvement in extremist activities.

Secondly, there is a lack of expertise among officers in agencies dealing with radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Most initiatives are led by agencies under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), with minimal involvement from other relevant government bodies, such as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM). This is particularly concerning as women are highly vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organisations and KPWKM should play a leading role in addressing this issue. In response to these challenges, the study proposes several PCVE youth programs that can be initiated by the stakeholders.

Lastly, there is a lack of intra-agency collaboration in PCVE programs. Interviews with stakeholders involved in initiating PCVE youth programs highlight minimal engagement between agencies, with a strong desire for greater involvement from various sectors, including government agencies, think tanks, academics, NGOs and youth clubs (Interview with KBS, Malaysia Prison Department, ABIM, MDIO and JAKIM, 2023). In response to these challenges, this research advocates for coordinated efforts between agencies to successfully launch and implement PCVE youth programs in Malaysia.

In conclusion, by addressing these issues, this research will contribute to the development of more effective PCVE strategies for youth in Malaysia.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the problem statements above, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What youth model can be developed to represent the pathways of radicalisation among Malaysian youth, based on the profiles of detainees and ex-detainees from 2013 to 2020?
2. What PCVE youth programs were implemented in Malaysia between 2017 and 2023?
3. What PCVE youth modules can be customised to address the specific pathways of radicalisation among Malaysian youth, based on the identified profiles?

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To develop a model of radicalisation pathways among Malaysian youth, based on the profiles of detainees and ex-detainees from 2013 to 2020.
2. To examine the PCVE youth programs implemented in Malaysia from 2017 to 2023.
3. To design and propose tailored PCVE youth modules that address the specific pathways of radicalisation among Malaysian youth.

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE**

The significance of this research is explained below.

Firstly, the individual pathways identified are based on evidence-based research. The cases were drawn from interviews with enforcement agencies, detainees and ex-detainees, as well as from sources such as the Malaysia Law Journal (MLJ), newspapers, country reports, government documents and academic journals. By relying on these sources, the suggested module will be effective due to its foundation in reliable and valid data, rather than personal opinions or biases.

Secondly, this study provides clear guidance for stakeholders involved in PCVE efforts who lack expertise in this area. It offers well-structured recommendations for PCVE youth programs that align with each agency's expertise, resources and networks. This approach saves time, reduces trial-and-error efforts and enables agencies to implement the programs more effectively and efficiently.

Lastly, this research introduces new initiatives that complement the existing strategies in Malaysia's Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (MyPCVE) for youth. The proposed initiatives align with the latest trends in youth radicalisation pathways from 2013 to 2020 and are based on an in-depth analysis of previous PCVE youth programs implemented from 2017 to 2020.

In short, the identified significance justifies the need for this study by highlighting its potential to influence decisions, actions and future studies in the field.

## **1.6 FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

This study analyses radicalisation profiles among Malaysian youth by developing an analytical framework based on three key concepts: social identity, recruitment and ideology. Social identity theory, developed by Hogg, Terry and Adelman, highlights factors such as age, gender, and marital status. Recruitment theory, as proposed by Gerwehr, Daly and Borum, focuses on the processes involved, the roles individuals play



and their levels of expertise. Meanwhile, the concept of ideology categorises individuals into high, medium, and low levels of involvement in joining VE groups. Together, these concepts provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the pathways to radicalisation.

Operationally, the framework employs three key components in analysing radicalisation profiles: demographics (age, gender, marital status), recruitment (process, role, expertise) and the exposure to ideology (high, medium, low).

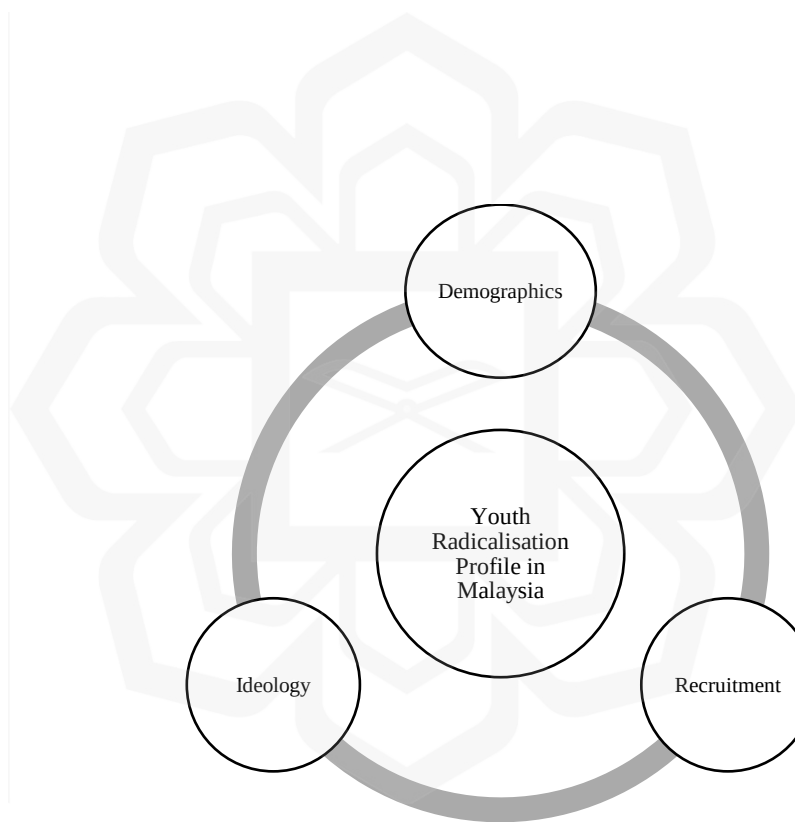


Figure 1.7: Framework of Analysis for Youth Radicalisation Profile in Malaysia

Figure 1.7: Description of Framework of Analysis for Radicalised Youth in Malaysia

| Dimension   | Demographic                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                   | Recruitment                                                               |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Ideology                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Definition  | Characteristics of detainees and ex-detainees |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                   | Individual's recruitment process                                          |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | level of motivation or justification                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Context     | Gender                                        | Age                                                                                                                                                                                              | Marital Status                                                    | Recruiter                                                                 | Group Role                           | Group Expertise                                                                                                                                                                                            | High                                                                                                                                     | Medium                                                                                                                                       | Low                                                                                                                                                |
| Description | Individual's gender                           | Individual's age at the time of their involvement with the group                                                                                                                                 | Individual's marital status such as single, married or re-married | The methods used to recruit individual into the group                     | Individual's role in the group       | Individual's skills, competency or expertise in the group                                                                                                                                                  | Individual's strong motivation or cognitive rationale for joining an IS group and/or committing violent action that cause harm to others | Individual's medium motivation or cognitive rationale for joining an IS group and/or committing non-violent action that cause harm to others | Individual's low motivation or cognitive rationale for joining an IS group and/or committing non-violent action that does not cause harm to others |
| Example     | Male or Female                                | Early youth, or the schooling stage, covering ages 15-18;<br><br>Middle youth, associated with higher education or early employment, for ages 19-24;<br><br>Late youth, representing the working | Single, married or re-married                                     | Spouse, family member, boyfriend, media social, teacher, and <i>usrah</i> | Leader, follower and loose associate | Expertise: Recruiter, terrorism financier, suicide bombing, weapon expert, waging war ( <i>jihad</i> ) in Syria, in-house attack and medical practitioner.<br><br>Without expertise: <i>Jihad al-nikah</i> | Suicide bomber, in-house attack, wage a war in Syria/FTFs and dissemination beheading videos through social media                        | Social media spreading and terrorism financing                                                                                               | <i>Bay'ah</i> , possession of images and video related to VE group                                                                                 |

|  |  |                           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  | stage, for<br>ages 25-30. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

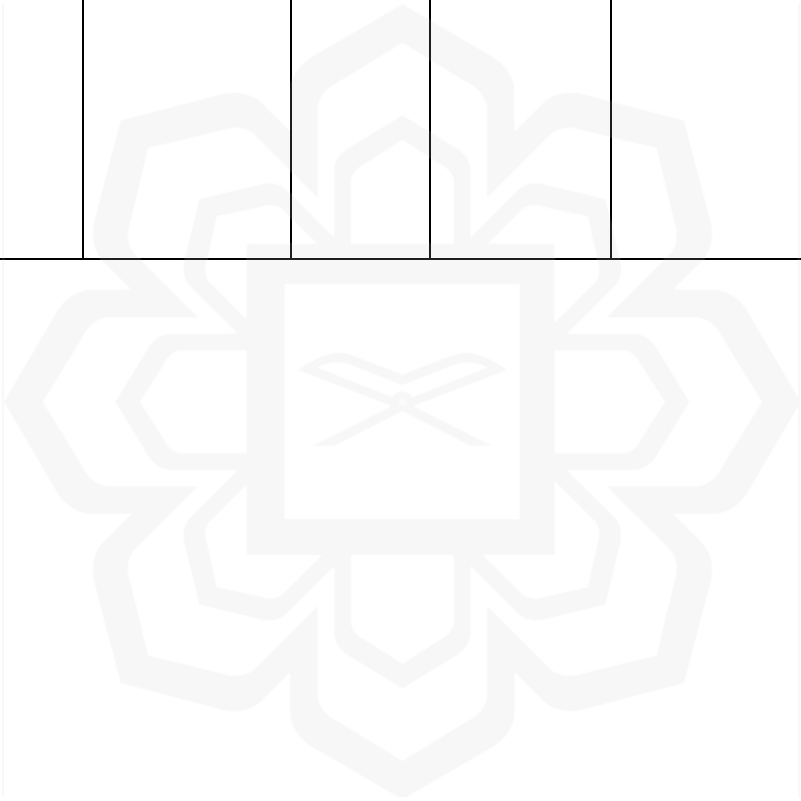


Figure 1.7 depicts the pathways identified as producing the youth radicalisation profile in Malaysia, while Table 1.7 defines the meaning behind each pathway, which will be further elaborated as follows. Firstly, demographics is understood as the characteristics defining a profile, encompassing gender, age and marital status. Gender is the individual's being either male or female; age identifies their age at the time of their involvement with the group, ranging from 15-30 years old; marital status describes their being single, married and re-married.

Secondly, group recruitment covers the recruitment style associated with the identified profiles, described in terms of recruiter, group role and group expertise. Recruiter can be defined as the method used to recruit individuals, based on associations with VE group members, spouse, family member, boyfriend, social media, teacher and *usrah*. Group role can be defined as an individual's role in the group, such as leader, follower and loose associate. Group expertise defines the individual's skills, competency, or expertise in the group, such as recruiter, terrorism financing, suicide bombing, weapon expert, medical practitioner, in-house attacks, waging war in Syria and *jihad al-nikah*.

Lastly, ideology refers to an individual's level of motivation or justification for joining the VE group. This level is categorised as high, medium, or low, depending on the degree of motivation or justification involved in their decision to join. It also considers the type of terror acts initiated, whether violent or non-violent.

Hence, the framework of analysis for youth radicalisation profile in Malaysia used as the basis in identifying the model of youth radicalisation in Malaysia and proposing relevant PCVE youth modules.

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Given that the main focus of this study is related to the youth radicalisation pathways and PCVE programmes in Malaysia, therefore, the review of literature is divided into two parts: firstly, profile Malaysian youth radicalisation pathways and secondly, PCVE youth programs or modules initiatives.

### **1.7.1 Profiling**

This study argues that the studies on terrorist profiling is underexplored, because based on our preliminary studies in literature, it is found that this aspect is not given proper attention, whereas in actuality, this aspect of radicalisation, i.e. using profiling to understand radicalisation is vital.

Research in psychology, sociology and criminal justice highlights the importance of profiling as one of the most effective tools in law enforcement. Its strength lies in identifying pathways of individuals through the radicalisation process, which enhances the success rate of police investigations while reducing the societal prevalence of profiling-related offenses (Dean, 2014). The comprehensive findings of this study further emphasise that effectively addressing terrorism threats demands a thorough understanding of profiling theories and practices.

In Malaysian context, this means more rehabilitation modules and PCVE programmes for Malaysian youth can be developed based on profiles of youth VE detainees in Malaysia. This is further informed by the technique and choice of profiling method used with regard to the interrelated paths of individual radicalisation. Both the profiling techniques and methods can be categorised along a range of classifications, which include those by organisation, race, gender and age (Sahito et al., 2013); or more across socioeconomic (Denoeux & Carter, 2009), pathological (Sahito et al., 2013), mathematical, psychological, clinical, criminal and geographical lines, thereby putting the latter group of parameters as resembling investigative psychology (Silke, 2015).

Group profiling, in particular, can assist in identifying specific patterns of radicalisation among individuals (Russell & Miller, 1977; Hazelwood et al., 1995). The method provides insight into the perpetrator's actions at the crime scene (Silke, 2015) through crowd detection (Dean, 2014), as well as "useful interview strategies" for individuals suspected of being terrorists, in addition to limiting the scope of investigation and intelligence activities. It finds particular success in police investigations, whereby the method has been employed in filtering through the variables

unique to an offender's profile (Silke, 2015). In a study determining the effectiveness of profiling in aiding British police investigations, 51.6% of the investigators surveyed attested to how profiling has improved confidence in their own assessments of the case, whereas 60.9% of them responded by sharing how the method enhanced their understanding of the offence and offender (Silke, 2015).

Prediction and mitigation of the prevalence of terrorist attacks are consequent outcomes of profiling. This is achieved in pursuit of a 'pre-rad life' that can be identified through knowledge of the pathways of individual radicalisation this involves identifying the characteristics of an individual's background; pinpointing the transition point; identifying factors that facilitate the transition; and identifying potential enablers and support systems. On the basis of these findings, effective PCVE programs and rehabilitation modules can be developed in accordance with the profile pathways of individual radicalisation (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2020; Jensen, 2016).

Diverse pathways to individual radicalisation have been detected as a result of the diverse profiling methodologies utilised. Age, personality, work history, family history, social life and criminal record are factored into the pathways (Silke, 2015), in tandem with the psychological motivators and the consistent terrorist mindset being revealed (Stewart, 2016). In conjunction, the 2017 United Nations report and the Nation Action Plan reports from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Kosovo, Maldives, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United States and United Kingdom corroborate the following that the aforementioned factors, among others, significantly contribute to the radicalisation of Muslim extremists in each country. With regard to the context, these factors manifest as a firm ideological belief system; involvement in youth groups; predominantly male demographic; low socio-economic status and educational attainment; unemployment; psychological and emotional vulnerability; inclination towards *jihad*-oriented activities; marriage to militants; limited understanding of Islamic teachings; experiences of broken family structures; radicalisation facilitated through social media platforms; and influence from family and friends.

The present study aims to clarify the contextual factors contributing to the participation of young individuals in VE groups within Malaysia. Although notable differences emerge when comparing profilers from Malaysia to, for instance, those from

America or Maldives expressed as differing access to information; or the latter two's belonging to a minority Muslim group, which entails backgrounds made up of conflict in their country of origin; being members of a marginalised group; living in a polarised society; being subjected to socioeconomic segregation; and racism from the local community they generally come from privileged middle-class backgrounds, possess a good educational background and are often self-employed. The literature review even indicates that the majority of profilers are members of youth organisations, thus pointing to the necessity of comprehensive research on the profiling of VE youth groups in identifying the root problems.

Numerous studies aim to enhance understanding of the current state and perceptions of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism among Malaysian youth. Notably, Koruth (2018) highlights various factors influencing Malaysian youths to embrace radical ideologies, including an interest in religious beliefs, peer influence and media or internet portrayals of injustice and the suffering of Muslims. This aligns with the literature review conducted by this study, from which five crucial factors are identified as influencing the emergence of VE groups in Malaysia ranging from external factors such as conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; regional events such as Arab Spring; internal or domestic issues such as *Sunni-Shi'ah* conflict; inter-group conflict; to individual circumstances. These contribute to the rising motivations for Muslim youth in Malaysia to become radicalised, among which include sympathy towards war-torn countries, the intersection of religion and politics, ideological factors and personal or psychological issues (Ahmad El-Muhammady et al., 2019).

Wilkins & Brown (2009) characterize terrorists as “uncommon” criminals who excel in evasion and disguise, holding their religion, nationality and politics in serious regard. Sahito et al. (2013), referencing Wilkins & Brown, highlight that terrorist profiling reveals proclivities toward revenge, religious and social suppression, conformity, displaced anger onto others, internal guilt, aspirations of toughness and bravery and attraction to promises of rewards in the afterlife. Terrorists often encompass a complex blend of ethnic, economic and social backgrounds, frequently involving travellers or immigrants (Wilkins & Brown, 2009). Consequently, it is anticipated that the analysis of data and information held by suspected terrorists could assist in profiling, potentially enabling the pre-emption of their actions (Hamden, 2019). It is therefore

crucial to recognise the individuality of each terrorist, as they possess distinct personality traits or psychopathology.

Evaluating the motivations from a psychological standpoint, the profiles of youth detainees in Malaysia have been found to show low levels of sociability, high levels of neurotic anxiety and impulsive sensation-seeking (Roslan et al., 2019). This finding parallels the symptoms attributed as common to radicalised youth, which include low self-esteem, low level of attachment, high narcissism, high cognitive distortion, high aggression, a deviation from Islamic teachings, a strong inclination towards impulsive-sensation seeking, emotional sensitivity and a desire for change. These come about as the youth develop a sense of attachment to groups like IS as a result of their participation in four processes which are early exposure via social media; participation through *bay'ah* via messaging apps such as Telegram; engagement with the distortion and generalisation of information they receive through the dissemination of false information and propaganda; identity formation via training; and armed conflict that aims to establish the IS. The attachment is further strengthened when the ideology is further disseminated, either through social media; online talks and *usrah* containing extremist elements; individuals or friends sharing the same ideology; magazines or books promoting extreme beliefs such as *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*; or influence from extremist family members (IYRES, 2017).

According to Ahmad El-Muhammady (2020), there are specifically identified push and pull factors that contribute towards radicalisation of Malaysian VE detainees. These factors include ideology, domestic recruitment agents such as the local cells of *Darul Islam Malizia*, Black Crow and Briged *Khalid al Walid* or external events such as the war in Syria and the insurgency in Southern Philippines, social media, the presence of militant groups and other terrorist recruiters. Additionally, there are other numerous catalysts that compel vulnerable and at-risk youths to join the Islamic extremist groups aside from personality, psychology, poor understanding of religion, social media, ideology and political conflicts. For instance, Malaysia has a strategic location in Southeast Asia and is known as a safe haven and transit point for Philippine and Indonesian visitors, including returning foreign terrorist fighters.



Despite these weaknesses, a study conducted by IYRES (2015) revealed that a significant proportion of young individuals nonetheless possessed an adequate awareness of IS. Specifically, the majority of youth (62%) acknowledged it as an extremist group, while a smaller percentage identified it as an Islamic movement (22%), political propaganda (14%), or categorised it under other classifications (2%). Therefore, increasing overall engagement is imperative to effectively prevent and eliminate the root cause of terrorism, thereby highlighting the need for individual profiling to take place as well.

Hence, it is evident that there is a lack of research on the profiles of individual radicalisation in Malaysia, specifically examining the combined dimensions of demographics, group recruitment and ideology across both genders. By addressing this gap, this research aims to explore radicalisation profiles in terms of these three dimensions.

### **1.7.2 PCVE Youth Program**

This study highlights that research on PCVE youth programs remains underexplored. Our preliminary review of the literature reveals that this critical aspect has not received sufficient attention. In reality, PCVE youth programs play a vital role in addressing radicalisation by providing targeted interventions to prevent individuals from joining VE groups.

Most international organisation such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), along with various countries at both the international and regional levels commonly agreed that national action plan on PCVE is important in combating radicalisation.

In line with that, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched numerous programs and initiatives to support PCVE efforts, particularly involving young people. These include the Youth Engagement and Empowerment Project (YEEP) in Southeast Asia (2022) and East Africa (2023), aimed at empowering youth to take leadership roles in PCVE policymaking. Another notable initiative is the

Empowering Dialogue and Interfaith Networks (EDIN) (2021), which collaborates with young religious leaders and media practitioners worldwide to develop media campaigns promoting religious harmony. Additionally, UNDP has implemented strategies such as the Youth Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development, Promoting Tolerance and Respect for Diversity, a “Whole-of-Society” community-centered approach, and the use of sports as a tool for peacebuilding and preventing violent extremism. These initiatives aim to foster inclusive and peaceful societies, ensure equitable access to services and economic opportunities and encourage youth participation through programs like the Youth Camp and the Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme (United Nations, 2023).

GCTF has initiated various programs, including education, media capacity building, empowerment of men, youth engagement, socioeconomic inclusion, governance capacity building, transitional justice and inter-communal activities such as sports and inter-faith dialogues. These programs are designed based on factors such as individual socio-psychological aspects, social, political, ideological/religious influences, culture and identity, trauma, group dynamics, radicalisers and groomers and the role of social media (Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, 2015)

Aligned with the youth PCVE programs outlined by UNDP and the GCTF, numerous countries, including Canada, Denmark, Finland, Kosovo, Maldives, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and the United Kingdom, have launched their own PCVE youth programs (United Nations, 2017). These programs include a range of initiatives such as International CVE Research Conferences, awareness campaigns, sports and e-sports events, educational programs, social media initiatives, community engagement, capacity building and training, all tailored to the specific context of each country (Schanzer et al., 2019). Additionally, youth-led projects encompass video games, media campaigns, theatre, psychoeducational training, youth empowerment, curriculum development, peace weeks, dialogues, webinars, seminars, conferences, talks, focus group discussions (FGDs), CVE web portals or online hubs and initiatives focusing on women’s roles and general awareness programs (United Nations, 2017).

Malaysia has been implementing PCVE youth programs since 2005, initiated by various agencies, including government bodies, NGOs/CSOs and research centers.

These programs include peace education for youth, gender mainstreaming, media literacy and the protection of religious freedom (INITIATE.MY, 2022). Additionally, efforts have been made to address misconceptions about *jihad* within different social groups and institutions, such as programs led by JAKIM (Haziq, 2017). Youth-led campaigns by SEARCCT, such as the Targeting and Preventing Extremism for Youths (TAPESTRY) Workshops and the Inisiatif Mahasiswa Muslim Perangi Ancaman Keganasan (IM2PAK), produced extensive research and materials on these issues. Among the key publications include Youth and Terrorism: A Selection of Articles, Don't-Lah Weh: A Peer-to-Peer Resource Guide on Ensuring Your Kawan2 Never Become a Terrorist and Reaching the Youth: Countering the Terrorist Narrative (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Other initiatives focus on the promotion of Islamic *Wasatiyyah* and the dissemination of counter-narratives (Aslam et al., 2019), counter-terrorism (Abdul Razak et al., 2018; Abu Bakar, 2019) as well as promoting women as peace agents (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2023).

## **1.8 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.8.1 Research Design**

The study adopts a qualitative approach to improve accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data by utilising library research (textual and discourse analysis) and semi-structured interviews to investigate three main areas such as profiles of youth radicalisation, implemented PCVE youth programs in Malaysia and program for youth PCVE in Malaysia. The data collected were triangulated from various sources to enhance the validity of research findings through cross-verification and to address gaps in information by utilising multiple sources.

The study relies on primary and secondary sources. The first category of primary source materials are those produced by IS such as *Dabiq* magazine; Telegram, blogs and Facebook postings of IS-related profiles; talks, lectures and interviews with former IS detainees; and interview with various stakeholders, including officers in the counter-terrorism division from RMP; the Malaysian Prison Department in Kajang and Tapah, as well as the Kamunting and Sabah Correctional Facilities; the Malaysia's Ministry of

Defense (MINDEF); the Malaysian Defense Intelligence Organisation (MDIO); the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA); the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM); the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT); the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS); the Bar Council; the Malaysian Institute for Youth Research (IYRES); the Malaysian Institute of Defense and Security (MiDAS); the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM); the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM); and the Extremism Analytical Research Unit (EARU-ISTAC).

Meanwhile, the secondary source materials consist of varied books, the Malay Law Journal (MLJ), Country Reports on Terrorism (CRT), newspapers, journal articles, as well as websites (government, research institutes and personal information search engines).

### **1.8.2 Sampling**

In identifying the youth radicalisation model in Malaysia, the study employed non-probability sampling, specifically theoretical sampling. The participants selected were based on Malaysian youth ranging from 15-30 years old that have been detained due to terrorism-related offences from 2013-2020. Participants will be analysed and categorised based on the demographic, group recruitment and ideology dimensions. The theoretical sampling is chosen to provide more information on profiles collected through the three aforementioned contextual dimensions.

In identifying implemented youth PCVE programs in Malaysia, the study employed a type of non-probability sampling, called purposive (judgemental) sampling, in selecting stakeholder analyses of websites and reports based on organisations known for their PCVE efforts, which include SEARCCT, MDIO, the Malaysian Prison Department, KBS and EARU-ISTAC.

In designing and proposing PCVE modules for the youth in Malaysia, the study employs the same purposive (judgemental) sampling in selecting participants for the interview session. The said participants were selected based on organisations known for their PCVE efforts, such as officers from the RMP counter-terrorism units, the

Malaysian Prison Departments in Kajang and Tapah; the Correctional Facilities in Kamunting and Sabah; the MINDEF, MDIO, MOHA, JAKIM, SEARCCT; JBS-KBS, the Bar Council; the Malaysian IYRES, MiDAS, MBM, ABIM and EARU-ISTAC.



### **1.8.3 Data Collection Methods**

The study made use of content analysis and semi-structured interviews in gathering data and cross-verifying findings across books, MLJ, telegram conversations, blog and Facebook postings, newspapers, websites and reports. The findings were triangulated to develop a comprehensive understanding of the study, which contributes towards categorising each profile according to social identity, group recruitment and the ideology dimensions. This facilitated in identifying the profile of youth radicalisation in Malaysia and the youth PCVE programs implemented and subsequently designing and proposing suitable PCVE modules for the youth. For the third matter, semi-structured interviews were conducted to better understand previous PCVE programs or modules. The questionnaire used as part of this phase is attached under the (Attachment II) section.

### **1.8.4 Data Analysis**

In identifying the youth radicalisation model, the study employed a case study analysis alongside textual, discourse and thematic analyses. The study relies on sources such as *Dabiq* magazine and social media postings. This approach is employed to ensure the accuracy of the data and in-depth understanding in analysing profiles based on demographic, group recruitment and ideology dimensions. This approach is also applied to identify youth PCVE programs implemented in Malaysia, with additional insights drawn from websites and reports.

In designing and proposing suitable PCVE modules for the youth in Malaysia, the exploratory approach is used to examine previous PCVE programs in order to propose suitable PCVE modules customised to the Malaysian youth identified based on their radicalisation pathways.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

To sum up, this chapter has established the foundational framework for the study, outlining its objectives, problem statement, significance, methodology and literature review. It sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, which focus on developing the youth radicalisation model for Malaysia. This model will be based on the identified profiles of youth radicalisation in Malaysia from 2013 to 2020, aiming to understand the profiles through the lenses of demographic, group recruitment and ideological dimensions.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE YOUTH RADICALISATION MODEL IN MALAYSIA**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to develop the youth radicalisation model in Malaysia. The model analyses radicalisation profiles, focusing on the factors influencing radicalisation and the processes involved, viewed through the lenses of demographics, group recruitment strategies and ideological dimensions. The findings derived from this analysis will serve as the foundation for designing a PCVE youth module in Malaysia.

#### **2.2 FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS FOR RADICALISED YOUTH**

The research develops a framework of analysis for radicalized youth in Malaysia to understand the profiles of both genders' males and females. The framework is based on a combination of various concepts, namely social identity theory (Hogg et al., 2013), group recruitment (Gerwehr et al., 2006) and ideology theory developed by the researcher. The framework consists of three dimensions such as demographics comprising of age, gender and marital status; group recruitment encompassing the recruiter, role and expertise; and ideology in terms of high, medium and low.



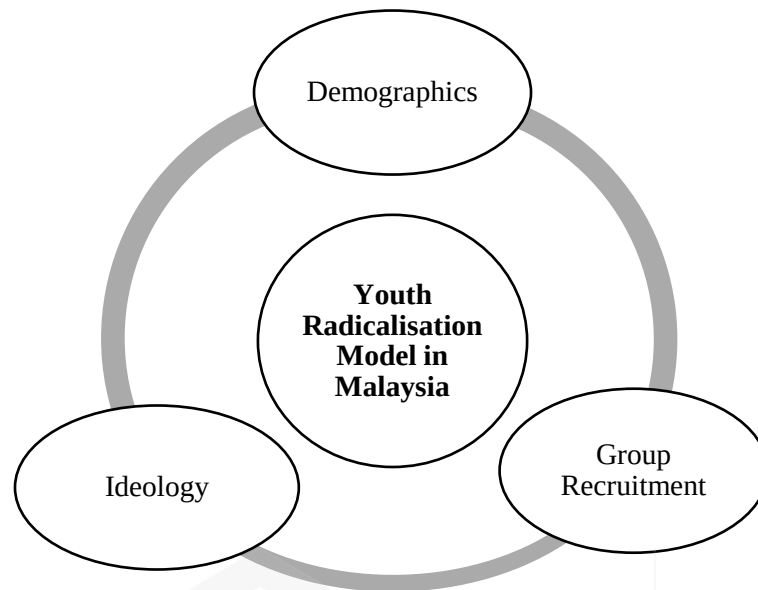


Figure 2.2: Framework of Analysis for Youth Radicalisation Model

Figure 2.2 show the element of pathways in producing youth radicalisation profile in Malaysia, encompassed demographics, group recruitment and ideology dimension.

Table 2.2: Description of Framework of Analysis for Radicalised Youth in Malaysia

| Dimension   | Demographic                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                    | Recruitment                                                              |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                            | Ideology                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Definition  | Characteristics of detainees and ex-detainees |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                    | Individual's recruitment process                                         |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                            | Level of motivation or justification                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                     |
| Context     | Gender                                        | Age                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Marital Status                                                     | Recruiter                                                                | Group Role                           | Group Expertise                                                                                                                                                                            | High                                                                                                                                      | Medium                                                                                                                                        | Low                                                                                                                                                 |
| Description | Individual' s gender                          | Individual' s age at the time of their involvement with the group                                                                                                                                                                                            | Individual' s marital status such as single, married or re-married | The methods used to recruit individual into the group                    | Individual' s role in the group      | Individual' s skills, competency or expertise in the group                                                                                                                                 | Individual' s strong motivation or cognitive rationale for joining an IS group and/or committing violent action that cause harm to others | Individual' s medium motivation or cognitive rationale for joining an IS group and/or committing non-violent action that cause harm to others | Individual' s low motivation or cognitive rationale for joining an IS group and/or committing non-violent action that does not cause harm to others |
| Example     | Male or Female                                | Early youth, or the schooling stage, covering ages 15-18;<br><br>Middle youth, associated with higher education or early employment, for ages 19-24;<br><br>Late youth, representing the working stage, for ages 25-30.<br><br>Single, married or re-married | Single, married or re-married                                      | Spouse, family member, boyfriend, media social, teacher and <i>usrah</i> | Leader, follower and loose associate | Expertise: Recruiter, terrorism financier, suicide bomber, weapon expert, waging war ( <i>jihad</i> ) in Syria, in-house attack and medic.<br><br>Without expertise: <i>Jihad al-nikah</i> | Suicide bomber, in-house attack, wage a war in Syria/ FTFs and dissemination beheading videos through social media                        | Social media spreading and terrorism financing                                                                                                | <i>Bay' ah</i> , possession of images and video related to VE group                                                                                 |

### 2.2.1. Demographic Dimension

The demographic dimension is consisting of three elements as follows: (a) gender, male or female; (b) age at the point of their involvement in activities classified as offences under Penal Code sections 130b-130r, SOSMA, POCA, POTA and ALMATFA and (c) marital status such as single, married, or remarried. Single can be defined as an individual who not married at the time of arrest. Married is defined as an individual who already married at the time of arrest, remarried is defined as individual who have divorce and re-married again during the time of arrest.

### 2.2.2 Group Recruitment Dimension

The group recruitment dimension is defined as the individual's recruitment process in joining the VE groups. The process is analysed based on the methods used to recruit individuals into the VE group, as well as the individual's role and expertise. Group recruitment is defined as an individual's process of recruitment joining the VE group through the influence of spouse, family member, boyfriend, social media, teacher and *usrah* who is initially VE group members.

Meanwhile, group role is defined as individuals' roles in the VE groups such as leader, follower and loose associate. A leader is defined as the mastermind responsible for guiding a group's missions, including strategising recruitment efforts, facilitating *hijrah* for the FTF and planning both domestic and international attacks. Leadership positions are often filled following the death of a predecessor, with appointments typically based on the selection criteria established by the former leader. These criteria often emphasise the new leader's considerable influence and violent characteristics. Furthermore, leaders are generally well-known to key organisations international, regional and national such as the Conter Terrorism Division, Royal Malaysian Police and their names frequently appear in both national and international news reports and newspapers. Additionally, they frequently release statements in videos directed at their followers both within the region and globally.

A follower is defined as an individual who is deeply involved in extremist activities and maintains a close association with the group. These individuals are often active members who participate regularly in extreme or violent actions. Such activities may include recruiting new members, funding terrorism, conducting suicide bombings, carrying out internal attacks, or serving as weapons specialists or foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in conflict zones like Syria.

Loose associate is defined an individual with minimal direct involvement in extremist activities but still maintains a connection to the group. They are typically passive members, participating irregularly and engaging only in non-extreme or non-violent activities. These activities may include taking *bay'ah*, possessing images related to VE group, serving in roles such as a medical practitioner or engaging in *jihad al-nikah*.

In contrast, group expertise refers to the specialised skills that individuals possess, are assigned, or are sought after within VE groups. These skills can be categorised into two groups: individuals with expertise and those without. Individuals with expertise hold specialised skills that are either possess, assigned or sought after to support the group's operations. These skills include recruiters, who influence and persuade new members to join VE groups; terrorism financiers, who provide or facilitate financial support for the group's activities, such as sending money or using accounts to fund operations in Syria; in-house attack executors, who carry out attacks on behalf of the group within their home country such as Malaysia; suicide bombers, who are assigned to carry out suicide bombing missions either in Malaysia or Syria; FTF in Syria is individuals waging war in Syria, who actively participate in combat as part of the group's *jihad* efforts; weapon experts, who are skilled in handling and making weapons, often through self-training such as watching instructional videos; and medical professionals, who serve as doctors or nurses, providing medical care to wounded members or assisting those affected by the conflict. Meanwhile, non-expertise can be defined as an individual who did not have any expertise and joined VE groups because of *jihad al-nikah*.

### **2.2.3 Ideological Dimension**

Ideology is defined as the level of individual's motivation or cognitive rationale for joining VE group and/or the nature of their actions, whether violent or non-violent and whether these actions cause harm to others or not. The level of ideology is categorised as high, medium, or low.

High-ideology is defined as an individual's strong motivation or cognitive rationale for joining a VE group and/or committing violent action that cause harm to others. For example, the individual will go to Syria without the permission of his parents, spouse or siblings or without knowing His/ Her closed members due to the influenced by the VE group members. The migrating has been known to the parents, spouse and family members after His/ Her arrived in Syria through police or news. In addition to that, His/ Her committed violent acts such as suicide bombing, disseminate beheading videos, weapon expert, in-house attacks or wage a war in Syria or FTFs. Medium-ideology refers to an individual's moderate motivation or cognitive rationale for joining VE group and/or engaging in non-violent actions that contribute to harm. For example, recruiter or terrorism financier. Low-ideology is defined as an individual's low motivation or cognitive rationale for joining VE group and/or committing non-violent action that does not cause harm to others. For example, an individual may be involved by taking *bay'ah* or possessing images and videos related to VE group. Hence, this combination of dimensions forms the foundation of a model for youth radicalisation in Malaysia.

## **2.3 YOUTH RADICALISATION PROFILE IN MALAYSIA**

The youth radicalisation profile in Malaysia consists of 38 cases, including 30 males and 8 females, who were apprehended for terrorism-related offenses between 2013 and 2020. These profiles were analysed based on demographics, group recruitment strategies and ideological influences to better understand the processes and factors driving radicalisation in each case.

### 2.3.1 Demographic Dimension

The demographic dimension encompasses of gender age and marital status. These three components are selected due to their significant influence on the behavioural, psychological, and sociological patterns of individuals.

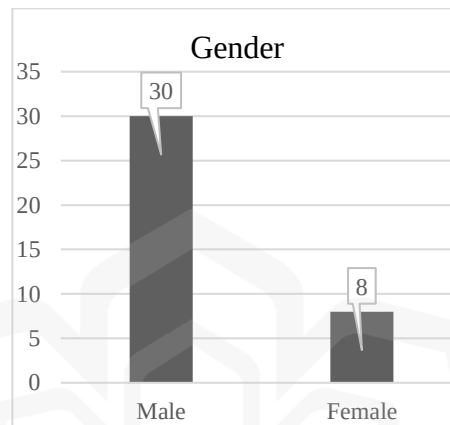


Figure 2.3.1.1: Gender

Figure 2.3.1.1 shows that males represent the majority compared to females in joining and being recruited by VE groups. This predominance of males over females, as reflected in the graph, can be attributed to the higher male population in Malaysia compared to females.

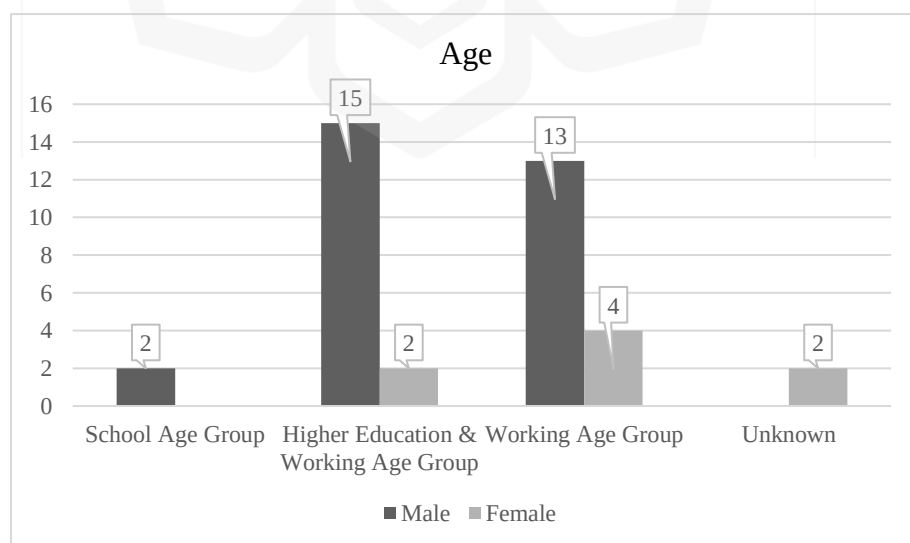


Figure 2.3.1.2: Age Group

Figure 2.3.1.2 shows that males are involved across all age groups, including as early as the school-age group. Additionally, the data reveals that the higher education and working-age groups are the primary targets for both genders, compared to the school-age group. The high numbers observed in these age groups vary between males and females. For males, many did not pursue tertiary education, and most were employed in less competitive jobs, making them more vulnerable to joining VE groups as a way to fill a sense of purpose. In contrast, females show higher numbers during the higher education stage, as many continued to tertiary education and were recruited through influences such as university lecturers or boyfriends.

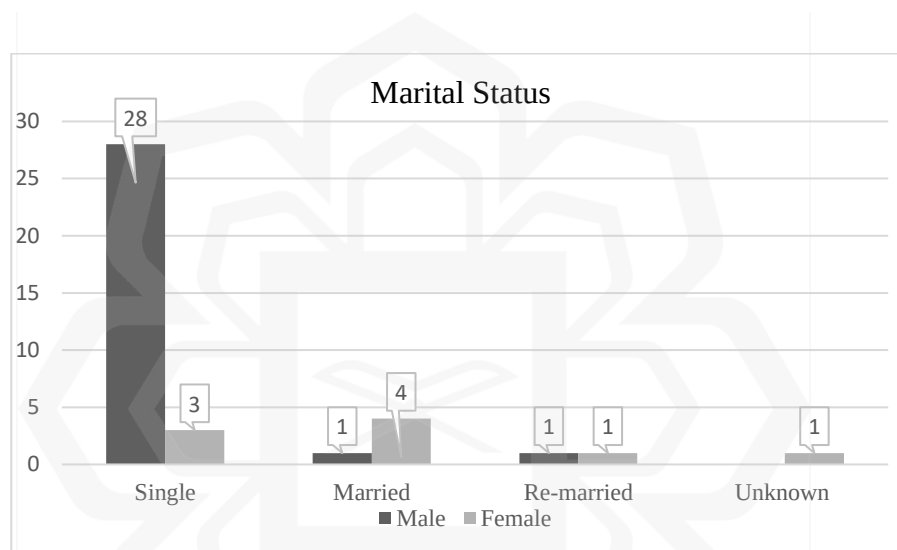


Figure 2.3.1.3: Marital Status

Figure 2.3.1.3 illustrates that single males represent the largest group involved in VE groups across all marital statuses, while married females constitute the largest group among females. Both groups also include individuals with remarried profiles. Most male profiles were single, as their primary motivation for joining VE groups was *jihad*. In contrast, most female profiles were married, as many joined VE groups under the influence of *jihad al-nikah*. This explains the higher proportion of married females compared to males in these groups.

### 2.3.2 Group Recruitment Dimension

The recruitment dimension encompasses of group recruitment, role and expertise.

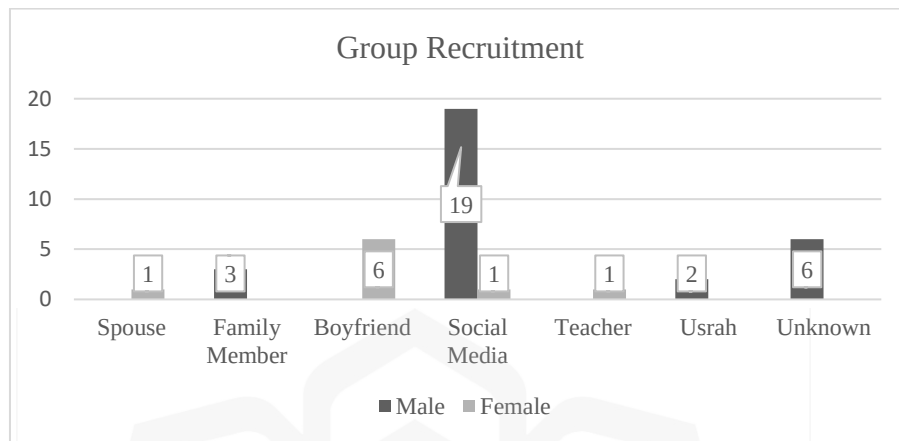


Figure 2.3.2.1: Group Recruitment

Figure 2.3.2.1 highlights that both males and females have been recruited through social media due to easy access to phones and the internet. Furthermore, males are often recruited through diverse networks, particularly by individuals of the same gender, such as family members and *usrah* groups. In contrast, females are more commonly recruited through personal relationships such as spouse, boyfriend and teacher, as they are often more influenced by emotional connections.



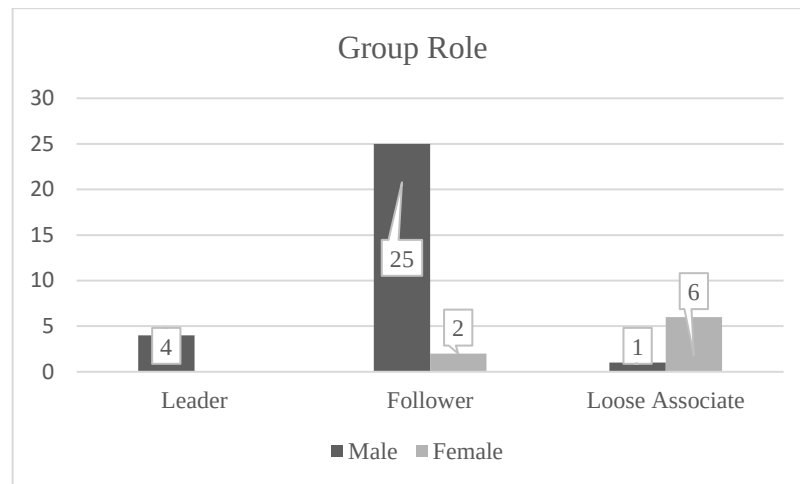


Figure 2.3.2.2: Group Role

Figure 2.3.2.2 shows that only males are represented as leaders and have a higher number as followers, reflecting the traditional role of men in Islam and within the family as leaders. In contrast, females have no representation as leaders and are predominantly found in the loose associate category rather than as followers, as their involvement in VE groups is often influenced by their relationships with their husbands or boyfriends.

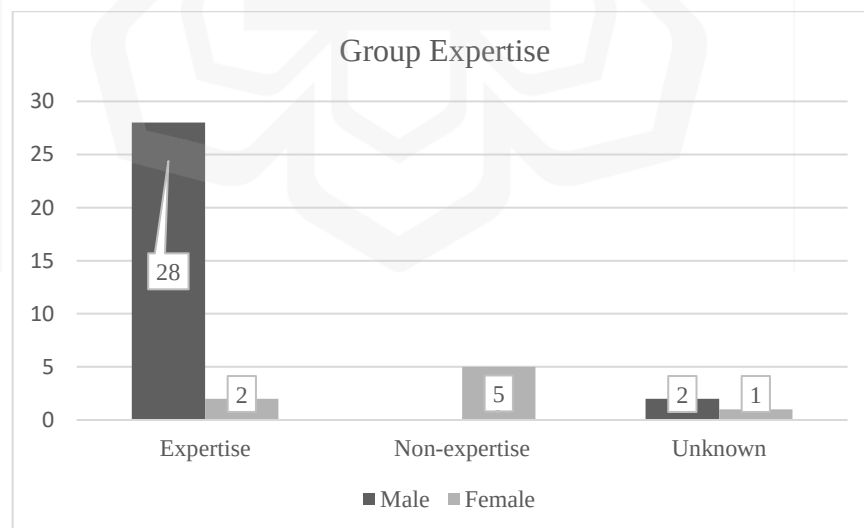


Figure 2.3.2.3: Group Expertise

Figure 2.3.2.3 shows that males constitute the majority in the expertise category, while females are predominantly represented in the non-expertise category. This difference can be attributed to the varied purposes of males joining VE groups, such as serving as suicide bombers, foreign terrorist fighters (FTF), or terrorism financiers. In contrast, female profiles often join VE groups primarily for *jihad al-nikah* or to follow their husbands, which explains the lack of expertise among female profiles compared to their male counterparts.



Figure 2.3.2.3: Expertise

Figure 2.3.2.3 illustrates that both males and females have violent expertise, including roles such as carrying out suicide bombings. Males exhibit expertise in all areas except medical roles, which are exclusively dominated by females. This reflects the physical capabilities of males and the nurturing qualities of females, shaping their respective roles within the group.



Figure 2.3.2.3: Non-expertise

Figure 2.3.2.3 shows that females predominantly occupy non-expertise roles, such as participating in *jihad al-nikah*. This is largely because most females joined VE groups either to follow their husbands or were recruited with the purpose of marriage in Syria.

### 2.3.3 Ideology Dimension

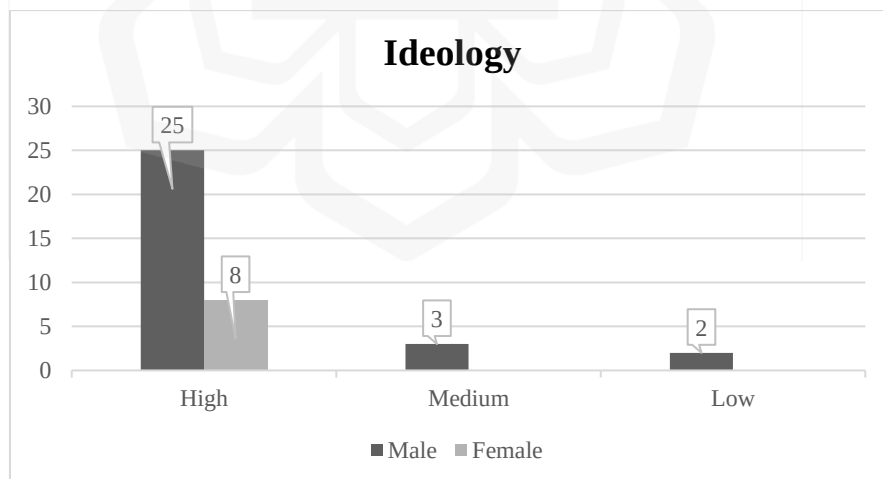


Figure 2.3.3: Ideology

Figure 2.3.3 shows that majority males and females have a high level of ideology, meanwhile only males have medium and low level of ideologies. This indicate that

males may join for varied reasons, while females who participate tend to be strongly aligned with the group's ideology, possibly due to personal influences (e.g., relationships) or targeted recruitment strategies.

## 2.4 THE YOUTH RADICALISATION MODEL IN MALAYSIA



The youth radicalisation model in Malaysia provides a comprehensive framework for analysed and understanding the profiles of male and female individuals involved in radicalisation. It examines three key dimensions: demographics, group recruitment dynamics, and level of ideology. The first dimension covers gender, age and marital status, providing insights into the background of individuals. The second dimension focuses on the roles of recruiters, specifically the responsibilities and expertise assumed by individuals within the group. Lastly, the third dimension assesses the degree of commitment to the group's ideology, categorised into high, medium and low levels. Together, these dimensions offer a detailed understanding of the factors driving youth radicalisation in Malaysia.

### 2.4.1 Demographic

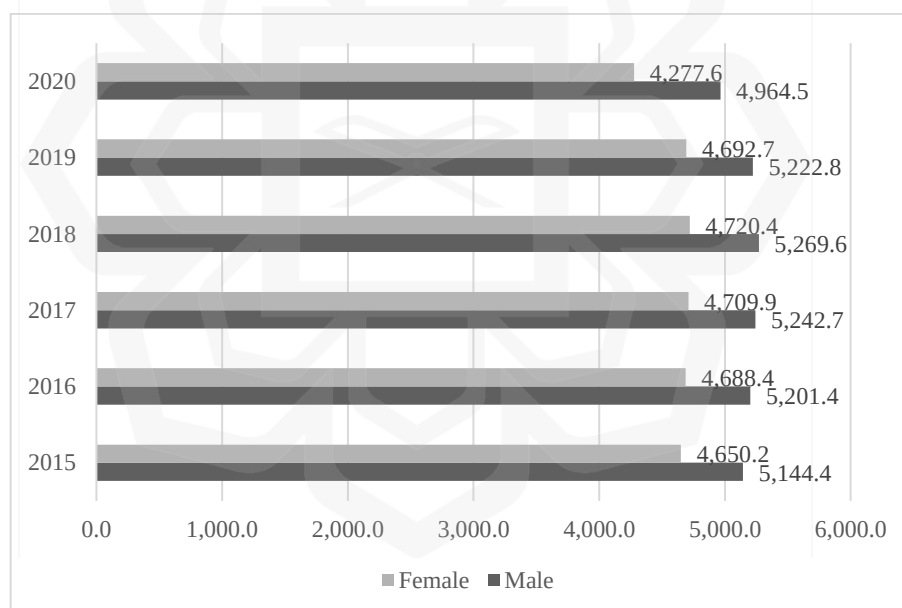
VE groups strategically recruit both men and women by constructing and idealising specific notions of masculinity and femininity that align with their ideological narratives. The males portray themselves as “real men” — authentically masculine — embodying traits such as aggression, machismo and protectiveness that reinforce the group's militant and combative image. In contrast, the females are depicted as fulfilling what these groups assert to be women's biological roles, emphasizing procreation, nurture and domestic responsibilities as their primary duties (Speckhard, 2018). These gendered narratives are deliberately crafted to appeal to both men and women,

leveraging deeply ingrained cultural and ideological constructs to strengthen their recruitment efforts.

#### 2.4.1.1 Gender

The involvement of males in VE groups surpasses that of females, which can be attributed to the higher male population. Chart 2.3.1.1 illustrates this trend: highlighting data from the Malaysian Department of Statistics (2022), it shows that the male youth population consistently exceeded the female youth population between 2015–2020.

Figure 2.4.1.1: Statistic Youth Male and Female in Malaysia (2015-2020)



Note: Source from Malaysia Youth Data Bank System from IYRES website.

The main reason driving male and female membership in VE groups seems to be the influence of gender-specific factors — particularly the constructs of masculinity and femininity. Male profiles, exhibiting traits alleged as masculine, predominantly feature a hero-like persona, through which their self-perception of being defenders of their group ideology validates their calls for dominance through assertive, aggressive action.

Driven by the need to prove themselves, they become risk-takers, centering their life goals around *hijrah*, *jihad* and *syahid* in war-torn countries. These masculine tendencies appear to originate from childhood trauma, including experiences of narcissism, low self-esteem, parental neglect and distant relationships within family and friends (Esposito, 2015; Wan Mat Rusoff, 2023). Wandy's own words corroborate this:

Ten years ago, I was the black sheep of my village — parents would not allow their children to be friends with me. Yes, I was naughty, but [after joining IS] Allah SWT has blessed me with many friends, [which helped me] understand myself. (Malay Mail, 2016)

Wandy's words seem consistent with Ahmad El-Muhammady (2023), who observed the narcissism inherent in such figures' desire for heroism via *jihad* as validation to compensate for low self-esteem (Taarnby, 2003). This is concomitant with a lack of empathy towards others: often emotionally damaged and suffering from childhood wounds, they would feel humiliated when deprived of the attention they crave. In a terrorist, this trait can be volatile, as they would lash out in aggression as a response — or at worst, exploiting a particular sociopolitical/religious cause as justification for violence (Hamden, 2019).

From interviews with detainees at Tapah Prison, this lack of empathy shows itself as their utter willingness to sacrifice themselves to attain *syahid* without considering the consequences on the broader community or nation. One detainee's statement exemplifies this disregard:

I followed Wandy's instructions to bomb the Movida Club to overthrow the *taghut* government in Malaysia — despite being aware of the significant casualties resulting from the bombing. (Informant 1, 2023)

Another detainee expressed:

... [a] profound sense of fulfilment from their involvement in the Syrian war, despite their current detention. (Informant 2, 2023)

These notions of *hijrah*, *jihad* and *syahid* has been indoctrinated into them through *Dabiq* propaganda, excerpts of which are shown below:

O soldiers of IS — by Allah, what a great thing you have achieved, and your reward is with Him! By Allah, He has healed the chests of the believers through the killing of the *Nusayriyyah* and *Rafidah* at your hands. Through you, He has filled the hearts of the disbelievers and hypocrites with rage. By Allah — what a great thing you have achieved!

Who are you? — who are you, O soldiers of IS? From where have you come? What is your secret? Why have the hearts of the East and West quaked in fear of you? Why have the chests of America and its allies trembled in fear of you? Where are your missiles? Where are your weapons of mass destruction? Why has the world united against you? Why have the nations of disbelief entrenched together against you? So know that — by Allah — we fear not the swarms of planes, nor ballistic missiles, nor drones, nor satellites, not battleships, nor weapons of mass destruction. How could we, when Allah the Exalted has said, *If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you, but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allah SWT let the believers rely.* (Ali Imran: 160) (*Dabiq*, Issue 4, p. 6-7)

Abdullah Ibn Amr RA said that Allah's Messenger SAW said, "There will be *hijrah* after *hijrah*. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrahim's *hijrah*. Then there will remain on the earth the worst of its people. Their lands will cast them out, Allah will hate them, and the fire will gather them together with the apes and swine. [Graded *hasan* – reported by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and al-Hakim] (*Dabiq*, Issue 3, p. 10)

*Shaykhul-Islam* Ibn Taymiyyah RA said, "Islam in the end of times will be more manifest in al-Sham. [...] So the best of people on the earth in the end of times will be those who keep to the land of Ibrahim's *hijrah*, which is al-Sham." [Majmu' al-Fatawa] (*Dabiq*, Issue 3, p. 10)

However, the abuse by these VE ideologies, as propagated in *Dabiq*, of religious citations is consistent with the following remark by John Esposito (2015):

The concept of *jihad* has been used and misused; used by resistance and liberation movements and hijacked and misused by extremist and terrorist organisations to legitimate, recruit and motivate their followers. The trajectory of *jihadist* movements has moved from a national to a transnational or global agenda.

This is further supported by what Malaysia ex-detainees have said themselves:

Initially, the majority of Muslims in Malaysia follow and practice the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*, a traditionally moderate version of Islam. Then, the later Salafi and Wahhabi streams of Islam come into the country and create identity confusion for some Malaysians. [However,] Salafi Islam can protect against the militant *jihadi* ideologies of groups like IS and al-

Qaeda, if taught in ways that denounce their call to violence in the name of *jihad* [i.e. denouncing their legitimizing the murder of Muslims and others who do not follow their strict interpretation of Islam]. (Informant 1, 2023)

The shared excerpts make it clear that the projected masculinity seemingly inherent in the image of “heroic” *jihadist* serve as a source of both strength and motivation for members and potential recruits alike, driving them to wage war and undertake *hijrah*, *jihad*, and attain *syahid*.

With regard to female profiles, VE groups have strategically positioned *jihad al-nikah* as a means of influencing and recruiting women (Abd Razak et al., 2017). These groups exploit emotional vulnerabilities by presenting images of attractive, devout Muslim men as potential spouses and highlighting the plight of the elderly, children and sick individuals affected by the Syrian conflict. Leveraging women’s natural empathy, many have since been persuaded to flee to Syria under the guise of *jihad al-nikah*, assuming roles as wives, mothers, teachers and caregivers in the hope of aiding marginalised communities. This issue was prominently addressed by Ayob Khan during his talk at the *Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme* in 2020:

“All the women who travelled to Syria to take on secondary roles, such as wives, mothers, teachers, or caregivers for their husbands, children, and the elderly”.

Additionally, some women choose to remain in Syria even after their husbands’ deaths, their empathy driving them to protect their children and continue supporting VE group missions. Syrian media interviews have revealed that, despite the fall of the “caliphate”, many women remain devoted to VE ideology, raising their children to become the next generation of VE fighters while awaiting the “caliphate’s” return (Cook & Vale, 2018). A similar pattern is observed among several Malaysian women who refuse to return home after their husbands’ deaths, instead choosing to further the mission of Muslim VE groups and aiming to die in Syria (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2020).



Moreover, their femininity lends credibility to the perception that they would draw less scrutiny from the RMP when joining such groups. Ahmad El-Muhammady (2020) supports this, stating that:

IS recruited women because their femininity made them less likely to raise suspicion or be targeted by law enforcement as potential members.

In spite of differences, there is a clear overlap between such male and female profiles — namely, impulsive-aggressive behaviour: that they are willing to do anything without considering the impact on their family, surrounding community and country. Generally, aggressive behaviour is driven by anger (Lajunen & Parker, 2001), dissatisfaction and frustration (Berkowitz, 1990), anxiety (Tyrer, 1994), neurobiological factors (Dabbs et al., 2001), social learning (Landsford, 2012), and more. Buss and Perry (1992) categorise aggressive behaviour into four forms: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility. Others categorise aggressive behaviour into two forms: overt or covert aggression, and instrumental or impulsive/expressive/affective reactive aggression (Feshbach, 1964).

A study conducted by IYRES in 2017 found that aggressive behaviour, particularly anger, was the most prominent component of aggression displayed by youths involved in extremist activities. The study results showed that 5.44 (SD = 2.41) was the score for anger; 5.21 (SD = 1.81) for verbal aggression; 4.85 (SD = 2.18) for physical aggression; and 4.71 (SD = 1.72) for hostility. These results clearly indicate anger as the primary aspect of aggressive behaviour among extremist youth (Kamaluddin & Mat Arisah, 2019).

This aggressive behaviour on the youths' part emerges in the many cases where family members were unaware that their child had migrated to Syria until shown a video on social media of them beheading an enemy through social media; receiving a call from the police that their child had been detained at the airport en route to Syria; hearing news that their child had died due to the war there; or receiving a request for money from their child or family members living there. There are also cases where similar profiles sought help from the Malaysian police to bring them back, unable to bear the hardships especially after losing their husbands to war, leaving them to raise and care

for their children alone — in fact, they would prefer to go to prison in Malaysia rather than stay in Syria (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2020).

Another common trait is the lack of religious knowledge and understanding. Both profiles believe that becoming martyrs will grant them a shortcut to Paradise as well as remove their past sins. With this as their foundation, they then agree to fight alongside VE groups in Syria (Ayob Khan, 2020). The data obtained shows that youth involvement in extremist groups stem from a belief system that has undergone processes of deletion, distortion and generalization (Taib, 2016). The thought patterns of such youths include 1) exposure to the wars in Syria/Iraq/Palestine; 2) belief that Muslim communities are under threat, supported by evidence of cruelty towards women and children; 3) belief that Muslims should help other Muslims; 4) anti-Western sentiments; 5) the idea that humanitarian values lead to unity (*ukhuwwah*); and 6) the desire to join a specific group to defend other Muslim communities (Taib, 2016).

Furthermore, both profiles generally exhibit low self-esteem due to several factors such as the absence of a father figure, poor relationships with their parents and siblings, and disconnection from their community — as well as experiences of divorce, in the case of women. The feelings of inadequacy that they perceive within themselves drive them to seek validation by joining VE groups, the resultant acknowledgment and celebration of their contributions fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. Studies conducted by Mohamad (2010), Azlina et al. (2010), and Rozaimi et al. (2007) support the consistent link found between low self-esteem and involvement in various social issues, including delinquency and misconduct. Specifically, the 2017 IYRES study revealed that youths with higher acceptance of extremist activities tended to have significantly lower self-esteem scores (39.92) compared to those with moderate (36.47) or low (38.56) acceptance of extremism (Roslan & Yahya, 2019).

Both profiles also harbour strong anti-government sentiments toward Malaysia, viewing its government as a *taghut* regime because it operates under a democratic system and does not implement Shariah law based strictly on the Quran and Sunnah. As a result, they carry out attacks on police stations and issue threats to assassinate government leaders. Their ultimate goal is to destabilise Malaysia's governance and seize control of the country, promoting the ideology of an Islamic Caliphate. Once in

power, they aim to unify Malaysia with other countries that support the establishment of a global Islamic Caliphate, rejecting the nation-state model championed by Western powers. They believe the nation-state system divides the *ummah* into separate entities, making them vulnerable to exploitation and control by stronger states. In their view, this system undermines the unity of the *ummah*, as each state represents its identity through national boundaries rather than a collective Islamic identity. They aspire to restore the Caliphate system that existed during the time of the Prophet and his Companions, with IS as the ruling authority.

Additionally, their strong anti-Western sentiments stem from their belief that Western policies are biased against Muslims, as evidenced by the oppression of Muslim minorities and atrocities such as the genocide in Palestine. They cite events such as the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, where Muslims were collectively blamed, exacerbating Islamophobia worldwide. In contrast, they highlight the lack of action by Western countries to defend Palestine during attacks by Israel. As a result, they seek to carry out attacks in Western nations and target countries aligned with the West, such as Singapore. Beyond launching direct attacks, VE groups also actively recruit Westerners into their ranks. When travel to conflict zones like Syria is not possible, these recruits are encouraged to perpetrate attacks within their home countries. This strategy is designed to destabilise governance systems and create chaos within Western nations.

In short, VE groups target both male and female recruits, recognizing that each gender offers unique strengths and attributes that enhance the group's overall effectiveness and capabilities.

#### **2.4.1.2 Age**

The recruitment of youth varies across different age groups, including school-age individuals, those in higher education or early in their careers, and those in the working-age group. The school-age group refers to early youth, encompassing profiles of individuals aged 15 to 18 who have been detained or first identified for involvement in terrorism-related offenses.

Among the school-age group, two profiles involved Form 5 students from Kelantan, aged 17 and 18 at the time. Both were apprehended for attempting to carry out domestic attacks independently. One had constructed six Molotov cocktails and tested one in a field near Kuala Lumpur (South China Morning Post, 2018), while the other built an improvised explosive device (IED) (Ibnu Hasyim, 2017). These cases illustrate how, despite their young age, these individuals were capable of engaging in the planning and execution of dangerous, potentially lethal activities, indicating the vulnerability of youth to extremist influences.

This vulnerability can be better understood through Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1958), particularly the stage of "identity versus confusion." During adolescence, individuals strive to develop a sense of ego-identity to avoid identity confusion. At this stage, they begin to explore who they are and learn how to integrate themselves into society to avoid conflict between personal and societal expectations. However, this process can become challenging when adolescents are faced with numerous choices and influences. For example, interactions with others, especially within their peer group, can significantly shape their identity and personality. If, during this critical period, they associate with VE groups, they are likely to adopt the group's identity, values and worldview as their own.

This susceptibility to radical ideologies is heightened by their limited life experience and cognitive development, rendering them more susceptible to manipulation. Radicalisation is especially common among younger individuals, who are more likely to see the world in absolutes. Lacking critical thinking skills, they would view the world in binary terms of good-versus-evil, holding an idealistic outlook that contrasts with the complexities of real-world pragmatism. This combination of idealism and naivety renders them particularly vulnerable to extremist narratives, and are thus easier to be exploited by extremist groups (Ayob Khan, 2020).

To counter this vulnerability, Walid Darab (2015) suggests five key strategies to protect teenagers from joining VE groups, which are: practicing proper parenting, fostering a deep understanding of Islam, instilling self-worth and a sense of belonging, limiting and monitoring social media usage and consistently making *du'a* to Allah

SWT. These measures are aimed to strengthen the resilience of adolescents against extremist influences by providing them with emotional, intellectual and spiritual support.

The higher education and early working-age group refers to middle youth, encompassing profiles of individuals aged 19 to 24 who have been detained or previously identified for involvement in terrorism-related offenses. Most of the profiles identified fall within the higher education and early working-age groups. Notably, none of these profiles are affiliated with the higher education category, despite the expectation that individuals in this age group would typically continue their studies at the tertiary level, especially when compared to the number of working profiles. This observation aligns with statistics presented in Figure 2.4.1.2, which show that male enrolment at the tertiary level is lower than the number of students who have completed their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM).

This trend can be attributed to current economic challenges and the growing appeal of the gig economy, which is seen as a more financially rewarding alternative. Many young individuals view entering the workforce as a means to gain immediate financial benefits, in contrast to pursuing higher education, which often result in accumulation of debt and limited job opportunities due to high competition and low salaries. Additionally, the uncertainty of securing employment after graduation discourages them from continuing their studies, as they would still need to repay their education loans regardless of their employment status (IYRES, 2022).

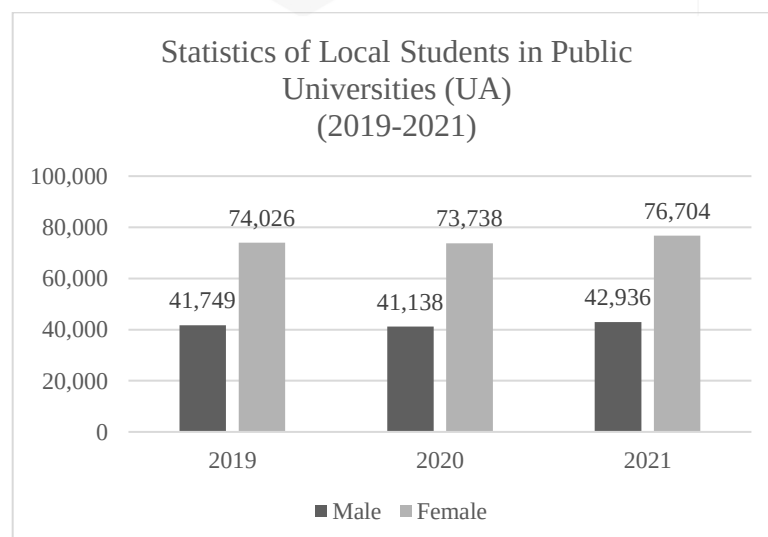


Figure 2.4.1.2 Statistic of Local Students in Public Universities (UA) (2019-2021)

However, lower enrolment in universities is not the sole factor contributing to male recruitment into VE groups. Interestingly, as Aslam (2017) notes, “The high number of male students enrolled in universities has also led to an increase in youth recruitment within these institutions.” This is because Muslim VE groups actively target students in higher education, focusing their efforts on those attending universities (Today Online, 2015). They often attract these students by offering financial incentives, such as allowances and salaries, which can be particularly appealing to those struggling to meet basic needs, including affording food. Additionally, they provide a sense of belonging, which appeals to students who feel socially isolated (Ayob Khan, 2020). To sum up, both individuals pursuing higher education and those opting to enter the workforce face a significant risk of being recruited and influenced by VE groups. These groups effectively exploit the vulnerabilities of both categories, whether through targeting the economic struggles of non-students or leveraging the idealism and influence of university environments.

In contrast to male profiles, female profiles in this age group show greater diversity, with some pursuing tertiary education and others being employed in the workforce. One profile, for example, had failed in her university studies due to academic challenges (Malaysia Law Journal, 2015), and afterwards pursued work as a credit control assistant to support herself before eventually joining VE group. Another profile, while also having failed her university studies, had immediately joined a VE group.

The profile had pursued a Diploma in Al-Quran and Sunnah at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), but was dismissed after failing to meet the minimum CGPA requirement of 2.0 (Malaysiakini, 2014). Her dismissal only came to light when her academic status was reviewed in connection with her involvement in VE groups, suggesting that her academic failure contributed to her decision to join such groups. Her choice to study Al-Quran and Sunnah reflects a genuine passion for understanding Islamic teachings and a strong desire to engage with religious knowledge. However, this same passion may have made her vulnerable to recruitment, as she likely viewed her involvement with VE groups as an extension of her

commitment to Islamic principles. This case aligns with findings from IYRES (2020), which indicate that the strong interest in or curiosity about Islam by the radicalised youth are often exploited by extremist groups to promote their ideological agendas.

The second profile involves a female employed as a credit control assistant. She initially pursued university studies but failed to complete her program (Malaysia Law Journal, 2015). Following her academic challenges, she transitioned to working as a credit control assistant to support herself. This case highlights a different pathway to vulnerability, where personal setbacks, such as academic failure, may have left her feeling unfulfilled or directionless. VE groups often exploit these emotions, presenting their cause as a way to find purpose and meaning in life. In short, a pattern emerges among female profiles both individuals started with aspirations to pursue higher education but faced academic challenges that altered their paths. These setbacks appeared to have created vulnerabilities, making them more susceptible to recruitment as they sought a sense of purpose and fulfilment. According to IYRES (2020), many radicalised youths join Muslim VE groups as a way to gain a sense of purpose and identity in life. In contrast, male profiles often choose not to pursue tertiary education, opting instead for the workforce to gain immediate financial benefits. This comparison highlights the varied motivations and vulnerabilities that lead to radicalisation among male and female recruits.

The aforementioned female profiles highlight the varied backgrounds and circumstances that contribute to female recruitment into VE groups. In short, it is evident that their strong desire for knowledge drove their pursuits. However, academic failure can leave them feeling unfulfilled, which may lead them to join VE groups. The findings by IYRES (2020) corroborate the reality that these groups provide a sense of purpose and meaning by offering opportunities to support Muslims in war-torn countries. Such cases highlight how personal challenges, such as academic setbacks, can increase vulnerability to extremist recruitment.

The working age group refers to late youth, encompassing profiles of individuals aged 25 to 30 who have been detained or previously identified for involvement in terrorism-related offenses. The late youth working-age group represents a key target for recruitment by VE groups, as individuals in this stage are often more established in their

careers. Within this group, profiles include both employed and unemployed individuals. The majority are engaged in occupations such as factory work, honey-selling, cake-selling, cow farming and managing oil palm plantations, reflecting a predominance of labour-intensive and small-scale entrepreneurial roles.

Male profiles within this group predominantly indicate involvement in private companies, self-employment, entrepreneurship, industrial work and agriculture. Notably, none of these individuals hold positions in professional, administrative, or creative design fields, nor were they employed in government roles. This is consistent with a statement by Zahid Hamidi, who noted that such individuals are typically employed in local industries and business circles (The Malaysian Insider, 2014). This lack of representation in more competitive or specialised fields underscores a distinct trend in their occupational choices.

The types of work undertaken by these individuals are generally not highly competitive or demanding in terms of workload or skill requirements. Consequently, these roles may not necessitate significant professional growth or advanced skill development. This stagnation in personal and professional advancement leaves individuals vulnerable to recruitment by VE groups, who often exploit their feelings of stagnation and dissatisfaction.

The female profiles demonstrate significant diversity, highlighting the different roles and circumstances of women drawn into VE groups. For example, one profile involves a student pursuing a Master's in Usuluddin at the University of Malaya (UM); another features a housewife dedicated to caring for her family; and a third involves a former employee of an electronics factory in Penang.

The UM student profile exhibits a strong passion for religious knowledge and desire to deepen her spiritual understanding. Yet this intellectual curiosity had been manipulated by her lecturer: after admitting that 12 of the books in her possession — authorities claim the books were on Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda, all faith-based terror groups — were purportedly tied to terrorism, her lecturer then persuaded her to pursue her Master's research on *jihad*. (Malaysia Human Rights Report, 2016)



On the other hand, the housewife may experience social isolation and a lack of access to the latest information. Spending most of her time at home, she has limited interaction with others and hence turns to social media as her primary source of information about the outside world. Scrolling through platforms such as Telegram and Facebook, she encountered posts requesting help for Muslims in Syria; later joining the group to learn more, motivated by her concern, empathy and sympathy for the situation. Each photo and content related to VE groups that she downloaded further deepened her exposure to their narratives. It can be inferred, therefore, that her isolation, coupled with her time spent alone caring for her son, made her more susceptible to the emotional appeals and propaganda of these groups (The Sun, 2014). This highlights how social media can become a powerful tool for extremist groups to target and manipulate socially isolated, emotionally vulnerable individuals.

Lastly, this pattern of underemployment and unemployment among both male and female recruits reveals a significant factor in their susceptibility to joining VE groups. Many were drawn in by promises of salary, free housing, food and allowances, which offered solutions to their economic struggles and a sense of purpose in their lives. For unemployed youth or those facing financial difficulties, these promises can be particularly enticing, addressing both material needs and a lack of direction. Moreover, the ideological appeal permeates these offerings to become material and spiritual incentives, alongside promises of marriage. Additionally, the rewards of “martyrdom” for those who die in battle are emphasised, conjured under the alluring claim of an authentically Islamic lifestyle under Shariah law. This blend of ideological and material promises effectively attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those who are economically disadvantaged, searching for purpose, or seeking a deeper sense of spiritual fulfilment.

#### ***2.4.1.3 Marital Status: Single or Married***

In this study, marital status refers to profiles of individuals who were single at the time of their detention and first identified for involvement in terrorism-related offense. The patterns identified in the male profiles can be categorised into two distinct

groups are single men without plans to get married and single men who are planning to marry women they recruited in Malaysia before traveling to Syria. The single men who do not plan to get married are primarily motivated by the desire to travel to Syria to wage war, overthrow the government, and support marginalised Muslim communities. These individuals make up the typical recruits to VE groups, serving as followers rather than leaders. Their primary focus is on fulfilling the group's ideological mission and contributing to what they perceive as a larger religious cause.

In contrast, the single men who plan to marry women they have recruited to join the group exhibit a distinct dynamic. Many of these men are long-standing members or leaders within VE groups and use marriage as a tool to reinforce the group's ideological and propaganda narratives. They romanticise marriage as a religious obligation, portraying it as an essential aspect of fulfilling Islamic teachings. This framing not only aligns with the group's agenda but also strengthens their ideological influence over new recruits (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2021).

The patterns identified in the female profiles reveal a recurring dynamic of single women who intend and plan to marry their recruiters, often referred to as their boyfriends, whom they typically met through social media platforms. These women are motivated by the prospect of migrating and marrying the *mujahidin* members of VE groups, despite opposition from their parents. In many cases, they disregard their parents' advice and migrate without their knowledge or consent.

These actions often reflect narcissistic, impulsive-aggressive behaviour, characterised by a disregard for family concerns and a focus on fulfilling their own desires and perceived obligations. This impulsivity, coupled with their susceptibility to extremist propaganda, makes them more prone to taking drastic actions that align with the group's ideology and objectives.

The recruitment of single females is often associated with a softer approach, particularly targeting young girls and single women whom VE groups aim to seduce into their ranks. Research has documented that VE groups recruiters achieve greater success in recruiting women through these softer tactics (Speckhard, 2017). It appears that women were often far more naïve in their hopes and dreams about joining the

Islamic State. In fact, none of those interviewed ever expected to fight for it — and once inside it, most were more innocent in their roles. Many of the women, however — at least in their own recounting — supported their men when both parties became disillusioned with Muslim VE groups, even when their men were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and flogged as a result (Speckhard et al., 2017).

The second categorisation for the marital status is married status, which is referred to the profiles of individuals who were married at the time of their detention and first identified for involvement in terrorism-related offenses. Meanwhile, the pattern observed among married males reflects a patriarchal dynamic, as they often bring their entire families, including their wives and children, to Syria. In Malaysia, husbands are traditionally seen as the primary authority figures within the family, holding a position of superiority and overriding power. Consequently, women are often expected to comply with their husbands' decisions.

Ahmad El-Muhammady (2020) supports this observation, noting that in many Malaysian families, husbands wield absolute authority in decision-making, and wives are generally expected to abide by these decisions. This patriarchal structure enables husbands to influence and involve their families in their ideological pursuits, including migration and participation in VE group activities. As such, when regarding participation in VE group activities, the husband is considered self-centred, as he chose to become a suicide bomber without considering the impact of his death on his wife and two children, who would be left behind in Syria.

The patterns observed among married females in relation to VE groups fall into two categories: wives who join VE groups alongside their husbands; and wives who join independently, without their husbands' involvement. In one case, a married woman became associated with VE groups, even though her husband was not affiliated with them. Her involvement remained at the pre-radicalisation stage, as she was found in possession of images linked to VE groups. However, she claimed to have no knowledge of who had sent them to her (News Straits Times, 2016).

In contrast, the wife of Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim is considered to have undergone the radicalisation process and joined VE group after recruitment by her husband. Upon arriving in Syria, she was assigned roles such as caregiving and medical support (Free Malaysia Today, 2017). These differing scenarios demonstrate that equal likelihood of many women being recruited into VE groups by their husbands or independently. These largely express the unique pathways through which married females may engage with such groups.

The pathway of recruitment per obedience to husband corroborates the observation made by Speckhard (2018), who remarked that such women, either out of submissiveness or by means of blackmail, rape and economic dependence, would adhere to traditional roles expected of them, which meant obeying their husband, brother or father — even if it meant following them into violent extremism. Some women, even when they fulfil the traditional roles, still generally retain their agency, but may nonetheless decide to follow their husbands into Muslim VE groups — believing their material lives will improve, or that the caliphate will offer both the promise of a pure Islamic lifestyle.

In both cases, the impetus would be propaganda disseminated by means of *Dabiq*, typically for purposes of indoctrination. For instance, the following excerpts (taken from “A Jihad Without Fighting” by Ummu Sumayyah al-Muhajirrah, *Dabiq* Issue 11 illustrate the sort that such women are exposed to:

Here, I dedicate my speech to my *muhajirah* sisters. How often have we heard of sisters whose husbands are killed, so the earth — with all its vastness — becomes constricted for them, turning them towards the lands of kufr, where their families and relatives are. I say to them — and there is no ability nor strength except with Allah SWT! — that you are sinful if you leave the land of Islam and return to the land of kufr. Whoever made *hijrah* for the sake of her husband: know, then, that he has indeed departed without doubt — if not today, then tomorrow. And whoever made *hijrah* for the sake of Allah: know that Allah is Ever-Living and does not die. So remain steadfast, my sisters — and may Allah make us hold onto the Islamic State with all our strength!

O my sisters, adorn yourselves with obedience and worship, so that they shall aid you in times of calamity and hardship. Allah has said about Yunus: *And had he not been of those who exalt Allah, he would have*

*remained inside his belly until the Day of Resurrection.* Ibn Jawzi has said, the majority of scholars are of the opinion that He means: were it not for his worship prior to being swallowed, he would have remained within the belly. (p. 43)

As for you, O mother of lion cubs — what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is? She is the teacher of generations, the producer of men. I inform you of the statement of the Prophet SAW, “*Every one of you is a shepherd and everyone is responsible for his herd... And the woman is a shepherd in her house and is responsible for her herd.*” So, have you understood, my Muslim sister, the enormity of the responsibility you carry? O sister in religion, indeed, I see the *Ummah* of ours as a body made of many parts; but the part that is most effective in raising a Muslim generation is that of the nurturing mother. And for that reason, you are in need of much patience and goodness; and what suffices of beneficial knowledge in order to build a generation capable of bearing the trust that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains have all declined to bear. (p. 44)

My beloved sister, indeed from the blessings of Allah SWT upon you is that He honored you with life on the soil of the Khilafah. So, take advantage of that as much as you can give to your children a righteous upbringing upon clear *tawhid* and correct *aqidah* kufr bit-taghut and worship Allah SWT alone, teaching them the heart-softeners, the remembrance of Allah SWT, the Prophet’s biography and the fiqh of *Jihad*. And if the claimants of Islam in the lands of kufr raise their children on the stories of Cinderella and Robin Hood, you should make use of the stories in *Mashari al-Ashwaq ila Masari al-Uhshaq* of Ibn an-Nahhas AS as stories of your lion cubs before they sleep. And here before you are the Shariah institutions, training camps, and even the kindergartens. All of them in our state – may Allah SWT support it – are upon the methodology of prophethood, and Allah SWT belong all praise.

Undoubtedly, it is through these writings that successfully indoctrinated women perform *hijrah* and *jihad* at Syria by exercising the role of wife and mother to the *mujahidin*, children and VE groups.

This is different from the female profile, where most of them are already married. They wish to follow their husbands and take care of their children, as well as raise the children of other VE families. They want to being wives to so-called warriors, mothers to “cubs of the Caliphate (Almohammad & Speckhard, 2017). Even if their husbands die in the battlefield, they would marry other *mujahidin* to continue their lives. This is because they have been indoctrinated with the ideology of VE groups, and their

children are viewed as the continuation of the VE groups legacy. This is in line with the media interviews with women have suggested that even while the ‘caliphate’ has fallen, some remain committed to carrying forward the ideology of VE groups and raising their children to be the next generation of VE groups while awaiting the return of the ‘caliphate’ (Cook & Vale, 2018).

This aligns with the situation in Malaysia. Nor Mahmudah, the wife of Wanndy, initially refused to return to Malaysia after Wanndy’s death. She had been indoctrinated to marry other *mujahidin* and remain in Syria until the Last Day. However, this indoctrination ultimately failed when Mahmudah requested her father’s help to return to Malaysia, even though she would face imprisonment. She expressed that imprisonment would allow her family members to visit her, and if she died, she could be buried in Malaysia. Another key reason for her decision was the lack of security and basic necessities in Syria for her and her children following Wanndy’s death (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2023). To sum up, we can say that all female profiles who join VE groups do so for personal reasons, specifically to marry a *mujahidin* there. This contrasts with the male profiles, where they go to Syria due to others, wanting to help Muslims who are living in war and oppression.

In another instance, there are also individuals who are remarried. The remarried category refers to the profiles of individuals who were re-married at the time of their detention and first identified for involvement in terrorism-related offenses. The pattern observed among males who remarry reflects self-centred behaviour, as they prioritise their plans to travel to Syria and remarry over their responsibilities as fathers from their first marriages. These individuals neglect the well-being of their children from their previous marriages, demonstrating a lack of accountability and disregard for their familial obligations (New Straits Times, 2016). Judge Datuk Mohamad Shariff Abu Samah mentioned in the court: “You should have taken care of your family members’ welfare instead of going to a war-torn country”, (Straits Times, 2016).

Scholarly attention has come up with many reasons for women participation in terrorism which imply that they are fundamentally different from men’s and therefore their motivations are gendered. Many have tended to link women’s participation to something bad that have happened to them such as abuse, rape, use of drug and loss of

loved ones such as brother or husband or child (Speckhard, 2017). Mahmudah was previously divorced and married Wanndy without introducing him to her family or seeking their approval. She proceeded with the marriage without informing her parents. It is notable that Mahmudah's circumstances, such as being divorced, made her more susceptible to influence by VE groups, particularly through the concept of *jihad al-nikah*.

It is notable that Mahmudah's circumstances, such as being divorced, made her more susceptible to influence by VE groups, particularly through the concept of *jihad al-nikah*. This aligns with the findings of Almohammad and Speckhard (2017), who noted that a softer approach is often used to recruit young girls and women, particularly those who are divorced or widowed. VE group recruiters have been documented as being more successful in seducing such women into their ranks using this approach, leveraging their emotional vulnerabilities and personal circumstances.

#### 2.4.2 Group Recruitment

VE groups have extended invitations to individuals from all backgrounds, regardless of religion, race, or nationality, to join their so-called Islamic State and take on specific tasks and roles. This call to action was prominently featured in *Dabiq* magazine:

The *Amir al-Mu'minin* has said, "We make a call to the scholars, fuqaha', and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields. We call upon them and remind them to fear Allah SWT, for their emigration is *wajib 'ayni*, so that they can answer the Muslims' dire need for them. People are ignorant of their religion and they thirst for those who can teach them and help them understand it. (*Dabiq*, Issue 1, p. 11)

*O you who have believed! Why do you say what you do not do? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do. [As-Saff, 2-3].* Unkept promises of *hijrah* to Allah SWT could result in a devastating ending for the slave. Therefore, every Muslim professional who delayed his *jihad* in the past under the pretense of studying Shari'ah, medicine, or engineering, etc, claiming he would contribute to Islam later with his expertise, should now make his number one priority to repent and answer the call to *hijrah*, especially after the establishment of the Khilafah. This

Khilafah is more in need than ever before for experts, professionals, and specialists, who can help contribute to strengthening its structure and tending to the needs of their Muslim brothers. Otherwise, his claims will become greater proof against him on Judgement Day.

As for the Muslim students who use this same pretense now to continue abandoning the obligation of the era, they should know that their *hijrah* from *dar al-kufr* to *dar ul-Islam* and *jihad* are more obligatory and urgent than spending an unknown number of years studying while exposed to doubts and desires that will destroy their religion and thus end for themselves any possible future *jihad*. (*Dabiq*, Issue 3, p. 26)

#### **2.4.2.1 Recruiter**

A recruiter is defined as a member of a VE group who actively seeks to recruit new members into the group. Recruiters effectively target and recruit individuals, including friends, family members, girlfriends, and wives, through both traditional methods such as *usrah* sessions and modern mechanisms such as social media (Ayob Khan, 2020). The primary goal of recruitment is to cultivate homegrown militants and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) for Syria, with the broader aim of promoting the group's ideology and establishing an Islamic Caliphate.

Several patterns of male profiles have been identified regarding the recruiters and the individuals recruited through social media which are the recruiters were the leaders of VE groups at that time, while the recruits were part of the first batch of VE groups and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in 2014. Additionally, both recruiters and recruits frequently used messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram to facilitate communication and coordination.

Recruiters who recruited through social media shared a common pattern: they were all leaders of Muslim VE groups at the time, including Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi or Wanndy, Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal, Mohd Khairil Mi and Mohd Lotfi Ariffin or Lofti. These leaders were widely recognised for their highly strategic and effective recruitment methods, particularly during that period. For example, Wanndy and or Akil Zainal were known for successfully recruiting large numbers of youth. Their extensive online presence, characterised by a significant number of followers and friends on Facebook, played a pivotal role in their recruitment



efforts. This vast network enabled them to easily identify and target vulnerable individuals by analysing interactions, such as likes and comments, on their posts about VE groups or the situation of Muslims in Syria (The Malaysian Insider, 2014).

In contrast, individuals recruited by VE groups often followed a distinct pattern, with many belonging to the first wave of recruits in 2014. Their recruitment was largely driven by a lack of awareness at the time about the dangers associated with these activities. The severity of the issue only gained widespread attention after the release of the White Paper and the Movida attack in 2016, which brought it to the forefront of public concern. Moreover, the ongoing Palestine conflict during that period played a significant role in influencing recruits, as many viewed it as a legitimate cause closely tied to their faith.

Both recruiters and recruits also often relied on messaging applications like WhatsApp and Telegram to communicate and coordinate their activities. These platforms offered global reach, easy accessibility, interactive features, real-time updates and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, features such as likes and shares provided immediate feedback, enabling recruiters to engage with vulnerable individuals and entice them to join their cause (Speckhard et al., 2020; Noor, 2015).

This has been further supported by interviews conducted with detainees at Tapah Prison Department (2023):

I went to Syria because every day I saw the war in Syria on Facebook — the conflict between Muslims and the government. I wanted to help the Muslims who were being marginalized by Bashar al-Assad's government. I live nearby them; if I don't help the Muslims in Syria, who else will?

Moreover, platforms like Telegram became a preferred choice for Muslim VE groups because of its features, including secure, encrypted communications and the ability to share large files anonymously. These capabilities allowed recruiters to operate with impunity while effectively targeting vulnerable individuals. Regarding this, Arkani (2023) provides the following testimony:

Social media also allowed group members to conceal their identities by using pseudonyms or "nom de guerre." This anonymity was crucial in protecting members from being tracked by law enforcement. Members often did not know each other personally, making it challenging for authorities to infiltrate or identify the entire network if one member was apprehended. For instance, individuals such as Muhammad Wanddy Mohamed Jedi adopted the alias *Abu Hamzah al-Fateh*, Mohamad Fauzi bin Misrak used *Abu Dayan*, Mohamad Naim bin Abd. Rashid became *Abu Naim*, and Aqif Heusen bin Rahizat was known as *Abu Suffian*. This tactic reduced the likelihood of law enforcement tracing the group's members. Also, keeping group members unaware of each other's true identities further minimized the risk of detection. This approach made it difficult for undercover operatives or police spies to gather information about the group. Even if a spy infiltrated the group, the use of aliases meant they would be unable to identify other members. This strategy greatly reduced the chances of exposure or arrest of other group members.

Overall, social media has been the fertile ground for recruitment by Muslim VE groups and has contributed to the rise of homegrown cells and militants, facilitating linkages and communication with terrorist networks beyond Malaysia (Nahdohdin et al., 2019). This can be link with the statement made by Ayob Khan, whereby in Malaysia, 98% of individuals intending to join Muslim VE groups were recruited online (Azizan, 2016).

Research findings further support this, highlighting the significant role of media in influencing youth involvement in radical Islamic groups. A study revealed that the youth who became familiar with IS obtained information from various sources, including Facebook (50.4%), television (49.8%), newspapers (46%), YouTube (35%), blogs (22.8%), Twitter (12.9%), Instagram (9.2%), and others (8.4%). These findings align with a study by IYRES (2017), which found that all respondents were active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, and Twitter. The study also identified websites frequently visited by these individuals, including Syria Care, Mahkamah al-Qubra, and Revolusi Islam. Respondents also mentioned key reference sources such as groups like Revo, prominent figures like Muhammad Wanddy, and videos of lectures by individuals such as Ustaz Abdullah Iraqi, Abu Baraa and Musa Cerantonio (Yahya & Mat Arisah, 2019).

Several patterns have been identified among female profiles recruited through social media. These include being unknowingly added to Telegram groups, spending

significant time on their social media, exhibiting high levels of empathy and sympathy, blindly following others, and being easily deceived. The case of Siti Nor Intan Shafinaz Johari is an example demonstrating these traits. A housewife caring for her eight-year-old son (The Straits Times, 2016) highlights how she was detained for possessing 139 pictures related to the VE group. She had received these images through Telegram and Facebook from unknown contacts and social media friends, most of whom she barely knew or had little direct interaction with (The Sun, 2014).

Secondly, a common pattern observed is the significant amount of time spent on social media. For example, Siti Nor Intan Shafinaz Johari, a housewife caring for her eight-year-old son (The Straits Times, 2016), had a flexible daily routine that kept her mostly at home (Benar News, 2016). This excess free time made her highly active on social media platforms, keeping her consistently engaged and immersed in the activities and information shared by VE groups.

Thirdly, a common pattern identified is a strong sense of sympathy. In the case of Siti Nor Intan Shafinaz Johari, she kept the images because, as a Muslim she felt deep sorrow and compassion for the suffering and events unfolding in Syria (New Straits Times, 2016). According to her lawyer, her concern and sympathy for the war in Syria were driven by her faith and a genuine desire to support those affected (The Sun, 2014).

Fourthly, a common pattern observed is the tendency to blindly follow shared news without verifying its authenticity. For instance, Siti Nor Intan Shafinaz Johari received 139 photos from her social media friends, most of whom she barely knew. Moved by sympathy for the plight of Muslims in Syria, she blindly following the information she received without validate its authenticity (New Straits Times, 2016). This is tally with the statement made by Mohamad (2020) from IYRES, “female have a high tendency to be influenced with the information from social media especially when they did not evaluate the information and blindly follow the information on VE groups. This is because they will be easily empathy and sympathy with the situation that happened to Muslims.

Lastly, a common pattern identified is the tendency to be easily deceived. Many female profiles influenced by social media propaganda promoting an idealized life in the so-called “Islamic State”, including promises of becoming the wives of handsome and attractive fighters. This observation is further supported by insights from Ayob Khan (2020):

But it is true, I might say as a joke, but the fact is that when the online Dabiq magazine was published, they also uploaded mujahidin, indeed they are so handsome, that's one of the attractions.

It is further mentioned by Razak et al. (2022) “The handsome faces of the Middle East have been made as attraction”. Based on this fact, it highlights the critical importance of fostering digital literacy, critical thinking, and emotional resilience, particularly among young women, to help them navigate the complexities of social media and avoid falling prey to manipulative narratives. Empowering individuals with the tools to evaluate information critically and providing alternative narratives of peace, empathy, and solidarity is key in preventing the spread of extremist ideologies.

Family members are one of the most effective channels for recruiting new group members. This method has predominantly been leveraged by men, who are more likely to recruit their own family members compared to women. Notably, male recruiters tend to target only their male siblings within the family.

The recruitment pattern among family members reveals that most recruits were influenced by their male siblings, who actively encouraged them to join VE groups. These recruits typically shared a close relationship with their siblings, often leading to recruitment of the same gender. In many cases, the male siblings were the only brothers in the family — a significant influence, especially in the absence of a strong father figure. Recruits were often assigned specific roles based on their expertise, such as traveling to Syria to participate in the conflict or providing financial support, either directly to the group or to assist family members associated with it.

Firstly, a common pattern identified is a close relationship between siblings. For instance, Muhammad Afiq Heusen Rahizat, Muhammad Fudhail Omar, Muhammad

Hassan Syauqi Omar and Muhamad Syazwan shared a close relationship with their brothers, who are Aqif Heusen bin Rahizat, Muhammad Hassan Syauqi Omar and Muhamad Syazani bin Mohd Salim, respectively — all of whom acted as their recruiters influencing them to join VE groups.

Secondly, these recruiters tended to recruit individuals of the same gender. For example, Muhammad Afiq Heusen Rahizat was recruited by his brother, Aqif Heusen bin Rahizat; Fudhail Omar influenced his brother, Hassan Syauqi Omar; and Syazwan successfully recruited his brother, Syazani. Notably, there were no cases where male siblings recruited female family members, or vice versa.

Thirdly, the recruiters were often the only male siblings in their families. For example, Wanndy and Jedi were the sole male members in their respective families. This dynamic fostered a strong bond and increased their likelihood of influencing other male family members due to the trust and closeness shared between them.

Fourthly, the absence of a father figure in the family leveraged the likelihood of recruitment. For instance, Wanndy grew up without a father due to his father's passing and his mother being unwell (BernarNews, 2016). As a result, Wanndy and his brother lacked a paternal role model to provide guidance and support, which may have negatively impacted their decision-making skills, problem-solving abilities and moral development.

Lastly, the recruitment into VE groups often involved assigning specific roles or expertise. For example, after being persistently persuaded by Aqif to join VE groups and take part in the ongoing conflict in Syria, Muhammad Afiq Heusen Rahizat left Malaysia in 2014 to travel to Syria and engage in the war. Tragically, later that same year, he was killed during a bombing attack carried out by the United States military near the border between Iraq and Syria (Today Online, 2018). This case underscores the profound influence siblings can have in radicalising family members and directing them toward violent activities.

Another significant example is Hassan Syauqi Omar's pivotal role in providing financial support to his brother, Fudhail Omar, who was actively involved in terrorist

activities in Syria. Hassan knowingly allowed RM300 to be deposited into his Maybank account to assist Fudhail. Additionally, he permitted a separate deposit of RM2,000 into his account, intended to support terrorist activities associated with Akil. These actions demonstrate Hassan's direct involvement in facilitating financial assistance for terrorism, as documented by Astro Awani (2017) and Borneo Post Online (2017). This case illustrates how family ties are exploited not only for recruitment but also for logistical and financial support.

Another example of sibling influence in recruitment are the brothers Syazwan and Syazani's participation in *jihad* in Syria via VE groups. Their extremist actions culminated in a violent incident when they attempted to attack a police training center at the Camp Speicher base, located 160 km from Baghdad. In the confrontation, both were shot by police, leading them to detonate their suicide vests. The explosion killed 12 policemen, including two officers, before the siblings themselves perished as suicide bombers (Malaysiakini, 2016). This case highlights the extreme lengths to which recruited individuals, particularly siblings, are willing to go to further the group's objectives.

All these patterns can be explained through Edwin Sutherland's criminological framework of Differential Association Theory. According to this theory, individuals become involved in criminal or deviant activities because such behaviours are learned from close relationships or intimate social groups. The theory posits that learning occurs through interactions with peers, where individuals not only acquire the techniques of committing crimes, but also internalise the motives and justifications for these actions from their social circle. This suggests that individuals can develop distorted patterns of thinking by associating with criminogenic peers. In the context of extremism, peers engaged in extremist activities can influence others by providing rationalizations and justifications for participating in such activities. As a result, youth are drawn into extremist behaviours, as they adopt the reasoning and motivations for involvement through their interactions with extremist peers.

In short, these profiles collectively demonstrate the significant role those familial relationships, particularly sibling influence, play in the recruitment and

operational activities of Muslim VE groups, whether through direct persuasion, financial facilitation, or collaborative participation in violent acts.

Another critical method of recruitment is through *usrah* organised by the VE group or its members to the new recruits. This method is considered a traditional form of recruitment, distinct from internet-based methods. Unlike online recruitment, *usrah* involves in-person indoctrination, conducted through physical gatherings and religious study sessions (The Malaysian Insider, 2014). These gatherings create an environment for direct engagement and personalised ideological influence making them an effective tool for recruitment.

The recruitment pattern through *usrah* reveals distinct characteristics. Recruiters were typically male, older and often had prior affiliations with groups such as al-Qaeda or Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). They also possessed in-depth knowledge of *jihad*, as interpreted by VE groups. In contrast, individuals targeted for recruitment generally had limited knowledge of Islamic teachings and were seeking to deepen their understanding of Islam. The recruitment process through *usrah* began during the first wave of recruitment in 2014 which often taking place in the recruiters' own homes.

Firstly, the recruiters conducting *usrah* were predominantly male, as they often held leadership roles within the group. In Islamic tradition, men are typically seen as leaders in religious and community settings, partly due to their role as *imam* in prayer, which aligns with their leading *usrah* sessions. This reflects the traditional understanding of gender roles within Islamic teachings. For example, Yazid Sufaat is widely recognised as a prominent leader of *usrah* sessions, actively recruiting new members into VE groups.

Secondly, the recruiters conducting *usrah* were generally older compared to those recruiting through social media. Due to their age, they were less familiar with technology and social media platforms. Instead, they preferred physical gatherings to establish bonds and foster *ukhuwwah*, as Islam emphasises the importance of unity and strong interpersonal connections among Muslims. Many of these older recruiters had themselves been recruited through *usrah* sessions and were accustomed to using such gatherings as part of traditional practices within VE groups.

Thirdly, the recruiter would often be from the previous VE groups, indicated by records of his previous detainment, either from al-Qaeda or JI. For example, Yazid Sufaat's 2008 detainment under the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960 did not stop him from recruiting new group members. As a matter of fact, according to the Sabah Prison officer, there have been prior cases where ISA detainees recruited new group members in the cell, leading to their being isolated under the pretense of distinguishing between the offences committed.

Fourthly, the recruiter would typically possess an in-depth knowledge of *jihad*. Initial *usrah* sessions with Yazid Sufaat would feature discussions on basic knowledge about Islam. However, after several meetings Sufaat would begin discussing *jihad* based on the perspective of Yusuf al-Qardhawi. This would then induce a high number of inquisitive attendees to join VE groups as Yazid began instilling the need for *jihad* in Syria. This can also be supported by the statement made by the Sabah Prison officer (2023), who stated the following:

During the early stages of their detainment, we engaged with the detainees by asking questions, debating, and discussing their offenses. Without fail, these detainees always provided reasoning to justify their actions, asserting that what they did was not wrong, but was in fact mandated by Islam. Their eloquence and clarity of explanation often left me questioning my own understanding of Islam — I found myself wondering, *What if they are practicing the correct Islam, and I am not?*

As a result, we often hesitate to engage, debate, or argue with detainees charged with terrorism-related offenses because of their extensive knowledge of *jihad*. They are highly skilled at framing their arguments and presenting their ideas with such conviction and eloquence that they can influence and even persuade others to accept their interpretations. This can occasionally lead us to doubt whether our own practice of Islam was correct.

This experience made me realise that I might not be the best person to debate or discuss these matters with them, given my limited knowledge of Islamic teachings. Therefore, it is more appropriate for such discussions and debates to be conducted by authoritative figures, such as scholars from JAKIM or Muftis. For those of us with limited knowledge, engaging with them can make us vulnerable to their persuasive arguments and interpretations of *jihad*.



Fifthly, recruiters often conducted *usrah* sessions in their own homes. This was the case with Yazid Sufaat: his home as a family-like setting provided the platform for *tarbiyah*, *da'wah* and *ukhuwwah* under the guise of discussing the revival of the Islamic tradition. Participants in these *usrah* sessions often regarded themselves as part of an extended family, which helped strengthen their faith and fostered a deep sense of unity. This familial atmosphere created a cohesive and supportive environment, making individuals feel deeply connected to the group. By cultivating this sense of belonging, participants were more likely to associate closely with the group, adopt its ideologies without question, and follow its teachings and directions with unwavering loyalty. This fostering would lead to repeat attendance, as was the case with Razin and Razif, both of whom attended five sessions at Sufaat's home on July 7, 14, 21, 28, and August 4, 2012 (Metro Online, 2015).

Lastly, recruiters would strategically maneuver later *usrah* sessions towards the intended narrative of *jihad*. Yazid Sufaat's initial series of *usrah* sessions in 2012 had at first focused on Quranic studies and interpretations; as the sessions progressed, he gradually shifted the discussions to more radical and militant topics, including promoting fatwas by Yusuf al-Qardhawi that encouraged Muslims to engage in *jihad* against the Syrian regime (Metro Online, 2015). This strategy was deliberately implemented in discreet fashion during the early stages of the *usrah* sessions to avoid detection by the RMP.

This shift in focus attracted the interest of the youth seeking to deepen their knowledge of Islam. The appeal of learning about religious concepts, combined with the introduction of radical ideologies, made these *usrah* sessions a fertile ground for recruitment. By 2013, authorities became aware of Yazid's activities, but not before he successfully influenced individuals like Razif and Razin, who later left Malaysia to participate in *jihad* in Syria. This case underscores how *usrah* sessions, when co-opted by extremist ideologies, can transition from educational gatherings to recruitment hubs for militant groups. This tallies with the statement made by Razif and Razin themselves, in response to a question from Deputy Public Prosecutor Ishak Mohd Yusoff:

After attending the *usrah*, I became more enthusiastic about going to *jihad* in Syria. My purpose for going to Syria was to fight against the

oppression of Bashar Al-Assad's army. The content of the *usrah* delivered by Yazid inspired me because I did not want to be among the hypocrites. Yazid told us that one of the traits of a hypocrite is refusing to go to war and disliking those who want to fight. (Lexis Nexis, 2017; Metro Online, 2015)

Thus, it is undeniable that *usrah* serves as an effective method for approaching and disseminating extremist interpretations of religion among young people. This approach has proven to be highly effective in influencing and radicalizing youth (Jaafar & Akhmetova, 2020).

The husband is often regarded as the most effective recruiter for his wife. This dynamic has led many wives to join and flee to Syria, following their husbands' influence and decisions. The recruitment pattern through husbands reflects a patriarchal dynamic, characterised by the husband's dominant leadership role over the wife. This dynamic is evident in the case of Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim, who recruited his wife and brought her, along with their two children, to Syria (Free Malaysia Today, 2017). Amirul later carried out a suicide bombing in Syria, his hope that his children would emulate his actions showing little regard for the consequences his decisions would have on his family after his death. His patriarchal tendencies are evident in his authoritative leadership style, as he saw himself as the primary decision-maker within the family, disregarding the impact of his actions. This perspective is further supported by a statement from his father-in-law (2014), which underscores Amirul's dominant role:

I had no idea that my daughter and Amirul had left for Syria to serve IS in October 2014, and I would have stopped them if I had known beforehand.

This statement indicates that Amirul made the decision unilaterally, without informing or consulting his wife's family. The father-in-law only learned about their departure after being notified by the police, highlighting Amirul's dominant and controlling role within the family. Meanwhile, the wife exhibited a pattern of obedience. Amirul's wife submissively and dutifully followed her husband, bringing along their two children — and, most notably, failing to inform her parents about their departure to Syria. This behaviour reflects cultural and religious norms often associated with Malay and Muslim women, where they are taught to prioritise family harmony and uphold

Islamic teachings that emphasise obedience to the husband as a virtue. Cultural understandings of narrations such as “Paradise lies under the feet of the husband” and warnings of disobeying one’s husband as sinful deeply ingrain such ideas in Malaysian society, particularly among Muslim women, leading to an expectation of unwavering obedience to husbands. Unfortunately, this dynamic sometimes result in women enduring mistreatment or being forced into compliance with harmful decisions made by their husbands.

The boyfriend is considered one of the most effective means of recruiting women into VE groups. By offering love and a future, these relationships often influence and persuade women to join, assigning them roles as wives and caregivers to help sustain the group’s operations and continuity. The pattern identified among female profiles recruited through boyfriends reveals traits of impulsiveness and aggression. This is evident in the cases of Ummi Khalsom Bahak, Aishah binti Atam, Nor Mahmudah Ahmad, Syamimi Faiqah and a university student. Their impulsiveness was evident in their determination to marry members of VE groups in Syria, even defying their parents’ objections. Their aggression was demonstrated by threatening their parents if they were not permitted to travel to Syria for marriage. This was fuelled further by their heavy use of social media, which served as the primary platform for connecting with their boyfriends.

In 2015, Malaysia recorded its first case of a woman linked to VE group. This case involved Ummi Khalsom Bahak, who intended to marry her boyfriend named Aqif Huesen, a member of VE group. According to the case details, Ummi Khalsom became acquainted with Aqif Huesen through a Facebook account under the name “Umiey Summayah Al Malazie”, which led to frequent communication via WhatsApp and KakaoTalk. Muhammad Aqif Huesen later proposed to Ummi Khalsom, inviting her to marry him and live in Syria, and even offered to finance her flight from Malaysia. Agreeing to the marriage, Ummi Khalsom attempted to travel to Syria. However, on September 13, 2014, she refused to purchase a flight ticket from KLIA2 to Indonesia, fearing arrest by the authorities. Instead, she opted to buy a ticket from KLIA2 to Brunei, planning to subsequently purchase a ticket to Istanbul, Turkey online. Ummi Khalsom also informed her family in Seremban that Aqif Huesen’s mother would be visiting to formalise the marriage proposal. Her father, however, opposed the plan and

filed a police report after realising she had run away to Melaka. Aqif Huesen's associate later deposited an additional RM5,000 into her account after she contacted him to purchase a new flight ticket (Benar News, 2015).

A similar case involved Aishah binti Atam, who threatened to commit suicide if her father refused to allow her to travel to Syria to join VE group (Lexis Nexis, 2017). Her father disclosed this to the police when filing a report attempting to prevent her from going to Syria (KiniTV, 2017). Aishah had been recruited by her teacher and was also in a relationship with Muamar Gadafi, who promised to marry her in Syria after she joined the VE group.

She was in the second semester of pursuing her Master's degree, yet she was broke. Even her father couldn't support her study. So, she was looking for a job, either in Negeri Sembilan or Malacca, I'm not sure. That time she was working as a teacher then she started surfing the internet, using Facebook, got to know a person, who is Muammar Gadafi. (Razak et al., 2022)

Nor Mahmudah Ahmad, similar to Aishah Atam, also persistently urged her family to allow her to marry Wanndy, whom she had met while working in Penang. A private person by nature, Mahmudah kept much of her life to herself, leaving her father with little to no knowledge of Wanndy. She never introduced Wanndy to her family before their marriage. In August 2014, despite her father's disapproval, Mahmudah married Wanndy and eventually persuaded him to relent (Berita Harian Online, 2015; Mstar, 2015). In late January 2015, the couple left for Syria, marrying in a Thai border town before entering Syria via Turkey (Bernar News, 2016). After the marriage, he only visited his in-laws' home twice. Her father, unaware of their plans to travel to Syria and join VE group, had no suspicion of her involvement in such activities.

In addition, Syamimi Faiqah, a former student of Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), left for Syria to join the Islamic State militants. She departed from KLIA to Syria to marry a militant known as Akil, whom she got to know via Facebook. Interestingly, Akil was a former member of a local rock group famous in the 1990s — his sudden turn of fighting for the Islamic State (The Malaysia Insider, 2015) made Syamimi's flight to Syria all the more controversial:

We should also take a look at the effect of the love factor between Nur Syamimi Faiqah and Akil. Akil was a former Ukays band drummer. He realised and became aware of the sins he had committed, so when this Daesh issue started to emerge, he became so narcissistic, with the spirit to become a hero. So, it was time for him to perform *jihad*, as he thought, with the hope to purify his soul, yet unfortunately when he reached there, he was not actually involved in *jihad*. He became a cyber-recruiter, influencing our kids. One of the victims was Nur Syamimi Faiqah. She was studying in KUIS, the one who failed her study, fell in love with Akil, and finally went straight to Syria with him. And Akil himself, he left his wife for *jihad*. So we would say that Aquil Zainal was an escapism factor — the factor of deleting sin, purifying sin. Nur Faiqah Syamimi was the love factor for that Akil. (Informant 1) (Razak et al., 2022)

Lastly, there was a case involving a university student who had already married a Moroccan VE group fighter via Skype and sought to reunite with her husband in Syria (The Straits Times, 2015). Notably, she did not consult anyone about her marriage. In fact, she quit her studies to marry the Moroccan fighter in Syria, abandoning her education and future in the hope of living in the so-called Islamic State as the wife of a *mujahidin*.

These examples demonstrate the scrutiny by Ayob Khan (2020) that, per such cases, women are often easily influenced by their boyfriends, even when knowing each other for only a short time. This susceptibility can be attributed to the psychological need for attachment and a sense of belonging, which are fundamental human desires. In such cases, the emotional connection formed within the relationship becomes a powerful force, often overriding rational judgment and critical thinking. Women in these situations may view the relationship as a source of stability, affection, and purpose, especially if they are experiencing feelings of isolation, rejection, or low self-esteem in other areas of their lives. The boyfriend, often acting as a recruiter, capitalises on this emotional reliance, using the promise of love, security, or a shared future to gain influence over their thoughts and actions (Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2020).

This phenomenon underscores the role of emotional manipulation in recruitment strategies, where personal relationships serve as channels for influencing behaviour and decision-making.

Teachers are among the most successful recruiters in Malaysia, particularly within the Malay and Muslim communities, where they are highly respected as knowledge providers. This esteemed position in society has allowed VE groups to exploit their influence using teachers as a means to recruit the youth into their ranks. A common recruitment pattern involving teachers in VE groups is their role as leaders, while those being recruited are often students studying Islamic subjects. Teachers leverage their position of authority and influence to recruit students, using the educational setting as a platform for indoctrination and radicalisation. Students, in turn, are often deceived through the manipulation of Islamic teachings. A notable example of this is the case of Siti Aishah binti Atam.

Siti Aishah binti Atam, a Master's student in *Usuluddin* at Universiti Malaya (UM), was reportedly recruited by her academic supervisor, Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, a senior lecturer in UM's Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought under the Academy of Islamic Studies (The Malaysian Insider, 2014). Aishah's interest in studying the subject in depth made her susceptible to influence, leading to her eventual recruitment into VE group by Dr. Mahmud. He encouraged her to focus her Master's research on jihadist topics and provided her with 12 books related to VE groups, ostensibly for research purposes (Malaysia Human Rights Report, 2016).

As a student, she trusted and followed her supervisor, whom she regarded as a father figure and who maintained a professional image on campus. However, the books in her possession, for which she was later detained, had no connection to her field of study in *Usuluddin*. Instead, they promoted Salafi jihadi ideology and contained elements capable of inciting violence (Malaysiakini, 2017). Additionally, Dr. Mahmud covertly recruited Malaysians to join VE groups, even going so far as planning to abduct a former student who had left the cell to prevent their activities from being exposed. The stark contrast between his professional reputation and his covert militant activities created confusion among students, enabling him to indoctrinate and influence them, ultimately leading individuals like Aishah to join VE groups.

The case of Siti Aishah binti Atam can be supported with the research conducted by Thomas Koruth Samuel (2018), who revealed that, according to a survey on the perception of terrorism and counter-terrorism among undergraduates in Malaysia, the majority of undergraduates (61.22%) were of the opinion that lecturers could play an important role in an individual having radical violent ideas. Whereas a majority of them (59.77%) were of the opinion that lecturers could play an important role in leading an individual to conduct an act of terrorism.

Furthermore, there is the significant role played by the teacher as a medium for influencing female profiles into extremist ideologies, particularly because of the deep respect and reverence many students have toward their educators. In many cultures, teachers are seen as authoritative figures who possess wisdom, knowledge and moral guidance. This respect is often deeply ingrained in the way students perceive their educators, which could foster a strong sense of trust and dependence. Female students, especially those who are impressionable or seeking direction in their lives, may view their teacher as a role model, believing that their guidance is not only academically valuable, but also morally or spiritually sound.

For women seeking a sense of identity, belonging, or understanding in their lives, the guidance of a teacher can appear to be a pathway to greater clarity and purpose. If the teacher presents these radical views as solutions to the student's struggles or as the key to unlocking a higher truth, the student may be more inclined to accept them without questioning. This dynamic is further amplified by the hierarchical nature of the teacher-student relationship, where students are conditioned to trust their educators implicitly and defer to their authority in all matters, including those of a more ideological nature.

It can be seen that the recruiters for the female profiles were all of the opposite gender. It tallies with the statement made by Speckhard (2017), who remarked that, while women who join IS are often portrayed as "brainwashed" by men, cultural biases that overlook the role of women as willing participants, including narratives that deny the role of political grievances in driving women to join IS, potentially pose far greater danger.

#### **2.4.2.2 Role**

A role is defined as an individual's designated position or function within the Muslim VE group, encompassing categories such as leader, follower, or loose associate, each signifying distinct levels of involvement and responsibility in furthering the group's strategic objectives.

A leader is defined as the mastermind responsible for guiding a group's missions, including strategising recruitment efforts, facilitating *hijrah* for the FTF, and planning both domestic and international attacks. Leadership positions are often filled following the death of a predecessor, with appointments typically based on the selection criteria established by the former leader. These criteria often emphasise the new leader's considerable influence and violent characteristics. Furthermore, leaders are generally well-known to key organisations international, regional and national such as the E8, RMP and their names frequently appear in both national and international news reports and newspapers. A common pattern identified among leaders of VE groups in Malaysia is their role as masterminds, entrusted with strategizing recruitment and *hijrah* efforts, as well as both local and international attacks. Four individuals are widely recognized as key leaders in these groups, as highlighted by the E8 counter-terrorism unit and media reports. These individuals are Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi, Muhammad Fudhail Omar, Mohd Khairil bin Mi and Mohd Faris Annuar.

Firstly, Wanndy, known as a Malaysian militant leader based in Syria (Malaysia Law Journal, 2016), has reportedly been placed under the Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT) list by the United States Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) for ties with the Islamic State. He started to become known internationally due to his appearance in a 2015 beheading video filmed in Syria (Future Directions International, 2016), showing him holding the head of a Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) soldier decapitated in Syria (Today Online, 2017). Since then, his supporters had been following him online via his several online monikers, among which included 'Abu Hamzah al Fateh', 'Abu Sayyaf al Malizi' and 'Wakasilu Huruahara' (Mohamed Yasin, 2017).



In attracting and influencing his supporters and the larger audience, he shared their life stories in VE territory and propagated its ideology to justify their motivations and actions. For example, he portrayed life in VE groups as one filled with blessings, often posting heartwarming pictures of their family and gathering of friends, showing camaraderie among VE groups members (Mohamed Yasin, 2017)

Despite his warm and friendly attitude, Wandy is also known as the most prolific recruiter for VE groups (News Straits Times, 2016). He has contacts not only in Malaysia, but Indonesia, Philippines and Syria as well (Malay Mail, 2016). This was by virtue of his spending most of his time surfing the Internet and updating his Facebook (page), in contrast to other Malaysian VE members who are more focused on the physical war (News Straits Times, 2016). Through the internet, Wandy would either channel instructions to locally based militants, or persuade them to join him in war-torn Syria (Latest World News, 2017). Due to his influence, he had apparently collected RM100,000 in donations from sympathisers. He used some of it to fund attacks in Malaysia, and kept most for his own use. It can be said that he enjoyed life in Syria, while others did the fighting for him (Free Malaysia Today, 2017). Among them was his brother, Mohamed Danny Mohamed Jedi, whom Wandy allowed to use his bank account to deposit and transfer money for IS and for Wandy's own expenses in Syria (BernarNews,2016).

Such activities gave him the reputation of a high-profile target for law enforcement agencies around the world, alongside the most notorious terrorists in the world. This is in line with the statement made by Hakim Abdul Karim Abdul Jalil remarking that "Wandy is the number 1 recruiter in Malaysia" (Benar News, 2017), corroborating a more official claim made by Ayob Khan, who declared that "Wandy is among the most-wanted men on the global terror watch list" (News Straits Times, 2016).

Wandy managed his cells by splitting them into smaller groups to avoid detection. For example, one cell would supply weapons while another carried out attacks. His modus operandi was to get the cells to arrange dead drops of weapons to evade authorities (The Straits Times, 2016). Aside from small cells recruitment, he also recruited lone terror units — many of the foiled terror plots were planned by either lone-

wolf actors, or small cells evading the authorities. These hard to-detect networks and cells are able to plan attacks while communicating with VE members on social media and encrypted messaging applications (Muh Nahdohdin, et al, 2019).

Wanndy has recruited individuals across a variety of professions, including bankers, engineers, and even a school guidance counsellor (The News Straits Times, 2016). Hence, he was regarded as one of the most effective VE propagandists in Malaysia, enlisting and radicalising a new generation of operatives and supporters to raise funds and carry out the country's first-ever VE terrorist attack (Fernandez, 2022). Wanndy's death indirectly capped the Malaysian Branch's success in disrupting several terrorist plots by VE group (Mohamed Yasin, 2017). Later, Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal took the lead in efforts to recruit Malaysians to Syria following Wanndy's death in Raqqa on April 2017. According to investigators, Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal adopted Wanndy's method of recruiting individuals to serve specific roles, only allowing them to communicate with the mastermind on occasion (Eurasia Review, 2018).

Secondly, Muhammad Fudhail Omar, who had close connections with Wanndy, was similar in age to him and in capability to recruit those aged between 25–35. Fudhail was persuaded to go to Syria by former Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) member Mohd Lotfi Ariffin. He made his way to the country in 2014 and joined the Ajnad Al Sham group; at the time, Lotfi was the head of the group's Malaysian outfit in Syria. After Lotfi was killed, Fudhail was appointed the group leader because he could speak Arabic.

Fudhail, along with other senior VE militants Mohd Ra Udin, Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal and Zahar Abdullah, were shortlisted as possible candidates to become the top Malaysian militants following Wanndy's death on April 29 (Asiaone, 2017). When Fudhail joined a VE group later that year, he was tasked with teaching the children of VE group members Quran recitation and guarding security posts. Just like Wanndy, Fudhail had asked his brother to transfer money to his account. More severely, he also provided instructions to kill police personnel and backed the suggestion of VE group supporters to conduct attacks in strategic locations, including Bukit Aman. Fudhail's rank and reputation amongst the Malaysian outfit were validated

when it was confirmed that several Malaysian VE group militants detained in Malaysia were found to be receiving orders from him.

Thirdly, Mohd Khairil bin Mi had organized a group for VE group supporters, one of which he recruited Armie and Hafiz. The two were friends from the same *madrrasah* and had attended a meeting with such a group, organised by Khairil Mi. Throughout the meeting, several activities such as *silat* demonstration, hiking, talks about *jihad* and the conflict in Syria were conducted. Among others, they also discussed issues pertaining to IS in Syria and ways to enter the war-torn country. After the meeting, a WhatsApp group named 'Daulah Islamiyyah Malizia' (DIM) was created; Khairil Mi was the leader of the group chat (The Straits Times, 2016).

Lastly, Mohd Faris Annuar was friends with Wanndy. He first gained notoriety when he appeared in a 30-second video showing the beheading of a Syrian man in 2015. Like Wanndy, he was among the few Malaysian fighters active on social media, channelling instructions to locally based militants or persuading them to join him in the war-torn Middle Eastern country (News World, 2017). All these leaders are shown to have the same pattern: each possessed high skill in recruiting new group members; each had been recruited by the previous leader; and more notably, each has had a close relationship with Wanndy to some degree.

Another important role is follower. A follower is defined as an individual with significant direct involvement in extremist activities and a close connection to the group. They are typically active members who regularly engage in extreme or violent action. A common pattern identified among followers of VE groups in Malaysia involve active group members who frequently engage in discussions to plan and strategies attacks, either in Malaysia or Syria. These individuals are also involved in terrorism financing, providing financial support for the group's activities. Wanndy has the highest number of followers. His tactics were to recruit individuals to small cells such as Gagak Hitam, along with lone-wolf units. Followers of Gagak Hitam under Wanndy as the leader included Hasrianto Matan and Muhammad Ikhwan Ahmad Shukri. Both had been recruited by Wanndy through the Gagak Hitam Telegram group, and have been arrested for the support they gave via it, as well as possessing incriminating videos related to the group on their mobile phone (New Straits Times, 2017).

Meanwhile, Wanndy was also in charge of another small cell, with the assistance of Aqif Hussein bin Rahizat, who received instruction or was recruited by Wanndy. With his help, Wanndy was able to recruit Gadaffi bin Mohamad Shafawi, Mohamad Naim bin Abdul Rashid, and Afiq Heusen bin Rahizat, all of whom were able to go to Syria (Malaysia Law Journal, 2016). Not only that, they were collectively involved in collecting funds to be channelled to an IS-linked group in the southern Philippines and arranging the movement of “two foreign terror suspects” from Malaysia to a Southeast Asian country (Reuters, 2016). Wanndy also recruited a lone-wolf operative known as ‘Kelantan 1’. Under Wanndy’s instructions, Kelantan 1 was tasked with planning domestic attacks in Malaysia, targeting events and locations such as the Better Beer Festival 2017, entertainment centers and places of worship around the Klang Valley. These attacks were to be carried out using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that he made himself. Muhammad Fudhail Omar recruited his brother Muhammad Hassan Syauqi Omar by asking for help in sending money to him in Syria. Hassan was charged with the first bank deposit of RM100 to be directly transferred into his Maybank account, with full knowledge that the service will be used to benefit Fudhail. The second charge was for allegedly allowing an additional RM200 to be deposited into his Maybank account, also for use by Fudhail (Astro Awani, 2017).

Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal had also recruited Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki, who became known as Malaysia’s first suicide bomber when he, believed to be fighting under the banner of the Islamic State, charged into a SWAT headquarters in Iraq, the explosives he carried on himself killing 25 police personnel (The Star Online, 2015). According to investigators, Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal took the lead in Malaysian recruitment efforts following Wanndy’s death in Raqqa in April 2017 by also copying Wanndy’s method of recruiting for specific roles and only communicating with the plot mastermind (Eurasia Review, 2018). With Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin or Akil Zainal’s help, Ahmad Affendi Abdul Manaf, Muhammad Syafiq bin Mohd Azmi, Hasan bin Zakaria and Muhammad Izzul Imma bin Mohd Isa were able to leave for Syria, thereby becoming among the first Malaysians to set foot in Syria to fight the Assad regime (New Straits Times, 2016). Mohamad Razin Sharhan Mustafa Kamal and Razif Mohd Arif were the

follower of Yazid Sufaat where they get influenced by the ideology that has brought by Yazid during his *usrah* sessions in 2012.

Mohammad Hafiz Zahri bin Suparyatnoh and Muhammad Armie Fatihah Mohd Hashim were followers of Mohd Khairil bin Mi. Both of them became influenced after attending the *silat* event hosted by Khairil Mi. To influence them further, Khairil Mi created a WhatsApp group discussing VE group propaganda. Afterwards, they were added to a WhatsApp Group under the name of 'Daulah Islamiyah Malizia' for their support of the Islamic State.

The pattern identified among female followers is their active participation in WhatsApp or Telegram groups and their possession of specific expertise that contributes to the group's activities. Firstly, Siti Aishah binti Atam is considered a follower due to her active involvement in a Telegram group associated with the VE group. She regularly participated in discussions, contributing to the promotion and advancement of the group's mission and propaganda. Notably, she also planned to migrate to Syria to engage in war alongside the VE group (KiniTV, 2017).

Siti Noor Mohd Amin is considered a follower primarily for her role as a suicide bomber, exemplifying her complete indoctrination and obedience to the group's mission. She not only adopted their beliefs, but also acted upon them by making the ultimate sacrifice, demonstrating unwavering loyalty and submission to the group's ideology. Her decision to travel to Syria and carry out suicide bombing reflects her commitment to fulfilling the group's expectations, firmly establishing her as an active and devoted follower (The Straits Times, 2016). In short, the role of female profiles within violent extremist groups are often that of a follower, marked by their active participation and expertise in violent activities.

Loose associate is defined an individual with minimal direct involvement in extremist activities, but still maintains a connection to the group. They are typically passive members, participating infrequently and engaging only in non-extreme or non-violent activities. The pattern identified among male loose associates is their possession of materials related to VE groups. For example, Wan Mohamad Nur Firdaus Abd Wahab was charged with knowingly supporting the terrorist group Daesh by *bay'ah*

through Telegram group known as Gagak Hitam, using the username 'Lat Firdaus.' Furthermore, he pleaded guilty to possessing 23 images linked to the terrorist group on his smart phone (Utusan Online, 2017).

In contrast, the pattern identified among female loose associates is their involvement in *jihad al-nikah*, where they either follow their husband or boyfriend to Syria to support or participate in *jihad*, or possess images related to VE groups. In the cases of Ummi Khalsom Bahak, Nor Mahmudah, Syamimi Faiqah, the wife of Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim and a university student, they are considered loose followers as they joined VE group primarily to follow their husbands or boyfriends, rather than pursuing any larger mission. Furthermore, most of them are passive members, as their actions and decisions are directed by their husbands or boyfriends rather than being initiated independently (Today Online, 2014; The Star Online, 2017; Malaysiakini, 2014; Free Malaysia Today, 2017). Meanwhile, Siti Nor Intan Shafinaz Johari is considered a loose associate member as she was detained for possessing 139 images related to the VE group, including pictures received from an unknown Telegram contact. Notably, she claimed to have kept these images out of sympathy for the suffering of Muslims in Syria (New Straits Times, 2016).

#### **2.4.2.3 Group Expertise**

Group expertise refers to the specialised skills that individuals either possessed, were assigned, or were sought after within VE groups. These skills can be categorised into two groups: individuals with expertise, and those without. Individuals with expertise hold specialised skills that are either possessed by them, assigned to them, or sought after by them, all in support of the group's operations. These skills include recruiters, who influence and persuade new members to join VE groups; terrorism financiers, who provide or facilitate financial support for the group's activities, such as sending money or using accounts to fund operations in Syria; in-house attack executors, who carry out attacks on behalf of the group within their home country such as Malaysia; suicide bombers, who are assigned to carry out suicide bombing missions either in Malaysia or Syria; FTF in Syria, individuals actively participating in combat as part of the group's *jihad* efforts; weapon experts, skilled in handling and making weapons, often through

self-training such as watching instructional videos; and medics, providing medical care as doctors or nurses to wounded members or assisting those affected by the conflict.

A suicide bomber is an individual assigned or intending to carry out suicide bombing missions, either in Malaysia or Syria. Hoffman and McCormick (2004) have concluded on their part that “there are only two basic operational requirements that an organisation must be able to satisfy to get into the game: a willingness to kill and a willingness to die.” This is supported by Arakani (2020), who claims that individuals are recruited to join VE groups solely for martyrdom. Usually, the new recruits would already harbour the intention to die by martyrdom, which is most likely why they did not refuse the role. Compared to others, suicide bombing is inexpensive, cost-effective, media-friendly and comes with a built-in intelligent guidance and delivery system, all of which make it effective as a form of psychological warfare (Hoffman, 2003; Agara, 2014). Consistent with the statement made by Ayob Khan in 2020, “IS [are] to instil fear among the government and society, so that they would listen to [the groups’] instructions due to the fear that has been instilled. This act will make VE groups known to people at large — and it will be a strategy to influence others into joining VE groups for their strength and superiority”.

There are several patterns of the male profiles recruited to be groomed as suicide bombers, being that: they had been recruited by VE group leaders; they had joined VE groups in the first wave of recruitment; they had been former JI and al-Qaeda members; and they were planning their impact to induce massive casualties. Firstly, most suicide bombers had become part of VE groups through the first wave of recruitment in 2014. Notable individuals include Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki, Ahmad Affendi Abdul Manaf, Hasan bin Zakaria, Muhammad Izzul Imman bin Mohd Isa, Mohammad Syazwan bin Mohd Salim, Muhammad Syazani bin Mohd Salim, Mohammad Fadhlan Shahidi bin Mohammad Khir and Mohd Amirul Rahim (The Star Online, 2015). All of these individuals were eventually killed in suicide bombings, either in Syria or Iraq. At the time, there was limited awareness about the dangers posed by these groups. Many such recruits, driven by a strong desire to help marginalised Muslims, believed their actions were necessary. This lack of understanding, combined with a commitment to what they perceived as a noble cause, led them to carry out extreme acts, including sacrificing their lives.

Secondly, many of the suicide bombers were former members of JI group. With their ideological beliefs acquired from previous groups, they only needed to put their ideology into practice. Consequently, upon joining VE groups during the early stages, they readily committed themselves to becoming suicide bombers.

Lastly, their planned impact was to induce massive casualties by design. According to reports, the suicide bombers died in a 2014 attack in Al-Anbar, Iraq (The Straits Times, 2016); blew themselves up in clashes with Syrian combat troops (Jaafar & Akhmetova, 2020) (New Straits Times, 2016); detonated the bomb belt strapped to them during what was supposed to be a close-quarters battle with the Syrian army in northern Raqqa (New Straits Times, 2016); carried out a devastating bombing at a wedding in southeastern Turkey, claiming more than 50 lives; drove an explosive-laden truck into an army camp in Homs, Syria, killing 50 regime army personnel (The Star Online, 2015); detonated their suicide vests, killing 12 policemen (Malaysiakini, 2016); and blew themselves up in a car in Syria and Iraq, killing more than 30 others (The Diplomat, 2016) (News Straits Times, 2016). The act of suicide bombing is not new in the context of VE groups. A survey conducted by Pew Research Centre in 2013 revealed alarming statistics about Malay Muslim attitudes toward such acts. The survey found that 27% of Malaysian respondents supported extremist actions: 5% of them believed suicide bombings were often justified, whereas 22% believed they were sometimes justifiable. This data highlights a concerning level of support for extremist actions within the Malay Muslim population, emphasizing the need for greater awareness and intervention efforts.

Similar to male profile patterns, the recruitment of females into VE groups follows similar trends, including being recruited by group leaders and acquired during the first wave of recruitment in 2014. For example, Siti Noor bt Mohd Amin was recruited by Aquil during this initial wave. Additionally, Siti Noor did not travel to Syria alone, but was part of a group that included Izzul, Syafiq Azmi, Amin and Tarmimi Maliki (The Straits Times, 2016). This highlights how early recruitment efforts often involved coordinated group movements, further reinforcing the strong influence and organisational strategy of VE groups during this period.



A weapon expert is an individual who possesses skills or potential in handling or making weapons. These individuals have the ability to create weapons from scratch using common materials or items easily available, such as those from a local stall. Often, they learn how to make weapons through online resources, such as YouTube. This reflects their high level of curiosity and enthusiasm in weapon-making. Such individuals typically construct weapons for the purpose of carrying out in-house attacks. They are known to carefully assess the location and situation, aiming to design a weapon that is as deadly as possible, with the goal of maximising harm and fatality.

The pattern of weapon expert was found amongst the early age group, with profile possessing traits of being a lone-wolf, high inquisitiveness and were capable of meticulous planning. Firstly, the profiles identified consisted of individuals in the early age group of 17 – 19 years old (Southeast Asia, 2018; Ibnu Hasyim, 2017). Their youth endowed them with abundant energy, greater physical stamina and enhanced dexterity compared to older individuals. These attributes made them particularly well-suited to learning and practicing physical skills, such as assembling and handling weapons.

Secondly, the profiles identified exhibit characteristics of a lone wolf. These individuals operate independently, without associating with any group and carry out actions on their own. They receive instructions and act alone, often to minimise the risk of failure or avoid detection by law enforcement or intelligence agencies. Additionally, their self-directed radicalisation drives their motivation to act independently and fuels their determination to master weaponry in pursuit of their goals.

Thirdly, the profiles identified possess strong curiosity and the ability to acquire information through the internet. Many individuals demonstrated expertise in creating Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) using materials such as PVC pipes, batteries, firecrackers, fireworks, a gas cylinder, matches, wires and mobile phones. Additionally, evidence included a notebook and a sheet of paper containing an IED diagram, believed to serve as a guide for assembly (Ibnu Hasyim, 2017). In one case, an individual constructed six Molotov cocktails intended to be used as firebombs for an attack (Southeast Asia, 2018). This pattern is further corroborated by Ayob Khan (2020), who noted that much of this knowledge was obtained through the dark web, highlighting

how these individuals leveraged online platforms to access technical information and instructions for carrying out attacks.

Lastly, the profiles identified demonstrate capacity for meticulous planning. The individuals involved had a clear understanding of the types of bombs they were creating and their intended targets, which included Christian churches, Hindu temples, entertainment venues (South China Morning Post, 2018) and the Better Beer Festival 2017 (Ibnu Hasyim, 2017). In one instance, a bomb was tested in a field outside Kuala Lumpur to evaluate its impact (South China Morning Post, 2018). Additionally, one individual uploaded a video to IS-linked social media platforms, where he threatened to attack Christian churches, Hindu temples and entertainment venues. The video included footage of the intended targets, strategically designed to draw attention and instil fear among the public (South China Morning Post, 2018).

Recruiter is another role that individual may assume in VE group A recruiter is an individual who influences and persuades new members to join VE groups. Several patterns can be identified from recruiter profiles, including the use of various strategies and media for recruitment. These include traditional activities like *silat* (martial arts), *usrah* and modern platforms such as social media. Recruiters also utilised Telegram as a medium for discussions. Recruitment efforts were often targeted, focusing on specific individuals such as strangers, siblings, wives, or girlfriends. Additionally, recruitment was strategically planned, including objectives such as launching attacks in Malaysia, traveling to Syria, or engaging in fundraising activities.

Firstly, Aszroy Yohyo Achoi influenced the public through his actions. He previously ran a blog and shared his support for VE group on Facebook (Utusan Borneo Online, 2019). His Facebook accounts — named ‘Yohyo Irranun Peace Alborneozy’ (Daily Express, 2016) and ‘Yohyo Illa’nun AlSaba Malizia’ — contained posts promoting VE groups and terrorism. Nine of his Facebook posts were linked to VE groups; eight were extremist in nature; and five showed supports for the Irranun community to which he belonged (Malaysia Law Journal, 2018).

Secondly, Wanndy Mohammed is recognised as a key recruiter for VE groups in (Malaysia Future Directions International, 2016, Aljazeera, 2016; The Star, 2017). He was associated with Gagak Hitam, who were responsible for the attack on Movida Nightclub in Puchong, Malaysia (Malaysia Kini, 2017). Wanndy extensively used online platforms such as Facebook and Telegram to spread VE group propaganda, targeting youths in Malaysia. Through these platforms, he built a network of operatives and supporters who raised funds and plotted attacks on Malaysian soil (Bernar News, 2016). One of the few Malaysian fighters highly active on social media, Wanndy channelled instructions to local militants and persuaded others to join the conflict in the Middle East (Latest World News, 2017). Between 2013 and 2016, he was linked to at least one-third of the 260 people arrested in Malaysia for their connections to the VE group (Bernar News, 2016). Although Wanddy himself did not fight in Syria, he played a significant role in recruiting members, orchestrating attacks in Malaysia, collecting funds to support VE group in the southern Philippines, and coordinating the movement of “two foreign terror suspects” from Malaysia to another Southeast Asian country (Reuters, 2016; The Star, 2017).

As a recruiter, Wanddy Mohammed reportedly collected RM100,000 in donations from sympathisers. While some of the funds were used to finance attacks in Malaysia, the majority was for his personal use. It was noted that he lived a comfortable life in Syria while others fought on his behalf (Free Malaysia Today, 2017). Despite his limited education, Wanndy utilised his computer to become Malaysia’s most prolific recruiter for VE groups. Among those he recruited was his own brother, Danny Mohamed.

In April 2016, Malaysian authorities arrested Danny Mohamed in Selangor for allowing Wanndy to use his bank account to deposit and transfer money for VE group activities and Wanndy’s personal expenses in Syria (Bernar News, 2016). Other individuals recruited by Wanndy included Muhammad Ikhwan Ahmad Shukri, Wan Mohamad Nur Firdaus Abd Wahab, Muammar Gadaffi bin Mohamad Shafawi, Hasan bin Zakaria, Muhammad Izzul Imma bin Mohd Isa, and Muhammad Syafiq bin Mohd Azmi.

Thirdly, Aqif Heusen Rahizat had recruited his own siblings and girlfriend to join VE groups and go to Syria for *jihad al-nikah* and waging war. He planned a trip for Ummi Kalsom Bahak to migrate to Syria to be married to him (Today Online, 2014). On 30 December 2017 in particular, Aqif, along with a Singaporean terrorist, Abu Uqayl Al-Singapuri, encouraged fellow comrades in a video to launch domestic attacks if they were unable to join the VE group in Syria (Muh Nahdohdin, et al, 2019).

Fourthly, Fudhail Omar actively recruited Malaysians to migrate to Syria as well as inspiring and supporting new recruits to launch attacks in Malaysia. He had replaced Wanndy in the same role (BernarNews, 2016). While staying in Syria, he asked his brother (Hassan Omar) to send money to him, the sum of which was believed to be intended for use, partly or fully, by a terrorist or to commit terrorism. He had also demanded funds from VE group sympathisers, telling them that they would be used to help fighters. However, a source said Fudhail had actually used all the money — about RM20,000 in total for his personal use (Free Malaysia Today, 2017).

Fudhail also had certain aspects in common with Wandy. He had travelled and commenced his operations in Syria as early as 2015. He was similar in age to Wanndy, and like him, Fudhail was capable of recruiting those aged between 25–35, a notable few for some lone wolf attacks. Because of his capabilities, Fudhail was expected to take over the role of Wanndy, which would earn him similar notoriety of being on the US' list of global militants until his death (Reuters, 2017). He also provided instructions to kill police personnel and had backed suggestions by VE group supporters to conduct attacks in strategic locations, including Bukit Aman. Several Malaysian VE group militants detained in Malaysia were found to be receiving orders from Fudhail, similar to Wanndy. Security forces were able to arrest two of his brothers for supporting and transferring funds to Fudhail.

Fifthly, Khairil Mi had organised several groups for the purposes of recruitment, through one of which Armie and Hafiz joined. On April 2, the two friends had attended a meeting by a group known as supporters of VE groups, which was organised by Khairil Mi. Several activities — such as *silat* demonstration, hiking, talks about *jihad* and the conflict in Syria — were conducted; they also discussed issues pertaining to VE group efforts in Syria and possible ways to enter the war-torn country. After said

meeting, Khairil Mi created a WhatsApp group named ‘Daulah Islamiyyah Malizia’ (DIM) to continue discussions of *jihad* and the current situation in Syria. According to Hafiz’s counsel Farida Mohammad, her client had very little knowledge about religion, but soon expressed desire to help after knowing about the situation there via Khairil Mi (The Straits Times, 2016).

Sixthly, Muammar Gadaffi recruited individuals through the following methods: (a) attempting to instil the militant ideology of VE groups in local youth via Facebook accounts such as “Iskandar Dzulquranain IS” and “Ammar Rasuli Al-Jihadi”; (b) trying to provide a deep understanding of the ideology, modelled in a military style; (c) offering military training to prepare “soldiers” for combat in Syria, Myanmar’s Rohingya region, Patani in Thailand, Palestine, and Southern Philippines; and (d) providing military training to youth using homemade rifles (Malaysia Law Journal, 2017).

Seventhly, Mohd Faris Annuar was among the few Malaysian fighters active on social media, channelling instructions to locally based militants or persuading them to join him in Syria (News World, 2017). He first gained notoriety when he and Wanndy appeared in a 30-second video showing the beheading of a Syrian man in 2015 (News World, 2017).

Lastly, Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim recruited his wife for *hijrah* to Syria with his two children. It was revealed that Amirul, prior to his suicide mission, had earnestly desired for his two children to emulate him in following the VE group cause (Free Malaysia Today, 2017). It can be seen that the Muslim VE groups members have successfully recruited many people through many media with various tasks.

An in-house attack refers to an attempted or planned homegrown attack by VE groups targeting Christian churches, Hindu temples, or events such as festivals associated with non-Muslim activities and rituals. A distinct pattern among violent attacks carried out by VE groups involves a weapon expert, and the targeting of locations associated with significant gatherings or non-Muslim activities, such as places of worship and festivals. These attacks, designed to cause mass casualties, have the underlying belief that such activities are contrary to Islamic teachings and may invoke

the wrath of Allah SWT. This rationale is used to then justify their actions as part of their extremist ideology and to instil fear within the targeted communities.

Firstly, one profile has received instructions from Aquil to launch an attack in Malaysia (Eurasia Review, 2018). In another case, a 17-year-old high school student was arrested about an hour after uploading a video to VE-linked social media platform. In the video, he allegedly threatened to firebomb Christian churches, Hindu temples and entertainment venues. The teenager had also filmed his intended targets, constructed six Molotov cocktails, and tested one in a field outside Kuala Lumpur (South China Morning Post, 2018).

Lastly, one profile has planned to carry out attacks during the 2017 Better Beer Festival, targeting entertainment venues and places of worship around the Klang Valley using homemade Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The individual involved was skilled in creating IEDs and was identified as the main planner of the Better Beer Festival attack. Police seized materials used to produce IEDs, including PVC pipes, batteries, firecrackers, fireworks, nails, matches, wires, two mobile phones, as well as a notebook and a piece of paper containing diagrams of IEDs, believed to be used as a formula (Ibnu Hasyim, 2017).

Several individuals were arrested for their involvement in the ongoing conflict in Syria, driven by their pursuit of the ideologies and propaganda promoted by VE groups. A common pattern among profiles identified as waging war is that they underwent military training after being influenced through traditional methods such as physical meeting. This training equipped them with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in armed conflict, demonstrating the level of preparation and commitment involved in their activities.

Firstly, the case of receiving military training involves Mohamad Naim bin Abdul Rashid and Aqif Heusen Rahizat, who attended army training and participated in a series of battles using firearms against Assad's forces (Lexis Nexis, 2017). This training significantly enhanced their combat skills and boosted their confidence, ultimately leading them to wage war in Syria as foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs).

Lastly, the influence of traditional methods is evident in the case of Mohamad Razin Sharhan Mustafa Kamal, Mohammad Hafiz Zahri bin Suparyatnoh and Muhammad Armie Fatihah Mohd Hashim, who were recruited to wage war in Syria by Khairil Mi. Khairil utilized *silat* events as a platform to discuss the ideologies and mission of the VE group (The Straits Times, 2016). Similarly, Mohamad Razin Sharhan Mustafa Kamal and Razif Mohd Arif were influenced to wage war in Syria through *usrah* sessions conducted by Yazid Sufaat at his home in 2012 (MStar Online, 2012).

A terrorism financier is an individual who provides or facilitates financial support for a group's activities, such as transferring funds or using accounts to finance operations in Syria

The pattern identified in terrorism financing involves individuals who have high empathy and sympathy, were recruited by family members, and who provided financial support in various ways, such as allowing their bank accounts to be used for fund transfers, directly contributing money, collecting funds, and managing bank accounts on behalf of VE groups. These funds are then used to support VE activities both within Malaysia and abroad.

Regarding empathy and sympathy, the case of Wanndy and his brother serves as an example. Wanndy's brother did not join the VE group at first and did not pledge *bay'ah* — his only involvement was sending money to Wanndy. After receiving frequent phone calls from Wanndy, who was living in Syria with his wife and children, the brother felt a deep sense of empathy and could not bear to refuse financial assistance (Raja Khairul Akhtar, 2023). This situation reflects findings from research conducted by IYRES, which shows that facilitators of money laundering for VE groups often exhibit high levels of sympathy and empathy. Further research conducted by IYRES and UUM reveals that 19.3% of university students were willing to provide financial support to VE groups.

In addition, Mohammad Hassan Syauqi Omar played a direct role in providing financial services. In his case, he had allowed RM100 to be deposited into his Maybank account, with full knowledge that the service will be used to benefit Muhammad Fudhail Omar, his own brother. The subsequent charge made against him was for allegedly allowing RM200 to be deposited into his Maybank account for use

by Muhammad Fudhail on May 1, 2015. He was also charged with a similar allegation once by allowing RM2,000 to be deposited into his Maybank account for use by Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin at the same location in Bandar Puteri Jaya at 3.03 pm on April 29, 2015 (Borneo Post Online, 2017). Lastly, there is the case of Hasrianto Matan, who was charged with managing terrorist property by handling Bukhori's bank account. He allowed deposits and money transfers from the account, facilitating its use for the benefit of VE groups and Bukhori (Rilek1Corner, 2017).

Medical expertise was one of the skills possessed by female profiles in Syria who joined VE groups. Several patterns have been identified among individuals with medical expertise who joined VE groups. These patterns include being female, serving as a wife and pursuing studies in the field of medicine. An example of this is the wife of Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim, who graduated from university as a medical lab technician. After following her husband, she was trained to become an anaesthetist at a hospital in Raqqa (Free Malaysia Today, 2017).

Profiles without specific expertise refer to individuals who lacked any skills when joining Muslim VE groups. Their primary purpose for joining was to participate in *jihad al-nikah*. *Jihad al-nikah* refers to the practice of women who, sympathetic to the plight of Muslims in Syria, seek to support them by marrying *mujahidin* within VE groups to boost their morale during the war.

Several patterns have been identified in cases of *jihad al-nikah*, with individuals typically being female and exhibiting caregiver tendencies. This is exemplified by the case of Siti Aishah binti Atam, Ummi Khalsom Bahak, Nor Mahmudah Ahmad, Syamimi Faiqah Sulaiman, the wife of Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim, and one university student. These individuals often lacked specific expertise, but understood that their primary role was to serve as caregivers for their husbands or future husbands, as well as other members of the VE group. Their responsibilities included supporting the survival of group members and contributing to the growth of the VE group by marrying *mujahidin* and raising future members or fighters.



### 2.4.3 Ideology

Ideology is defined as the level of an individual's motivation or cognitive rationale for joining VE groups. It can also include the nature of their actions, whether violent or non-violent, and whether these actions cause harm to others. The level of ideology is categorized as high, medium, or low.

High ideology is defined as the strong motivation or cognitive rationale an individual has for joining VE groups and/or committing violence that causes harm to others. Several patterns have been identified among males with strong ideological beliefs, including involvement in acts such as suicide bombings, planning in-house attacks, preparing for war in Syria and disseminating beheading videos. Males with high ideology have been linked to numerous suicide bombings carried out by VE groups, employing various methods to maximise casualties. One significant attack occurred in May 2014 in Al-Anbar, Iraq, when a group drove a vehicle loaded with explosives into a SWAT headquarters, killing 25 police personnel. Another attack in Homs, Syria involved an explosives-laden truck being driven into an army camp, resulting in the deaths of approximately 50 regime soldiers. Additionally, other individuals died as suicide bombers during battles with Assad regime forces, further emphasising the group's reliance on this tactic (MLJ, 2016). These incidents illustrate the strategic use of suicide bombings to disrupt opposing forces and maximise casualties, reflecting the operational focus on high-impact attacks.

Several profiles with high ideology actively prepared for war in Syria by facilitating the movement of Malaysian militants through Turkey and providing logistical support to the *mujahidin* (BernarNews, 2016; AsiaOne, 2017). For example, Mohamad Razin Sharhan Mustafa Kamal and Mohd Razif Mohd Ariff were recruited by Yazid Sufaat during *usrah* sessions. Yazid persuaded them to join the conflict in Syria, emphasising the religious duty of *jihad*. He said:

I attended five *usrah* sessions held at Yazid's house, [where he explained that] the purpose of going to Syria was to engage in *jihad* through warfare to fight against the tyranny of Bashar al-Assad's army. The content of the *usrah* sessions delivered by Yazid motivated me, as I did not want to be counted among the hypocrites. Yazid told us that one of the

characteristics of a hypocrite is not wanting to fight and disliking those who wish to fight.

Some individuals with high ideological commitment planned in-house attacks within Malaysia when they could not travel to Syria (BernarNews, 2016; AsiaOne, 2017). For instance, several profiles were tasked with plotting attacks targeting events like the Better Beer Festival 2017, entertainment venues and places of worship across the Klang Valley, including Christian churches and Hindu temples (Southeast Asia, 2018). These planned attacks involved the use of self-made Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). During investigations, police seized materials for IED construction, such as PVC pipes, batteries, ball fireworks, sparklers, shrapnel, matches, wires and two mobile phones. Evidence also included a notebook and a piece of paper containing an image of an IED used as a reference (Ibnu Hasyim, 2017). One individual constructed six Molotov cocktails and tested one in a field near Kuala Lumpur, showcasing intent and capability to carry out extremist attacks.

Another profile exhibiting high ideology appeared in a 30-second video in 2015, showing the beheading of a Syrian man. This individual was among the few Malaysian fighters active on social media, where he provided instructions to locally based militants and persuaded others to join him in Syria. The dissemination of such graphic content further highlights the ideological commitment to promoting violence and recruiting others to the cause (News World, 2017).

Females with strong ideological commitment are characterised by their involvement in violent action that causes harm to others, such as suicide bombings in Syria, as well as their motivation to join VE groups through *jihad al-nikah*. This deep motivation and cognitive rationale highlight their strong alignment with the group's ideological framework. One notable profile involves a female who carried out a suicide bombing in Syria, marking her direct participation in violent action (The Straits Times, 2016). This demonstrates the extent to which some women with high ideological commitment are willing to engage in acts that cause harm to others.

The only female profile identified under the category of high ideology is Siti Noor bt Mohd Amin. She is known to have died in a suicide attack in Al-Anbar, Iraq,

in 2014, during the first batch of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) from Malaysia (The Straits Times, 2016). Her involvement in such a violent act, specifically as a suicide bomber, classifies her as possessing high ideological commitment.

On the other hand, the majority of female profiles, including Siti Aishah binti Atam, Umami Khalsom Bahak, Nor Mahmudah Ahmad, Syamimi Faiqah Sulaiman, the wife of Mohd Amirul Ahmad Rahim and a university student, were considered to possess high ideological commitment. These women were apprehended after following their husbands or boyfriends to Syria, driven by the concept of *jihad al-nikah*. This practice reflects a strong ideological belief, as they perceived their participation as fulfilling a religious duty. The belief in *jihad al-nikah* served as both a key motivator and a justification for their involvement in VE groups, demonstrating the intersection of personal relationships and ideological influence in driving their actions.

Medium-ideology is defined as the medium level of an individual's motivation or cognitive rationale for joining VE groups and/or committing non-violent action that causes harm to others. Several patterns associated with a medium level of ideology have been identified, characterised by involvement in non-violent actions that indirectly contribute to harm. These include spreading VE group ideologies through social media and participating in terrorism financing. One male profile actively disseminated and promoted VE group ideologies through his blog and Facebook accounts, named "*Yohyo Irranun Peace Alborneozy*" and "*Yohyo Illa'nun AlSaba*". He made nine posts linked to VE group, eight of which promoted extremist views, and five expressed supports for the Irranun community to which he belonged (Utusan Borneo Online, 2019; Daily Express, 2016; MLJ, 2018; Borneo Post Online, 2016).

Additionally, Muhammad Hassan Syauqi Omar and Hasrianto Matan were involved in terrorism financing. Muhammad Hassan was charged with knowingly providing financial services by allowing deposits into his Maybank account to benefit terrorists. This included RM100 and RM200 deposits for Muhammad Fudhail Omar in 2015, as well as RM2,000 for Wan Mohd Aquil Wan Zainal Abidin on April 29, 2015 (Borneo Post Online, 2017). Similarly, Hasrianto Matan was accused of managing terrorist property by handling Bukhori's bank account, allowing deposits and money

transfers for the benefit of VE group and Bukhori. These offenses were reportedly committed between March and June of the previous year using the Telegram application under the username “Gagak Hitam”. These cases highlight how individuals with medium ideology contribute to the operations of VE groups through indirect but impactful actions, such as spreading propaganda and facilitating financial support.

Low-ideology is defined as the low level of an individual’s motivation or cognitive rationale for joining VE groups and/or committing non-violent action that does not cause harm to others. Several patterns have been identified among males with low ideological commitment, involving non-violent action. These actions include pledging *bay’ah* and possessing videos or images linked to VE groups. The case involves Muhammad Ikhwan Ahmad Shukri, who pledged *bay’ah* through the “Gagak Hitam” Telegram chat group. He was also found in possession of 23 videos related to a VE group (New Straits Times, 2017). Similarly, Wan Mohamad Nur Firdaus Abd Wahab pledged *bay’ah* to the “Gagak Hitam” group and was also found with 23 photos linked to the VE group on his mobile phone (Utusan Online, 2017). This case illustrates how individuals with low ideology support VE groups through symbolic actions or passive involvement, such as expressing allegiance or consuming extremist propaganda.

## 2.5 ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTH RADICALISATION MODEL IN MALAYSIA (2013-2020)

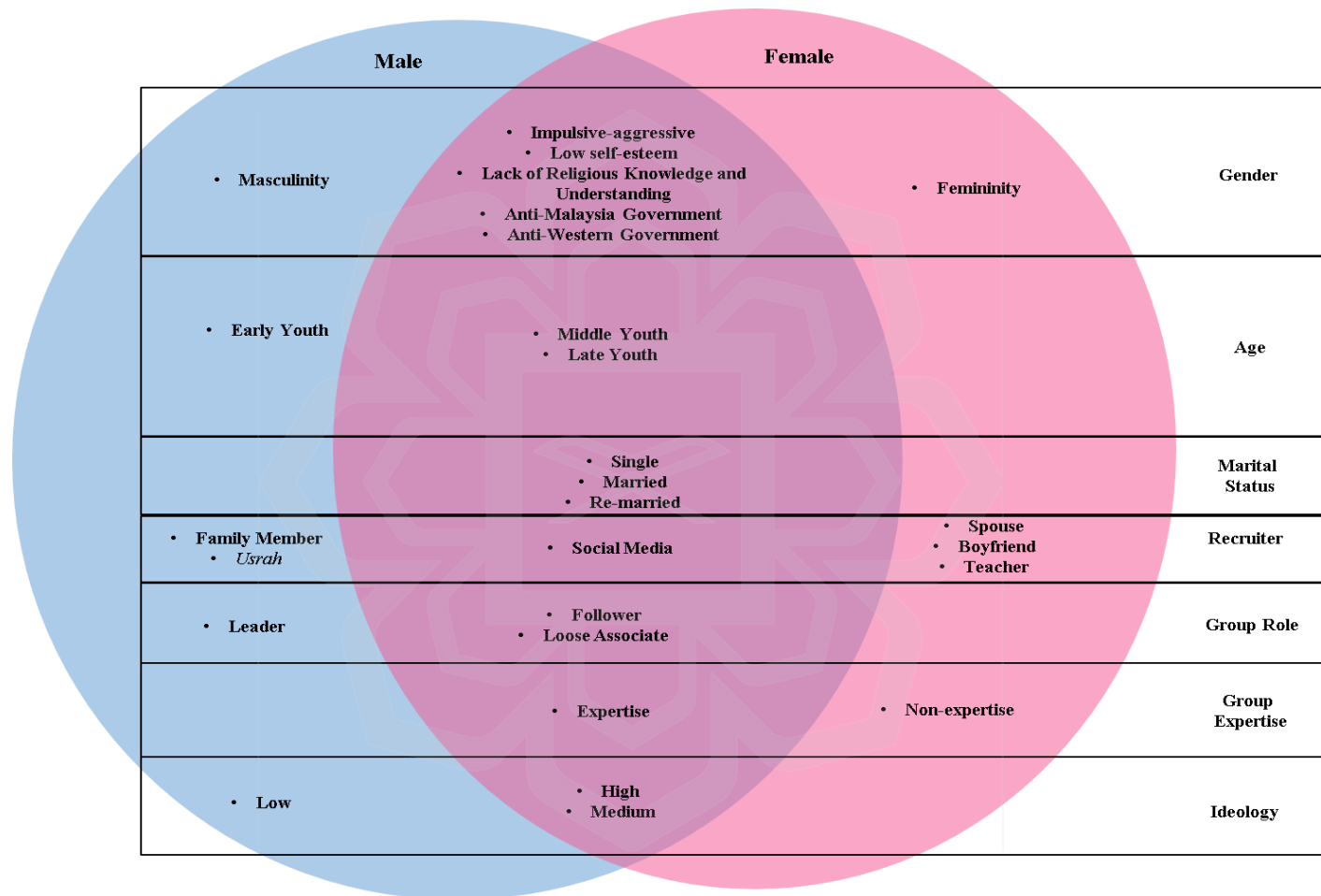


Figure 2.5 Analysis of The Youth Radicalisation Model

Based on Diagram 2.5, there are seven key dimensions of youth PCVE in Malaysia, including gender, age, marital status, recruiter, group role, group expertise and ideology.

From YRMM's analysis, we can distinguish each profiler and gender having varied profiles in terms of age joining VE groups, with the differences extending towards the dimensions of marital status, recruiter, group role, group expertise and ideology. From there, the differences we see between male and female profiles often boils down to which characteristics are in display — when it came to male profiles, such traits would include sentiments of heroism, narcissistic tendencies, and low self-esteem.

For male profiles, recruitment typically begins during early youth, typically within the 15–18 age range, and particularly among school-aged groups; they would be commonly recruited through family members and *usrah* sessions. In terms of roles within extremist groups, males would often assume leadership positions and bring with them specialised skills, including recruitment, financing terrorism, waging attacks in-house and in Syria, and expertise in weaponry. Typically, such recruits would display low levels of ideological commitment.

In contrast, female profiles stand out by virtue of their femininity, with high empathy and sympathy towards the situation in Syria following close behind. They are often recruited because of their affectionate nature, shown through their connections to their spouse, boyfriend, and teacher. While most of them did not have any expertise, they nevertheless took up *jihad al-nikah* as a cause when joining VE groups. After joining, their femininity by way of their empathy and sympathy would most typically be employed in situations where they are to care for the elderly and children by being mothers and caregivers to them.

Meanwhile, both male and female radicalised youth share distinct characteristics. Both groups exhibit a lack of understanding of Islamic teachings, impulsive-aggressive behaviour, and anti-Malaysian and anti-Western government sentiments. In terms of age, recruitment commonly occurs between 19–24 years of age (middle youth), coinciding with higher education or early employment; and 25–30 years of age (late youth), during the working stage. Given their age, both are recruited through

social media platforms. Marriage status does not seem to be a deterring factor, as we see members of both groups being recruited while single, married and re-married. After joining, their roles within extremist groups would typically be followers or loose associates. Despite this, both male and female members have demonstrated expertise as suicide bombers — an obvious show of a high level of ideological commitment.

Hence, it is recommended that the PCVE youth programs initiative be conducted with gender-centric criteria in mind, whilst also exploring how the dimensions of age, gender, marital status, recruiter, group role, group expertise and ideology prevent youth from joining VE groups.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the pathways of individual radicalisation show both similarities and differences across genders, influenced by variations in motivation and purpose. There is no single reason driving youth to join these groups — the factors are diverse and unique to each individual. Therefore, analysing specific demographic factors, recruitment strategies and ideological dimensions is crucial in developing targeted Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) modules that effectively address the distinct needs of individuals and genders.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM PROGRAMMING FOR RADICALISED YOUTH IN MALAYSIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the implementation of PCVE youth programs in Malaysia from 2017 to 2023, focusing on initiatives led by the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS), Malaysian Defense Intelligence Organisation (MDIO), Malaysia's Ministry of Defense (MINDEF) and the Malaysian Prison Department. These four agencies were selected for their active role in conducting PCVE youth programs nationwide. The analysis explores key elements such as program names, types, thematic focus and speakers. The information was gathered through interviews with relevant officers and a review of official websites from SEARCCT, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS), Malaysian Defence Intelligence Organisation (MDIO)(MINDEF) and the Malaysian Prison Department. The findings aim to provide a guiding framework for enhancing future PCVE youth modules in Malaysia.

### **3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF P/CVE YOUTH PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA**

Since 2017, Malaysia has implemented PCVE youth programs using a soft-approach strategy. These initiatives have been led by various organisations, including SEARCCT, Extremism Analytical Research Unit (EARU-ISTAC) IIUM, KBS, MDIO and the Malaysian Prison Department.

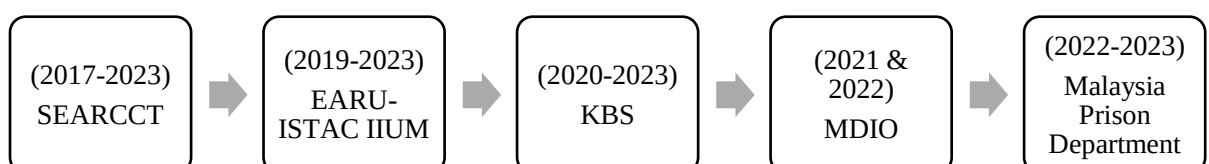




Figure 3.2 An Overview of PCVE youth program development

### **3.2.1 Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT)**

SEARCCT has established in 2003, serves as a regional counter-terrorism centre focusing primarily on training, capacity-building, research, digital counter messaging and public awareness programmes. In collaboration with other governments and international organisations, the centre also promotes Malaysia's perspective on the most effective means of countering the threat posed by terrorism. On the other note, SEARCCT has held various types of training courses, in collaboration with numerous countries which include Investigation and Legal Aspects; Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive and Crisis Management; Aviation, Maritime and Transportation Security; Cyber Terrorism; Prevention and Rehabilitation; Terrorism Financing; and Youth and Terrorism. In addition to that, SEARCCT was the first agency conducted PCVE youth programs in Malaysia in 2017 and continuously until 2024 (SEARCCT, 2020).

In 2017, SEARCCT launched its first PCVE youth program in giving awareness to youth on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism through the University Lecture Series (ULS), which was conducted at multiple institutions, including Kolej Profesional MARA Beranang, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Institut Kemahiran MARA (IKM) Kuala Lumpur, Kolej Yayasan UEM in Lembah Beringin, and Kolej Damansara Utama (KDU) in Glenmarie (SEARCCT, 2017).

This initiative continued in 2019 with a variety of programs, such as dialogue conferences and seminars such as “Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference: Youth Summit on International Peace and Security” and the “Building Community Resilience Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issues”. In addition to that, SEARCCT launched public awareness campaigns, including “Hebat Youth! Positive Expression” (HYPE) and “Move - #SenjataSaya”, as well as media projects, such as a digital miniseries in collaboration with Suria FM titled “Bongkar!” and a video project called “Curbing Ideologies of Violent Extremism Through Comics and Technology” (CIVETCAT) (SEARCCT, 2019).

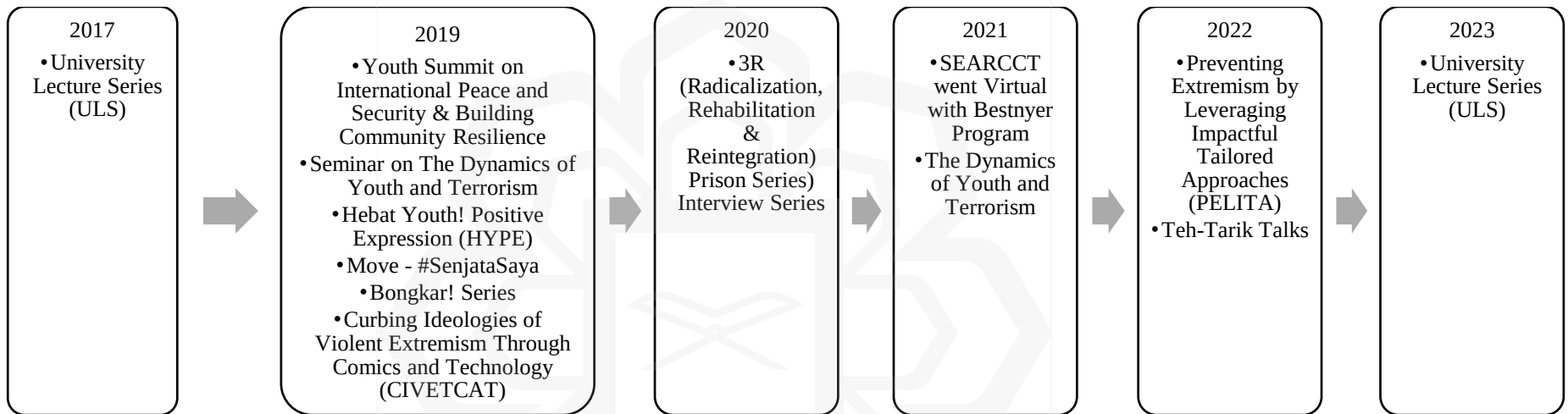


Figure 3.2.1 SEARCCT Youth Program (2017-2023)

In 2020, SEARCCT introduced the 3R (Radicalisation, Rehabilitation & Reintegration) Prison Series, an interview series designed to understand and address extremism in prison contexts. In 2021, SEARCCT held the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP)-SEARCCT Seminar on “The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issues”, through online due to the pandemic restrictions (SEARCCT, 2020).

In 2022, SEARCCT expanded its initiatives by introducing innovative prevention techniques, such as “Preventing Extremism by Leveraging Impactful Tailored Approaches” (PELITA) forum,” a series of short video discussions on extremism which is known as the “Teh-Tarik Talks” and a monitoring and evaluation program in collaboration with youth with the aims to develop strategies for building resilience (SEARCCT, 2022).

In 2023, SEARCCT replicated the same ULS at UiTM Sabah. These initiatives were designed to counter violent extremism by raising awareness, fostering engagement and enhancing resilience among Malaysian youth (SEARCCT, 2023).

### **3.2.2 Extremism Analytical Research Unit (EARU-ISTAC) IIUM**

EARU-ISTAC start its research centre in 2019 by initiated project on “Understanding Extremist Discourse, Intervention and Rehabilitation: Bridging the Gap between Stakeholders in Malaysia and Southeast Asia”. This research centre was under ISTAC-IIUM with joint experts from various fields such as history, political science, psychology, communication and terrorist rehabilitation expertise from IIUM and other institutions such as ISTAC-IIUM, Mercy Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). The objectives are to leverage on existing and potential expertise on religious extremism and rehabilitation in Malaysia and the region for capacity building with lab at ISTAC as facilitating platform and to create a playbook and modules on religious extremism and rehabilitation for the purposes of sustainability networking, training, public engagement and capacity building (Discussion with Dr. Danial Yusof, March 2018; Interviewee 9, personal interview, January 2023).

The purpose of this project is to create an academic platform that consolidates existing knowledge while addressing gaps to develop modules and content for certificate-level courses and workshops. The project covers a wide range of topics, including the history of religious extremism, the discourse surrounding Muslim extremism, the psychology behind Muslim extremism, the role of social media in Muslim extremism, the international context of Muslim extremism, and approaches to rehabilitation and intervention. These programs are designed to cater to specialists and participants from diverse fields, including state security consultants, law enforcement officers, researchers, business professionals and members of civil society in Malaysia, ASEAN countries, and global partners (Interviewee 9, personal interview, January 2023).

Additionally, the data from this project has been utilised for academic purposes, including the cultivation of new scholars in the fields of religious extremism and rehabilitation, the publication of journals and books and the organisation of roundtables and conferences. These efforts aim to foster the development of a comprehensive ecosystem in Malaysia, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and among global partners. In 2021, in collaboration with the University of Maryland, USA, the research center expanded its expertise in Geographic Information System (GIS), profiling and simulation. In extended to that, the research centre has conducted PCVE youth programs, research and launched its own web portal mycveguide.com, to serve as a resource for educational materials, awareness campaigns, community engagement and research and policy development (Interviewee 9, personal interview, January 2023).

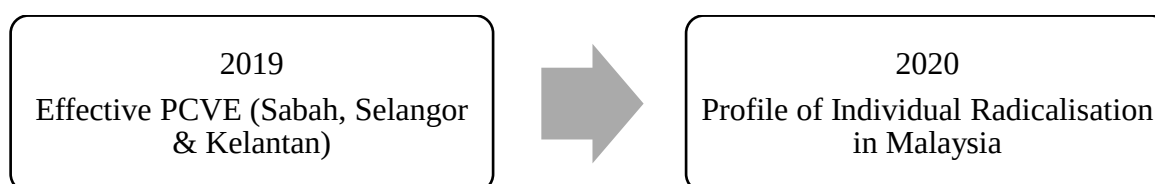


Figure 3.2.2 EARU-ISTAC Youth Program (2017-2023)

In August 2019, ISTAC-IIUM, in collaboration with the Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research and Management Systems International (MSI-Tetra Tech), conducted a study to identify relevant and effective PCVE narratives for Malaysian youth in Kelantan, Selangor, and Sabah. This research was prompted by findings from the “Malaysian Baseline Program Study,” which revealed that youth in these regions demonstrated high levels of support for Malaysian foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) (Ismail, 2023). The six-month study was participated by 615 youths from Kelantan (212 participants), Selangor (201 participants) and Sabah (202 participants). The study employs survey, focus group discussion (FDG) with 14 participants and interviews with 9 practitioners (MYPCVE Guide Website, 2020).

In 2020, in receiving training on constructing profile of individual radicalisation in Malaysia by the University of Maryland, USA, the research centre produced research titled “Pathway of radical youth in Malaysia”. The findings from this research have been a major reference in conducting PCVE youth programs in Malaysia. The pathways identified has been used and referred by KBS in created PCVE youth programs in Malaysia in 2020 and 2023 (Interviewee 9, personal interview, January 2023).

### 3.2.3 Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS)

KBS as a ministry of youth has taken a full responsibility in handling youth in Malaysia. Consistent with that, KBS with the help of the Malaysian Institute for Youth Research (IYRES)'s research findings and EARU-ISTAC IIUM has initiated its first PCVE youth program in 2020. The program continuously initiated yearly until 2023 (Interviewee 7, Personal Interview, March 27, 2023)

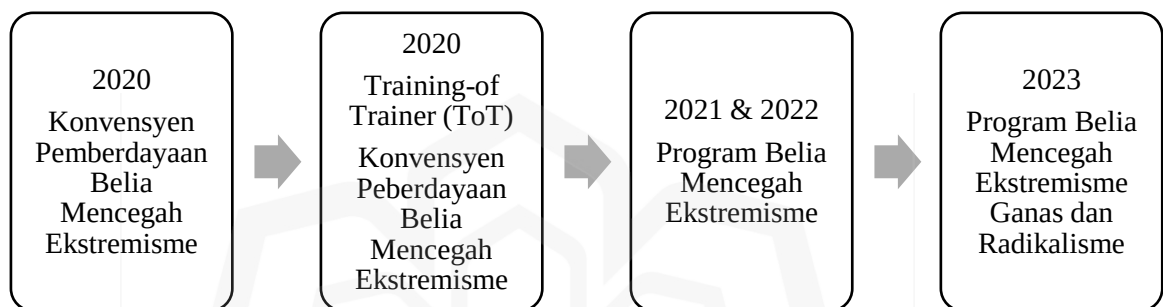


Figure 3.2.3 KBS Youth Program (2017-2023)

KBS launched its first PCVE Youth Program in 2020 with the Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme at national and three zonal levels north, west and south. This was followed by the 2020 Training-of-Trainers (ToT) for the same program, and the Program Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme in 2021 and 2022 with 5 cohorts through online. In 2023, KBS introduced the Program Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme. These initiatives demonstrate KBS's commitment to consistently implementing the PCVE youth program each year (Interviewee 7, Personal Interview, March 27, 2023)

### 3.2.4 Malaysian Defense Intelligence Organisation (MDIO)- Ministry of Defense Malaysia (MINDEF)

MDIO has initiated its first PCVE program in 2021. MDIO took responsibility in conducting PCVE youth program not only to the youth in general but also to its own Anggota Tentera Malaysia (ATM) officer, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia

(UPNM) students, Orientasi Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomatik (PTD) and radical detainees. It has conducted the 39 series of PCVE programs from 2021 to 2022 with total 63,170 attendees (Interviewee 2, Personal Interview, January 11, 2023).

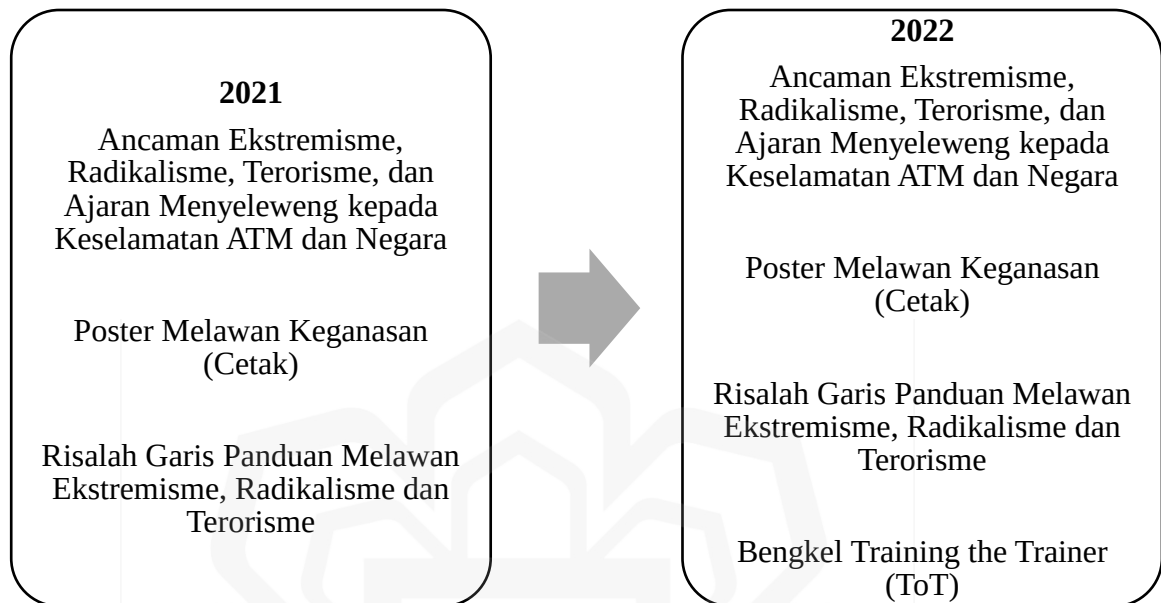


Figure 3.2.4 MDIO youth program (2017-2023)

MDIO launched its PCVE youth program in 2021, followed by another initiative in 2022. In both years, MDIO conducted activities addressing Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme, Terorisme, dan Ajaran Menyeleweng kepada Keselamatan ATM dan Negara, distributed Poster Melawan Keganasan and circulated the Risalah Garis Panduan Melawan Ekstremisme, Radikalisme dan Terorisme. In 2022, MDIO also introduced a ToT program. It also has produced poster “Melawan Keganasan” which was primarily distributed to military installations, while the brochure “Garis Panduan” was shared with both military personnel and civilians (Interviewee 2, Personal Interview, January 11, 2023)

### **3.2.5 Bahagian Banduan/ Tahanan Radikal dan Berisiko Tinggi, Malaysia Prison Department**

Malaysia Prison Department under Bahagian Banduan/Tahanan Radikal dan Berisiko Tinggi has start initiated its first PCVE youth program in 2022 and continue to 2023 (Elahi, 2023)

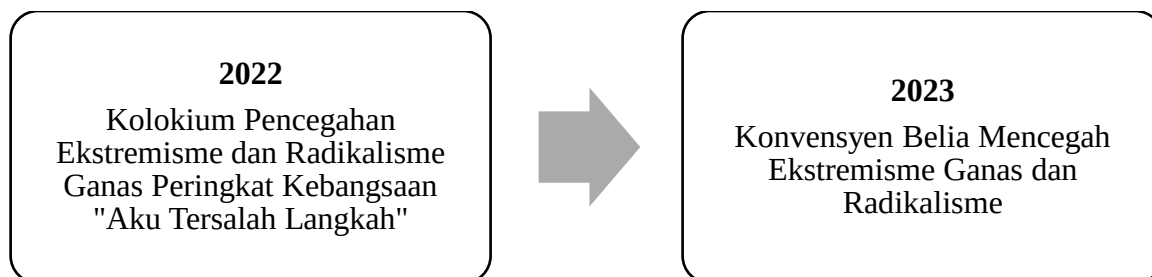


Figure 3.2.5 Malaysia Prison Department Youth Program (2017-2023)

In 2022, the Malaysia Prison Department launched the Kolokium Pencegahan Ekstremisme dan Radikalisme Ganas Peringkat Kebangsaan titled “Aku Tersalah Langkah”, followed by the Konvensyen Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme in 2023 in giving an awareness on radicalization, extremism and terrorism to their officers and youth at large (Interviewee 2, Personal Interview, December 11, 2023)

### 3.3 PCVE AWARENESS TALKS FOR YOUTH, 2017-2023

The PCVE awareness talk programs for youth in Malaysia between 2017 and 2023 will be analysed based on programs conducted by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT. These agencies were selected due to their significant involvement in implementing PCVE youth programs in Malaysia. This section will analyse various aspects of these programs, including their name, types, topics and speakers. The aim of this analysis is to serve as a reference for improving and refining future PCVE youth modules in Malaysia.



### 3.3.1 Name of the Awareness Talk Program

The term “name of the awareness talk program” refers to the specific title given to an awareness initiative by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT between 2017 and 2023. These titles are designed to reflect the program’s objectives and key topics, making them easily understandable for participants. Below is a compilation of program names organised by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT from 2017 to 2023.

Table 3.3.1 Name of the Awareness Talk Program

| Agency                     | Name of the Awareness Talk Program                                                                                |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KBS                        | Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia <b>Mencegah Ekstremisme</b>                                                         |
|                            | Program Belia <b>Mencegah Ekstremisme</b>                                                                         |
|                            | Program Belia <b>Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme</b>                                                   |
|                            | ToT<br>Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia <b>Mencegah Ekstremisme</b>                                                  |
| MDIO                       | <b>Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme, Terorisme, dan Ajaran Menyeleweng</b> kepada Keselamatan ATM dan Negara      |
| Malaysia Prison Department | Kolokium Pencegahan <b>Ekstremisme dan Radikalisme Ganas</b> Peringkat Kebangsaan “ <b>Aku Tersalah Langkah</b> ” |
|                            | Konvensyen Belia <b>Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme</b>                                                |
| SEARCCT                    | University Lecture Series (ULS) Program<br>Introduction to <b>Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism</b> in Malaysia     |

|  |                                                                                                                                 |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference: Youth Summit on International <u>Peace and Security</u> & Building Community Resilience |
|  | Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and <b>Terrorism</b> : Understanding and Countering the Issues                                 |

**Note:** The University Lecture Series (ULS) on *Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia* will only be listed once, regardless of its conducted at multiple institutions (e.g., Kolej Profesional MARA Beranang, USIM, IKM Kuala Lumpur, Kolej Yayasan UEM, and KDU Glenmarie). In addition to that, the programs listed here are specifically programs that conducted PCVE youth awareness talks.

Based on Table 3.3.1, KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT commonly use terms such as “mencegah,” “ekstremisme,” “ganas,” “radikalisme,” “ancaman,” “terorisme,” “ajaran menyeleweng,” “Aku Tersalah Langkah,” and “counter-terrorism.” These terms are intended to clearly communicate the program’s objectives and key topics. The organisers opinion such terminology requires no further explanation, as it directly addresses the issue, making it easier for participants, at-risk individuals or those seeking awareness to engage and join the program initiated (Elahi, 2023; Haron, 2023; Ahmed, 2020; Asmani, 2023; Sharif, 2020; Yusof, 2020; El-Muhammady, 2020; Ismail, 2020). However, this approach has faced criticism, particularly regarding the repeated use of similar terms year after year, the reliance on language with negative connotations and the resulting pessimistic portrayal of the issues being addressed (Participant Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme, 2020; Interviewee 11, personal interview February 20, 2020).

Firstly, KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT commonly more or less used the same topic. For example, “Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme”, “Program Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme”, “Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme, Terorisme dan Ajaran Menyeleweng kepada Keselamatan ATM dan Negara”, Kolokium Pencegahan Ekstremisme dan Radikalisme Ganas Peringkat Kebangsaan “Aku Tersalah Langkah”, “Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia” and “Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issues”. Notably, only one program title that uses different wording such as Commonwealth Youth

Dialogue Conference: Youth Summit on International Peace and Security & Building Community Resilience. The repeated use of similar topics over the years has led the participants in opinion that the organisers are just repeating the same content without offering new insights. As a result, alumni participants may be less inclined to rejoin and new participants might also lose interest, perceiving the programs are just the same despite being conducted in different years or by different organisers Interviewee 11, personal interview February 20, 2020).

Secondly, the word selection in previous program was gigantic and hard to understand. For example, the participant has the difficulty in understanding the word “radicalism”, radikalisme”, “ekstremisme”, “exstremism”, “terrorism”, “terrorisme” and “counter-terrorism” since they are not familiar with the word and commonly this is their first time knowing and encountering the words (Interviewee 11, personal interview February 20, 2020). This unfamiliarity led participants to ask the organizers basic questions such as:

Eh apa tu radikalisme, first time I dengar, I tak faham apa maksud radikalisme, terorisme and extremism, (Participant Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme.

This aligns with Asrul Daniel’s (2019) findings, which emphasise the importance of carefully selecting program titles, as they serve as an early determinant for participants to clearly understand the program’s objectives and purpose. Without clear and accessible titles, the program risks failing to achieve its intended outcomes. As noted by Ku Mat (2020), many participants appeared disengaged during the program, with some not paying attention and even falling asleep.

Thirdly, the word choices in previous program titles often carried negative connotations. For instance, some participants misunderstood the intent of the programs, believing that the organisers might be attempting to recruit them into VE groups rather than providing awareness and education on the issue. This misunderstanding instilled fear and scepticism, leading to a lack of interest and demotivation to participate and join the program conducted since participants began to perceive the programs as potentially harmful rather than beneficial. This is consistent with Adlyss (2020), who noted that

poorly chosen terminology could cause participants to assume the organisers had ulterior motives, such as recruitment. This concern was explicitly expressed by participants, with one stating:

“Do you want to recruit us?” (Interviewee 11, personal interview February 20, 2020).

Moreover, participants often displayed a pessimistic attitude toward program titles, assuming that the issues addressed were irrelevant to them because they believed they would never commit such offenses. For instance, titles like “Kolokium Pencegahan Ekstremisme dan Radikalisme Ganas Peringkat Kebangsaan: Aku Tersalah Langkah” were perceived as unrelatable, further reinforcing their disinterest and detachment (Participant Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme, 2020). As a result, they viewed the organisers’ efforts as unnecessary or irrelevant to them. This sentiment aligns with observations that it is challenging to attract participants to PCVE youth programs unless incentives, such as monetary rewards, accommodations, or merit points to improve their KPIs, are offered. Without such incentives, turnout tends to be low because many youths do not perceive the importance of these programs, lack adequate information on the issue and do not consider themselves at risk of committing such offenses (Interviewee 9, Personal Interview, January 16, 2023). This perspective is echoed in statements from participants, such as one from the Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme (2020), who asked, “Why do I need to join this program? I am confident that I will never join any VE groups”.

Such responses indicate that the dangers of radicalisation and extremism have not been emphasised to the same extent as other issues, such as “the danger of drugs”. This gap in awareness may contribute to participants’ lack of interest and engagement with these programs.

Hence, to address the issues of repetitive, overly complex, negatively connotated and pessimistic program titles, Asrul Daniel (2020) proposed that topic selection should be catchy, engaging and easy to remember. He emphasised that first impressions are crucial; if participants find a program’s title relatable, appealing and aligned with their interests, they are more likely to join, fearing they might miss out on

an enjoyable and meaningful program. Furthermore, such programs can gain attraction on social media since participants at this age are likely to share their experiences on platforms like Instagram. With that, it fosters voluntary participation, as attendees are drawn to the program out of genuine interest rather than obligation.

In addition to that, Asrul Daniel (2020) also suggested using acronyms to create memorable and easy-to-pronounce program titles. For example, SEARCCT introduced creative and concise names such as “HYPE (Hebat Youth! Positive Expression)”, “Move - #SenjataSaya”, “PELITA (Preventing Extremism by Leveraging Impactful Tailored Approaches)” and “Project 3R (Radicalisation, Rehabilitation & Reintegration)”. These techniques ensure the program names are not only memorable but also resonate with participants. Additionally, it is important to use titles with positive connotations that it will inspire hope and optimism, particularly for younger audiences. Incorporating words like “peace” or “love” in program names can convey a sense of purpose and positivity. For instance, SEARCCT’s “Youth Summit on International Peace and Security & Building Community Resilience” effectively communicates the program’s goals while projecting a hopeful message for the future. This combination of catchy titles, relatable content and positive language can significantly enhance the program’s appeal and effectiveness in engaging youth.

Based on the above analysis, it is recommended that future PCVE youth program modules avoid using terms like “radicalism,” “radikalisme,” “extremism,” “ekstremisme,” “terrorism,” “terrorisme,” and “counter-terrorism.” Instead, program names should incorporate positive words like “peace” and be designed to be eye-catching, engaging and easy to remember, preferably using simple and memorable acronyms.

### **3.3.2 Types of Awareness Talk Programs**

The term “types of awareness programs” refers to the different formats or methods employed by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT to implement PCVE youth programs in Malaysia from 2017 to 2023. Below is a

compilation of the types of awareness programs conducted by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT from 2017 to 2023.

Based on Table 3.2.2, KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT have implemented distinct types of PCVE youth programs. For example, KBS organised conventions and Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions, MDIO and the Malaysia Prison Department conducted colloquiums and SEARCCT focused on seminars. According to discussions with Asmani (2023), the selection of these program types was guided by several factors, including the program's objectives, the target youth group, the targeted number of participants, the extent of collaboration with other stakeholders and the budget allocated for the program.

Firstly, the type of program chosen varies depending on its objectives. For example, KBS, MDIO, SEARCCT and the Malaysia Prison Department have utilised conventions, seminars and colloquiums to raise awareness among participants. In contrast, KBS has specifically conducted ToT programs designed to provide in-depth training to participants. Each format was thoughtfully selected to align with the program's purpose, ensuring effective delivery and meaningful engagement with the participants.

Secondly, the type of program varies depending on its targeted youth groups, which are categorised into three groups which are early youth (school students), middle youth (university students and young professionals) and late youth (working adults). For instance, KBS and SEARCCT conducted conventions, seminars and ToT sessions, targeting school and university students. In contrast, MDIO and the Malaysia Prison Department organised colloquiums, focusing on their own officers. This difference is largely due to time constraints, since students generally have more availability, while working adults face limitations due to their job responsibilities (Interviewee 3, personal interview, December 2023).

Thirdly, the type of program varies depending on its expected number of participants. For example, KBS adopted the convention format to accommodate a large-scale target audience, including all youth in Malaysia aged 15 to 30. In contrast, MDIO and the Malaysia Prison Department chose colloquiums, as their programs focused on

smaller and specific groups such as their own officers and a limited number of youth participants. Similarly, SEARCCT targeted a smaller and more specific audience by conducting multiple events with a focused scope.

Fourthly, the type of program varies depending on its number of collaborators involved. For example, KBS adopted the convention format due to its reliance on extensive collaborations with various agencies to address its limited expertise in this area (Asmani, 2023). In 2020, KBS partnered with EARU-ISTAC and the Youth Power Club (YPC), and from 2021 to 2023, it collaborated with Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) to leverage additional funding and ideas. These collaborations required KBS to invite a diverse range of speakers, including international and national experts, think tanks, academicians, youth groups, NGOs, and CSOs. The program also incorporated a variety of modules, such as talks, visits, exhibitions, forums and group discussions, ensuring diverse perspectives and alignment with the goals of the program and its collaborators. In contrast, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT primarily conducted seminars and colloquiums, relying heavily on their internal expertise rather than extensive collaboration with other stakeholders (Interviewee 3, Personal Interview, December 11, 2023); Interviewee 2, Personal Interview, January 11, 2023). Their collaboration was limited to universities for participant engagement and selectively included international experts, national specialists and academicians to enrich their programs. Beyond these collaborations, they primarily relied on their internal expertise as enforcement agencies, leveraging the specialised training they received from the UNODC.

Lastly, the type of program depending on its budget allocated by the organisers. For example, KBS opted for the convention format because their larger budget enabled them to organize multi-day events, which included accommodations, meals for participants and a greater number of speakers (Asmani, 2023). In contrast, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department, and SEARCCT, with smaller budgets, were limited to one-day programs featuring fewer speakers and primarily relied on their internal expertise (Interviewee 3, Personal Interview, December 11, 2023); Interviewee 2, Personal Interview, January 11, 2023; Discussion with Dr. Ahmad El-Muhammady, 2020)

In conclusion, it is recommended that the type of future PCVE youth module programs be determined by several key factors, including the program's objectives, the target youth group, the expected number of participants, the level of collaboration with other stakeholders, and the allocated budget. These factors ensure that the program is tailored to its purpose, effectively engages its intended audience, accommodates the expected scale of participation, leverages resources and expertise through collaboration and operates within the available financial constraints.





Table 3.3.2 Types of Awareness Talk Programs

| Agency | Name of the Program                                                      | Tentative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KBS    | (2020)<br>Konvensyen<br>Pemberdayaan<br>Belia<br>Mencegah<br>Ekstremisme | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convention and Ice Breaking briefing;</li> <li>2. Motivational Lecture on “The Millennials and Z’s Goals”;</li> <li>3. Briefing on “Trends in Malaysian Youth Involvement in Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>4. Exhibition and Interactive Exhibition of Violent Extremism and Terrorism;</li> <li>5. Workshop on “Factors of Violent Extremism and Terrorism” Case Study Workshop;</li> <li>6. Panel Discussion “How Youth Affected Symptoms of Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>7. Motivational Interviewing for at-risk youth;</li> <li>8. Islamic Forum “The Concept of Jihad and Youth Hates Extremism”;</li> <li>9. Visits and Forums or Dialogues of Civilization “The Role of Multi-Religious Communities in Preventing and Against Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>10. A “Bright Click” briefing on social media usage;</li> <li>11. “Law on Violent Extremism and Terrorism” Brief Talk;</li> <li>12. “Narrative and Youth Workshop: A Form of Social Media Campaigns”;</li> <li>13. Talks and “Sharing the Experiences of Rehabilitation of Ex-Prisoner of Violent Extremists and Terrorism”;</li> <li>14. Lecture and Sharing Research Findings on “The Role of Family and Women in Preventing Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> </ol> |

|  |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                                                            | <p>15. The “ICONS Simulation”; and</p> <p>16. Group discussion on draft “Malaysian Youth Resolution Preventing and Against Violent Extremism and Terrorism”.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|  | <p>2021&amp;2022<br/>Program Belia<br/>Mencegah<br/>Ekstremisme</p>                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Webinar – “Malaysia Tempat Selamat Bagi Pengganas?” by Dr. El-Muhammady;</li> <li>2. Webinar – “Adakah Keganasan Berkesan Mendatangkan Perubahan?” by Thomas Koruth Samuel (UNODC);</li> <li>3. Webinar – “Wanita dan Keganasan”, by Puan Dina Zaman (IMAN Research);</li> <li>4. Webinar – “Fikir Proporsional, Tindak Profesional”, by Jufitri Joha (Presiden Majlis Belia Malaysia);</li> <li>5. Bengkel – “Mengenali Ekstremisme, Konsep Kemuliaan Insan &amp; Agenda Bangsa Malaysia”, Perbincangan dalam kumpulan (PDK-1 &amp; 2), “Rehabilitasi Ekstremis, Pengalaman Sebenar”, “Khidmat Bakti dan Misi Kemanusiaan Sebagai Kaedah Menangani Ekstremisme”, and</li> <li>6. Resolution.</li> </ol> |
|  | <p>(2023)<br/>Program Belia<br/>Mencegah<br/>Ekstremisme<br/>Ganas dan<br/>Radikalisme</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction on Violent Extremism and Radicalism by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Danial;</li> <li>2. Youth and Terrorism by RMP;</li> <li>3. Forum: Palestine Conflict vs. Extremism &amp; Radicalism by ISTAC-IIUM, FGIS and Global Peace Mission);</li> <li>4. The Role and Initiatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) in Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalism by KBS;</li> <li>5. Action Plan to Address Violent Extremism by MOHA;</li> <li>6. Terrorism and Social Media by UNODC;</li> <li>7. Workshop: Group Discussion for Proposal and Planning Discussions for Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalism Initiatives;</li> </ol>                                                       |

|      |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      |                                                                                                              | <p>8. Workshop: Presentation and discussion for Proposal and Planning Discussions for Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalism Initiatives; and</p> <p>9. Resolution.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|      | <p>Training-of-Trainer (ToT)<br/>Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme</p>                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convention and Ice Breaking briefing;</li> <li>2. Motivational Lecture on “The Millennials and Z’s Goals”;</li> <li>3. Briefing on “Trends in Malaysian Youth Involvement in Violent Extremism and Terrorism” by E8;</li> <li>4. Forum “Meningkatkan Kesedaran Belia Tentang Ekstremisme Ganas dan Terorisme by EARU-ISTAC;</li> <li>5. Social media and recruitment by SEARCCT;</li> <li>6. Islamic Forum “The Concept of Jihad and Youth Hates Extremism” by ACCIN;</li> <li>7. Visit “Pendedahan Pelbagai Rumah Ibadat”;</li> <li>8. Inter-faith dialogue;</li> <li>9. Bengkel Meningkatkan Kesedaran Belia tentang Ekstremisme Ganas dan Terorisme;</li> <li>10. Bengkel Belia Mereka Bentuk Kempen Kesedaran dan Pencegahan Ekstremisme Ganas dan Terorisme;</li> <li>11. Group activities; and</li> <li>12. Talk “Rehabilitasi Teroris Belia”.</li> </ol> |
| MDIO | <p>Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme, Terorisme, dan Ajaran Menyeleweng kepada Keselamatan ATM dan Negara</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme dan Terorisme,</li> <li>2. Ancaman Wahabisme;</li> <li>3. Ancaman Syiah;</li> <li>4. Ancaman Ajaran Menyeleweng/ Ajaran Sesat; dan Menggunakan Agama untuk Tujuan Politik (Penunggang Agama)</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|      | (2022)                                                                                                       | Not mentioned in the prison.gov website.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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| Malaysia<br>Prison<br>Department | Kolokium Pencegahan Ekstremisme Dan Radikalisme Ganas Peringkat Kebangsaan "Aku Tersalah Langkah"               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                  | (2023)<br>Konvensyen Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme                                           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talk “Senario Keterlibatan Belia Malaysia dalam Kegiatan Ekstremisme” by Cik Nur Syuhada Binti Mokhzan , Eksekutif Penyelidik, IYRES Malaysia;</li> <li>2. Talk “Pelan Tindakan Kebangsaan Bagi Mencegah dan Menangani Fahaman Pelampau Keganasan (NAPPCVE)” by Ahmad El-Muhammady, ISTAC;</li> <li>3. Talk “Belia dan Terrorisme” by Mohd Anuar Mohd Yusoff, E8 RMP</li> <li>4. Talk “Undang - Undang berkaitan pencegahan keganasan” by En Mohamad Mustaffa P Kunyalam, Attorney General Chamber; and</li> <li>5. Forum “Pencegahan Jenayah Keganasan” by Wan Abdul Rahman bin Wan Yaman, Director Akademi Koreksional Malaysia Langkawi</li> </ol> |
| SEARCCT                          | University Lecture Series (ULS) Program “Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia UITM Sabah | No Tentative (speaking to them on the dangers of radicalisation)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                  | Dialogue Conference & Seminar (International) Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference:                           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussions;</li> <li>2. Dialogues;</li> <li>3. Group activities; and</li> <li>4. Mock Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|  | Youth Summit on International Peace and Security & Building Community Resilience                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|  | SEARCCT – MTCP Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issues        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talk “The importance of listening to the voice of the youth, the need to empower them and guiding them in building the right identity”;</li> <li>2. Talk “Malaysia’s counter-terrorism legal framework”;</li> <li>3. Group activity - Developing digital counter-messaging products;</li> <li>4. Table Top Exercise (TTX) entitled “Operation New Hope”.</li> </ol> |
|  | MTCP-SEARCCT: Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issue (Online) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seminar on youth empowerment where the agency of youth can be manifested through various platforms such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), youth councils, social media and interestingly, through arts and culture.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                              |

Note: The University Lecture Series (ULS) on *Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia* will only be listed once, regardless of its conducted at multiple institutions (e.g., Kolej Profesional MARA Beranang, USIM, IKM Kuala Lumpur, Kolej Yayasan UEM, and KDU Glenmarie)

### 3.3.3 Topics of Awareness Talk Programs

The term “programs topic” refer to the theme selection used by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT to deliver PCVE youth programs in Malaysia from 2017 to 2023. Below is a compilation of programs topic conducted by KBS, MDIO, the Malaysia Prison Department, and SEARCCT from 2017 to 2023.

Table 3.3.3 Topic of Awareness Talk Programs

| Agency | Name of the Program                                                | Tentative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| KBS    | (2020)<br>Konvensyen<br>Pemberdayaan Belia<br>Mencegah Ekstremisme | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convention and Ice Breaking briefing;</li> <li>2. Motivational Lecture on “The Millennials and Z’s Goals”;</li> <li>3. Briefing on “Trends in Malaysian Youth Involvement in Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>4. Exhibition and Interactive Exhibition of Violent Extremism and Terrorism;</li> <li>5. Workshop on “Factors of Violent Extremism and Terrorism” Case Study Workshop;</li> <li>6. Panel Discussion “How Youth Affected Symptoms of Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>7. Motivational Interviewing for at-risk youth;</li> <li>8. Islamic Forum on “The Concept of <i>Jihad</i> and Youth Hates Extremism”;</li> <li>9. Visits and Forums or Dialogues of Civilization “The Role of Multi-Religious Communities in Preventing and Against Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>10. A “Bright Click” briefing on social media usage;</li> <li>11. Talk on “Law on Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>12. “Narrative and Youth Workshop — A Form of Social Media Campaigns”;</li> <li>13. Talks and “Sharing the Experiences of Rehabilitation of Ex-Prisoner of Violent Extremists and Terrorism”;</li> <li>14. Lecture and Sharing Research Findings on “The Role of Family and Women in Preventing Violent Extremism and Terrorism”;</li> <li>15. The “ICONS Simulation”; and</li> <li>16. Draft “Malaysian Youth Resolution Preventing and Against Violent Extremism and Terrorism”.</li> </ol> |

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|  | 2021&2022<br>Program Belia Mencegah<br>Ekstremisme                                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Webinar on “Malaysia Tempat Selamat Bagi Pengganas?” by Ahmad El-Muhammady (ISTAC-IIUM);</li> <li>2. Webinar on “Adakah Keganasan Berkesan Mendatangkan Perubahan?” by Thomas Koruth Samuel (UNODC);</li> <li>3. Webinar on “Wanita dan Keganasan” by Dina Zaman (IMAN Research);</li> <li>4. Webinar on “Fikir Proporsional, Tindak Profesional”, by Jufitri Joha (Presiden Majlis Belia Malaysia);</li> <li>5. Bengkel on “Mengenal Ekstremisme, Konsep Kemuliaan Insan &amp; Agenda Bangsa Malaysia”,</li> <li>6. Group activity: (PDK-1 &amp; 2), “Rehabilitasi Ekstremis, Pengalaman Sebenar”, “Khidmat Bakti dan Misi Kemanusiaan Sebagai Kaedah Menangani Ekstremisme”, and</li> <li>7. Resolution.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                        |
|  | (2023)<br>Program Belia Mencegah<br>Ekstremisme Ganas dan<br>Radikalisme              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talk on “Violent Extremism and Radicalism” by Danial Yusof (IIUM);</li> <li>2. Talk on “Youth and Terrorism” by RMP;</li> <li>3. Forum on “Palestine Conflict vs. Extremism &amp; Radicalism “by (ISTAC-IIUM, FGIS and Global Peace Mission);</li> <li>4. Talk on “The Role and Initiatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) in Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalism” by KBS;</li> <li>5. Action Plan to Address Violent Extremism by MOHA;</li> <li>6. Talk on “Terrorism and Social Media” by UNODC;</li> <li>7. Workshop: Group Discussion for Proposal and Planning Discussions for Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalism Initiatives;</li> <li>8. Workshop: Presentation and discussion for Proposal and Planning Discussions for Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalism Initiatives; and</li> <li>9. Resolution.</li> </ol> |
|  | Training-of-Trainer (ToT)<br>Konvensyen<br>Pemberdayaan Belia<br>Mencegah Ekstremisme | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convention and Ice Breaking briefing;</li> <li>1. Motivational Lecture on “The Millennials and Z’s Goals”;</li> <li>2. Briefing on “Trends in Malaysian Youth Involvement in Violent Extremism and Terrorism” by (E8, RMP);</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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|                            |                                                                                                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Forum on “Meningkatkan Kesedaran Belia Tentang Ekstremisme Ganas dan Terorisme by EARU-ISTAC;</li> <li>4. Talk on “Social media and recruitment” by SEARCCT;</li> <li>5. Islamic Forum on “The Concept of <i>Jihad</i> and Youth Hates Extremism” by ACCIN;</li> <li>6. Visit: Pendedahan Pelbagai Rumah Ibadat;</li> <li>7. Inter-faith dialogue;</li> <li>8. Bengkel Meningkatkan Kesedaran Belia tentang Ekstremisme Ganas dan Terorisme;</li> <li>9. Workshop on “Belia Mereka Bentuk Kempen Kesedaran dan Pencegahan Ekstremisme Ganas dan Terorisme”;</li> <li>10. Group activity; and</li> <li>11. Talk on “Rehabilitasi Teroris Belia”.</li> </ol> |
| MDIO                       | Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme, Terorisme, dan Ajaran Menyeleweng kepada Keselamatan ATM dan Negara       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talk on “Ancaman Ekstremisme, Radikalisme dan Terorisme”;</li> <li>2. Talk on “Ancaman Wahabisme”;</li> <li>3. Talk on “Ancaman Syiah”; and</li> <li>4. Talk on “Ancaman Ajaran Menyeleweng/ Ajaran Sesat; dan Menggunakan Agama untuk Tujuan Politik (Penunggang Agama)”.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Malaysia Prison Department | (2022)<br>Kolokium Pencegahan Ekstremisme Dan Radikalisme Ganas Peringkat Kebangsaan "Aku Tersalah Langkah" | Not mentioned in the prison.gov website.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                            | (2023)<br>Konvensyen Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme                                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talk on “Senario Keterlibatan Belia Malaysia dalam Kegiatan Ekstremisme by Nur Syuhada binti Mokhzan (IYRES);</li> <li>2. Talk on “Pelan Tindakan Kebangsaan Bagi Mencegah dan Menangani Fahaman Pelampau Keganasan (NAPPCVE)” by Dr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (ISTAC);</li> <li>3. Talk on “Belia dan Terrorisme” by ASP Mohd Anuar Mohd Yusoff (E8, RMP);</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



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|         |                                                                                                                                                                              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Talk on “Undang - Undang berkaitan pencegahan keganasan” by Mohamad Mustaffa P Kunyalam (AGC); and</li> <li>5. Forum on “Pencegahan Jenayah Keganasan” by TKP Wan Abdul Rahman bin Wan Yaman, Director Akademi Koreksional Malaysia Langkawi.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| SEARCCT | University Lecture Series (ULS) Program<br>“Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia UITM Sabah<br>27 October 2023                                        | No Tentative<br>(speaking to them on the dangers of radicalisation)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|         | Dialogue Conference & Seminar (International)<br>Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference:<br>Youth Summit on International Peace and Security & Building Community Resilience | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hate speech;</li> <li>2. Radicalisation;</li> <li>3. Extremism;</li> <li>4. Equal opportunities;</li> <li>5. Education; and</li> <li>6. Economic growth.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|         | SEARCCT – MTCP Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issues                                                                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of listening to the voice of the youth, the need to empower them and guiding them in building the right identity;</li> <li>2. Malaysia’s counter-terrorism legal framework.</li> <li>3. Participants went through a practical session in developing digital counter-messaging products and managed to produce three short videos in a short time frame; and</li> <li>4. Table Top Exercise (TTX) entitled Operation New Hope.</li> </ol> |
|         | MTCP-SEARCCT: Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issue (Online)                                                                | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth empowerment.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Note: The University Lecture Series (ULS) on *Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia* will only be listed once, regardless of its conducted at multiple institutions (e.g., Kolej Profesional MARA Beranang, USIM, IKM Kuala Lumpur, Kolej Yayasan UEM, and KDU Glenmarie).



Based on Table 3.3.3, KBS, MINDEF, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT employed various themes and methods to conduct PCVE youth programs in Malaysia between 2017 and 2023. These methods included addressing diverse themes, aligning program content with the process of individual radicalisation, incorporating both theoretical and practical approaches, utilizing individual and group-based delivery methods, adopting online and offline modes of delivery, designing programs to produce actionable outputs and fostering inclusivity through interfaith discussions and visits.

Firstly, the topics of programs can be summarised based on a variety of themes. KBS, MINDEF, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT implemented diverse themes in their program topics, including psychology, history, youth, hate speech, women and family, religion and interfaith, social media, terrorism financing, law and rehabilitation. These themes were carefully selected based on factors contributing to youth involvement in VE groups.

Secondly, the arrangement of topics in the program aligns with the process of individual radicalisation, covering three key phases such as pre-radicalisation, radicalisation and post-radicalisation. The program begins with the pre-radicalisation phase, which aims to raise participants' awareness about the dangers of VE groups and their recruitment strategies. This segment is led by enforcement stakeholders who provide critical insights into the factors contributing to radicalization.

Next, the radicalization phase, facilitated by SEARCCT, focuses on counter-messaging and counter-narratives. Participants are equipped with practical tools to effectively challenge and combat extremist ideologies. The program concludes with the post-radicalisation phase, where ex-detainees share their personal experiences with rehabilitation and reintegration. This phase offers participants real-life perspectives on the personal, familial and societal impacts of joining VE groups. It also emphasises fostering understanding and acceptance of ex-detainees, encouraging participants to support their reintegration into society without bias or prejudice. This structured approach aims to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of the radicalisation process, underscore its consequences and promote societal cohesion through support for rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. As supported by Ahmad El-

Muhammady (2019), incorporating these phases into PCVE youth programs is essential to ensuring the program's effectiveness and relevance.

Thirdly, the topic of programs can be summarised based on the incorporation of both theoretical and practical approaches. KBS has implemented a variety of program types, including lectures, briefings, sharing sessions, workshops, group discussions, group exercises, exhibitions, visits, webinars and ICONS simulations. This combination demonstrates that KBS integrates both theoretical and practical elements into its programs. The programs typically begin with theoretical components such as talks, forums, dialogues, exhibitions and visits. These sessions provide participants with foundational knowledge on radicalisation, extremism, and terrorism, addressing these issues from various perspectives, including those of the police, prison departments, legal frameworks, religion, social media and women. The practical component is introduced later in the program, culminating in a simulation exercise using the ICONS simulation game. During the simulation, participants apply the knowledge gained earlier to handle real-life scenarios. This approach helps evaluate the program's effectiveness. For example, if the simulation results in high casualties, it indicates that participants may not have fully understood or retained the lessons from the earlier theoretical sessions. This blend of theoretical and practical approaches ensures participants not only gain knowledge but also develop the skills to apply what they have learned in real-world situations, making the programs more impactful and comprehensive (Hafiz Iman, 2020).

Fourthly, the programs topic can be categorised based on individual and group-based delivery methods. For instance, lectures, briefings, sharing sessions, panel discussions, exhibitions, visits and webinars are designed to enhance individual understanding by focusing on direct knowledge delivery. On the other hand, activities such as group discussions, group exercises and ICONS simulations emphasise group-based learning, fostering collaboration and collective problem-solving. These group-based methods are particularly beneficial for participants who may struggle to understand concepts on their own, as working in a group allows them to seek clarification and gain support from peers. This dual approach ensures that the program caters to diverse learning preferences, maximising its overall effectiveness (Interviewee 9, Personal Interview, January 16, 2023).

Fifthly, the mode of delivery for the programs was conducted through both physical and online methods. Physical delivery methods included activities such as lectures, briefings, sharing sessions, workshops, panel discussions, forums, dialogues, exhibitions and visits. However, starting in 2021, the mode of delivery transitioned to a hybrid format to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions (Interviewee 7, Personal Interview, March 27, 2023). This allowed for some sessions, particularly talks, to be conducted online, ensuring the continuity of the programs while adhering to health and safety protocols.

Sixthly, the topic selection was designed to generate actionable outputs through the National Action Plan (NAP). For example, KBS expected participants to contribute valuable insights and recommendations to support ministries in addressing terrorism-related issues (Interviewee 7, Personal Interview, March 27, 2023). These recommendations were tailored to reflect participants' perspectives and needs while incorporating the latest techniques and trends in countering terrorism, ensuring they were both relevant and practical.

Lastly, the topic of inclusivity through interfaith discussions was a significant component. For example, in 2020, KBS initiated visits and forums under the theme "Dialogues of Civilization: The Role of Multi-Religious Communities in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism" at national and zonal levels, including the North, East, and South. These programs aimed to raise participants' awareness of other religions, fostering an understanding that no religion promotes violence, contrary to certain misconceptions. This initiative was particularly relevant following incidents like the 2016 Movida nightclub attack and violence targeting non-Muslim places of worship in Malaysia. Such attacks stemmed from the false belief that non-Muslims are extreme and cannot coexist in Malaysia. As a multi-religious and multicultural country, these perceptions needed to be addressed. To tackle this issue, Ahmad El-Muhammady (2020) suggested visits to places of worship, including churches, temples and mosques, as part of forums and discussions to promote interfaith understanding. These visits proved to be highly impactful, receiving the highest satisfaction ratings from participants compared to other modules. However, the initiative faced backlash on social media from certain political parties and segments of

society, who argued that it might encourage conversion to other religions or compromise Islamic principles. This criticism was further politicised, as KBS was led at the time by Hannah Yeoh, a Chinese politician, under the Pakatan Harapan government, which was perceived as being dominated by Democratic Action Party (DAP). Despite the challenges, it is strongly recommended to reinstate these visits and forums in future PCVE modules, as their benefits far outweigh the concerns. They play a crucial role in fostering understanding, tolerance, and unity in Malaysia's diverse society.

Based on the above exposition, it is recommended that the topics of future PCVE youth module programs include diverse themes, consistent with the process of individual of radicalisations, theoretical and practical approaches, individual and group-based delivery methods, hybrid online/offline formats, focus on producing actionable outputs and promote inclusivity through interfaith discussions and visits. These elements ensure that the programs address the multifaceted nature of radicalisation, cater to different learning preferences and adapt to changing circumstances such as technological advancements or public health concerns. Furthermore, by emphasising actionable outputs, the programs can provide tangible recommendations and insights to policymakers and stakeholders, enhancing their overall impact and relevance.

#### **3.3.4 Speaker for Awareness Talk Programs**

The term “speaker of the program” refers to experts invited by KBS, the Malaysia Prison Department, and SEARCCT to deliver talks during PCVE youth programs in Malaysia between 2017 and 2023. These speakers are recognised for their expertise in areas such as radicalisation, extremism, terrorism and counter-terrorism. Their primary role is to provide valuable insights and share their knowledge and experiences to address these critical issues. Below is a compilation of speakers invited by KBS, the Malaysia Prison Department, and SEARCCT from 2017 to 2023.

Table 3.3.4 Speaker for Awareness Talk Programs

| Organizer | Title                                                                                                                                 | Speakers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| KBS       | The National Youth Empowerment Convention Against VE 2020 (National & Zonal) /<br>Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme/ | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM). (Main Collaborator)</li> <li>2. Youth Power Club (YPC);</li> <li>3. Unit E8, Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM);</li> <li>4. Malaysia Prison Department;</li> <li>5. Malaysian Institute for Youth Development Research (IYRES);</li> <li>6. Malaysian Youth Council (MBM);</li> <li>7. Young Offices Office (ROY);</li> <li>8. Institute of Public Studies; Private, Polytechnic, Community College;</li> <li>9. Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT)</li> <li>10. Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGOs (ACCIN),</li> <li>11. Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM),</li> <li>12. Wisma Majlis Perundangan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM);</li> <li>13. Pertubuhan Generasi Baru Kristian Malaysi (ANCOM);</li> <li>14. IMAN Research; and</li> <li>15. Rumah Ibadat.</li> </ol> |
|           | (2020)<br>Training-of-Trainer (ToT)<br>Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme                                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM). (Main Collaborator)</li> <li>2. Youth Power Club (YPC);</li> <li>3. Unit E8, Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM);</li> <li>4. Malaysia Prison Department;</li> <li>5. Malaysian Institute for Youth Development Research (IYRES);</li> <li>6. Malaysian Youth Council (MBM);</li> <li>7. Young Offices Office (ROY);</li> <li>8. Institute of Public Studies; Private, Polytechnic, Community College;</li> <li>9. Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs);</li> <li>10. Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGOs (ACCIN),</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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|                            |                                                                                                          | 11. Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM),<br>12. Wisma Majlis Perundangan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM);<br>13. Pertubuhan Generasi Baru Kristian Malaysi (ANCOM);<br>14. IMAN Research; and<br>15. Rumah Ibadat.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                            | Program Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme (2021 & 2022)                                                         | 1. Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM) (Main Collaborator)<br>2. Unit E8, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP);<br>3. Jabatan Belia dan Sukan Negeri (JBSN);<br>4. United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);<br>5. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM);<br>6. IMAN Research; and<br>7. Majlis Belia Malaysia (MBM).                                                                                                 |
|                            | (2023)<br>Program Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme (2023)                                | 1. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM). (Main Collaborator)<br>2. Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM) (Main Collaborator)<br>3. United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);<br>4. E8, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP); and<br>5. Ministry of Home Affairs (MOFA).                                                                                                                                                |
| Malaysia Prison Department | Kolokium Pencegahan Ekstremisme Dan Radikalisme Ganas Peringkat Kebangsaan "Aku Tersalah Langkah" (2022) | 1. Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) (Main Collaborator);<br>2. Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA);<br>3. E8, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP);<br>4. Malaysian National Security Council (MNSC);<br>5. Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia (AGC);<br>6. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);<br>7. Government agencies;<br>8. Non-governmental organization (NGOs); and<br>9. Universities at Selangor. |



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|         | Konvensyen Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme Ganas dan Radikalisme (2023)                                                                                                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pusat Latihan Pegawai Penjara (PULAPEN) (Main Collaborator);</li> <li>2. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM);</li> <li>3. E8, Royal Malaysia Police (RMP);</li> <li>4. Institute For Youth Research Malaysia (IYRES); and</li> <li>5. Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia (AGC).</li> </ol> |
| SEARCCT | University Lecture Series (ULS) Program<br>Kolej Profesional MARA, Beranang, 6 April 2017                                                                                 | 1. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM);                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|         | University Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Nilai, 26 May 2017.                                                                                                               | Not mentioned on the SEARCCT's website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|         | Institut Kemahiran MARA (IKM) Kuala Lumpur, 2 August 2017.                                                                                                                | Not mentioned on the SEARCCT's website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|         | Kolej Profesional MARA, Beranang, 8 February 2018.                                                                                                                        | Not mentioned on the SEARCCT's website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|         | Kolej Yayasan UEM, Lembah Beringin, 28 June 2018                                                                                                                          | Not mentioned on the SEARCCT's website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|         | Kolej Damansara Utama (KDU), Glenmarie, 12 March 2019.                                                                                                                    | Not mentioned on the SEARCCT's website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|         | ULS UiTM Sabah 27 October 2023                                                                                                                                            | 1. UiTM Sabah                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|         | Dialogue Conference & Seminar (International)<br>Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference: Youth Summit on International Peace and Security & Building Community Resilience | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commonwealth Secretariat; and</li> <li>2. University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|         | SEARCCT – MTCP Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and                                                                                                                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP);</li> <li>2. E8, Royal Malaysia Police (RMP);</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|  |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issues (2019)                                                            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);</li> <li>4. Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia (AGC); and</li> <li>5. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM).</li> </ol>                                                                                                            |
|  | MTCP-SEARCCT: Seminar on The Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issue (Online) (2021) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP);</li> <li>2. E8, Royal Malaysia Police (RMP);</li> <li>3. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);</li> <li>4. Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia (AGC); and</li> <li>5. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM).</li> </ol> |

According to Table 3.3.4, the speakers for the PCVE youth programs represented a diverse group of speaker collaborators, including international organisation, national, academician experts, ex-detainees, Youth Clubs, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). This collaborative approach aligns with the model proposed by Sebastian Feve and Mohammed Elshimi (2018), which highlights the importance of incorporating diverse components in PCVE efforts such as international organisations, national planners, funders, communities and civil society. Collaboration between national government agencies and various non-governmental stakeholders is essential to harmonise existing policies and foster sustainable, far-reaching transformation. For NGOs and CSOs, this framework emphasises capacity building, which enhances community involvement in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of MYPCVE. Additionally, it provides civil society with guidance and strategic frameworks to address terrorism-related issues within local communities effectively.

Firstly, international organisation. International organisations have played an important role as speakers in PCVE youth programs in Malaysia. SEARCCT, KBS and Malaysia Prison Department have invited the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to represent international organisations in delivering talks on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. These invitations aim to deepen understanding of the factors contributing to radicalisation and its impact on both regional and Malaysian contexts, latest international best practices and learn about successful strategies for preventing, countering and combating these issues that can be adapted to Malaysia's unique circumstances.

However, between 2017 and 2023, the invitation of UNODC has been inconsistent across agencies and years. For example, KBS invited UNODC from 2021 to 2023, SEARCCT extended invitations in 2019 and 2021 and Malaysia Prison Department in 2022. This inconsistency and lack of coordination among agencies have resulted in missed opportunities to develop a comprehensive understanding of the transnational nature of radicalisation and its global and local impacts. Given that international organisations play a crucial role in addressing global issues and promoting transferable policies across countries, it is essential to include them consistently as key speakers in future PCVE youth modules. Their involvement would ensure a more

comprehensive discussion and deeper understanding of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of PCVE efforts (Interviewee 9, Personal Interview, January 16, 2023)

Secondly, government agency. Between 2017 and 2023, several government agencies collaborated as speakers for PCVE youth programs organised by KBS, SEARCCT, MDIO and the Malaysia Prison Department. These included the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (IYRES), Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) and the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). However, there has been a noticeable lack of involvement from key ministries such as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM), Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Unity, Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Communications and Digital (MOD) and Ministry of Finance (MOF).

The absence of these ministries has contributed to an incomplete and less effective understanding of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, as each ministry offers unique expertise, resources and perspectives that are critical to addressing these issues comprehensively (Interviewee 2, Personal Interview, January 11, 2023; Interviewee 3, Personal Interview, December 11, 2023; Interviewee 7, Personal Interview, March 27, 2023; Interviewee 12, Personal Interview, January 11, 2023). Furthermore, the participation of RMP, IYRES, AGC and JAKIM has not been consistent across all PCVE youth programs, which has led to a lack of continuity and depth in addressing the complexities of radicalisation. The inconsistent involvement of these agencies limits the insights and strategies shared in these initiatives, undermining the overall effectiveness of the programs. Hence, it is recommended that future PCVE youth modules in Malaysia actively involve ministries such as KPWKM, MOHE, MOE, Ministry of Unity, MOH, MOD and MOF as collaborators and speakers for incorporating diverse perspectives and areas of expertise (Interviewee 11, personal interview February 20, 2020).; Participant Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme, 2020). Additionally, ensuring the consistent engagement of RMP, IYRES, AGC and JAKIM as speakers as to maintaining a comprehensive and well-rounded approach.

Thirdly, the academic experts. Between 2017 and 2023, PCVE youth programs conducted by KBS, the Malaysia Prison Department and SEARCCT included academic speakers from diverse fields such as political science, social media, psychology, women's studies and history. These experts brought valuable insights based on extensive research in their respective areas, often serving as policymakers, panel members, and consultants in designing effective interventions, de-radicalisation strategies and rehabilitation programs at the national, regional and international levels. Their presentations, combining theoretical and practical approaches, provided participants with up-to-date knowledge on terrorism trends and patterns.

However, despite this diversity, the academic experts invited were primarily from fields such as political science, psychology, social media and women's studies, while other critical areas, such as religion, were notably underrepresented. This gap has contributed to an incomplete understanding of radicalisation, particularly since religion is a significant factor influencing youth involvement in VE groups. Furthermore, while political science experts were consistently invited by all agencies, fields like psychology, history, social media and women's studies received comparatively less emphasis, as these areas were perceived as less critical by some agencies. To ensure the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of future PCVE youth programs in Malaysia, it is recommended to include academic experts from underrepresented areas such as religion, alongside psychology, history, social media and women's studies. A broader representation of expertise will provide a more holistic understanding of the factors driving youth radicalisation and improve the overall impact of PCVE initiatives.

Fourthly, ex-detainees. Between 2017 and 2023, only KBS consistently invited ex-detainees as speakers for PCVE youth programs. The inclusion of ex-detainees aimed to raise awareness among participants by providing first-hand accounts of the factors leading to involvement in VE groups and the resulting impacts on individuals, families and society. This initiative also served as part of the reintegration task assigned to ex-detainees by the Malaysia Prison Department following their release (Interviewee 3, Personal Interview, December 11, 2023). However, not all agencies included ex-detainees as speakers, largely due to concerns that their participation might inadvertently influence or recruit participants. This perception has limited the scope and potential impact of PCVE programs. To enhance the comprehensiveness and

effectiveness of future PCVE youth programs in Malaysia, it is strongly recommended that agencies include both male and female ex-detainees as speakers. Their unique perspectives and lived experiences can provide invaluable insights into the realities of radicalisation and rehabilitation, fostering a deeper understanding among participants.

Fifthly, youth clubs. The inclusion of youth clubs as speakers in PCVE youth programs is intended to help participants connect with relatable role models and highlight the importance of joining such clubs. Youth clubs can play a crucial role in reducing the likelihood of youth joining VE groups by addressing factors such as low self-esteem and the need for social belonging, which are common vulnerabilities exploited by VE groups. Speakers from youth clubs can provide advice, guidance and information on activities that promote positive engagement and personal development. Notably, only the KBS has consistently invited youth organisations, such as the Youth Power Club (YPC) and the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM), as speakers in these programs. Other agencies have not extended similar invitations, leading to a lack of representation from youth clubs. This omission has contributed to a less comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing youth involvement in VE groups. To enhance the effectiveness and representation in future PCVE youth module programs, it is strongly recommended to include youth clubs as speakers or exhibitors. Their participation can provide a relatable and empowering perspective, showcasing the benefits of positive peer networks and structured activities in preventing radicalisation among youth.

Sixthly, NGOs and CSOs. NGOs and CSOs are deeply involved with local communities and have a better understanding of their dynamics compared to other groups. Involving these organisations can help serve as a bridge between the community and other stakeholders (Interviewee 9, Personal Interview, January 16, 2023). Examples of such organisations include Angkatan Bellia Malaysia (ABIM), the Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGOs (ACCIN), Wisma Majlis Perundingan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM), INITIATE.MY and Pertubuhan Generasi Baru Kristian Malaysia (ANCOM). For future PCVE modules, collaboration with various CSOs and NGOs is encouraged. This could include organising exhibitions during the program to raise awareness and highlight their presence and contributions.

Besides the suggestions mentioned earlier, it is recommended to include think tanks in the development of new PCVE modules. Think tanks are key stakeholders in shaping policies on this issue, as they publish reports and provide consultation on policies addressing violent extremism, de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programs (Interviewee 9, Personal Interview, January 16, 2023). Inviting them as speakers offers a fresh perspective, not only because they are experts but also because they are independent entities, reducing the likelihood of bias compared to other organisations. This independence allows them to discuss issues that may not be addressed by other groups, providing participants with a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, think tanks often receive significant grants from international organisations, equipping them with extensive national and global knowledge and experience. Examples of think tanks that can contribute include IMAN Research and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia.

Additionally, Asrul Daniel (2020) proposed involving influencers to attract youth participation in PCVE programs. Influencers are highly appealing to young audiences, motivating them to join and engage with programs to meet and interact with their favourite personalities. This strategy not only increases attendance but also enhances the program's visibility among youth, as influencers promote the event on social media and invite their followers to participate. This approach was effectively demonstrated during a SEARCCT program, where the turnout was significantly higher compared to programs without influencer involvement. Leveraging social media and the presence of influencers has proven to be a powerful method for expanding the reach and impact of PCVE programs among youth audiences.

In short, it is recommended that future PCVE youth modules include a diverse range of speakers, such as representatives from international organisations, national agencies, think tanks, influencer, academic experts, ex-detainees, youth clubs, NGOs and CSOs. This approach ensures the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of the program.

### 3.4 SUMMARY OF PCVE YOUTH PROGRAMS

| Name of the Program           | Type of the Program | Topic of the Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Speakers                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Peace Word                    | Convention          | <p><b>Topic Theme:</b><br/>Psychology, youth, history, hate speech, women and family, religion and interfaith, social media, terrorism financing, law, and rehabilitation</p> <p><b>Process of Individual Radicalization:</b><br/>Pre-radicalization, radicalization and post-radicalization</p> <p><b>Incorporation of both theoretical and practical approaches</b></p> <p><b>Individual and group-based delivery methods</b></p> <p><b>Hybrid Methodologies</b></p> <p><b>Generate actionable outputs</b></p> <p><b>Inclusivity through interfaith</b></p> | <p><b>International Organization:</b><br/>UNDP &amp; UNODC</p>                                                                                                 |
| Positive Connotation          | ToT                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Government Agency:</b><br/>KBS, E8 (RMP), Malaysia Prison Department, MINDEF, JAWI, JAKIM, SEARCCT, IYRES, AGC, KPWKM, MOHE, MOE, MOH, MOD &amp; MOF</p> |
| Simple and memorable acronyms | Colloquium          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Academician Expert:</b><br/>Political science, youth, psychology, social media, women's studies, religion and history.</p>                               |
|                               | Seminar             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Ex-detainees</b></p>                                                                                                                                     |
|                               | Forum               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Youth Club:</b><br/>YPC &amp; MBM</p>                                                                                                                    |
|                               |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>NGO/CSO:</b><br/>ABIM, INITIATE.MY, ACCIN, MAPIM &amp; ANCOM</p>                                                                                         |
|                               |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Think-tank:</b><br/>ISIS &amp; IMAN Research</p>                                                                                                         |
|                               |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Youth Influencer</b></p>                                                                                                                                 |

Figure 3.4 Summary of PCVE Youth Programs



Based on interviews with KBS, the Malaysia Prison Department, MDIO and SEARCCT, as well as an evaluation of the websites of previous PCVE youth programs in Malaysia (2017–2023), the following is a summary of the programs categorised by their name, type, topics, and speakers.

Firstly, Asrul Daniel (2020) suggested renaming the modules to include words like “peace” or other positive connotations and to create simple, memorable acronyms to attract youth participants to the program.

Secondly, the type of program whether a convention, ToT, colloquium, seminar, or forum are determined by key factors such as the program’s objectives, the target youth group, the expected number of participants, the level of collaboration with stakeholders and the allocated budget. Considering these factors ensures that the program is well-suited to its purpose, effectively engages its intended audience, accommodates the scale of participation, utilises resources and expertise through collaboration and operates within financial constraints.

Thirdly, the topic selection for the program is depending on the diverse themes, alignment with the process of individual of radicalisations, theoretical and practical approaches, individual and group-based delivery methods, hybrid online/offline formats, focus on producing actionable outputs and promote inclusivity through interfaith discussions and visits. These elements ensure that the programs address the multifaceted nature of radicalisation, cater to different learning preferences and adapt to changing circumstances such as technological advancements or public health concerns. Furthermore, by emphasising actionable outputs, the programs can provide tangible recommendations and insights to policymakers and stakeholders, enhancing their overall impact and relevance.

Fourthly, speakers for the program were selected to include representatives from international organisations, government agencies, academic experts, ex-detainees, youth clubs, NGOs and CSOs, think tanks, and youth influencers. This diverse selection ensures a comprehensive and inclusive perspective while also increasing the program’s appeal and engagement. These suggestions and recommendations are based on previous

PCVE youth programs in Malaysia and are expected to be leveraged and utilised to enhance and refine the new PCVE youth module in Malaysia.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, analysing previous PCVE youth programs is crucial for developing and proposing enhanced PCVE youth modules in Malaysia. The next chapter will design and suggest new PCVE youth modules in Malaysia.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (PCVE) MODULES FOR YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

After a thorough examination of PCVE youth programs in Malaysia from 2017 to 2023, this chapter seeks to propose recommendation to improve the PCVE modules for Malaysian youth. The suggested PCVE youth modules were based on the identified youth radicalisation model (YRM) and the analysis of PCVE youth programs conducted from 2017 until 2023. Hence, this chapter seeks to proceed the discussion on the analysis of youth radicalisation model, the analysis of PCVE youth programs and suggested PCVE youth modules in Malaysia.

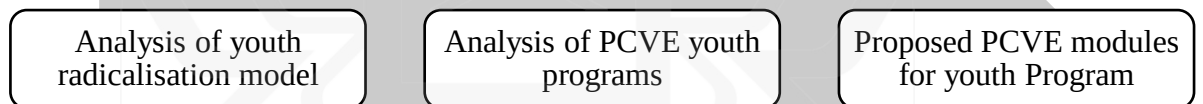
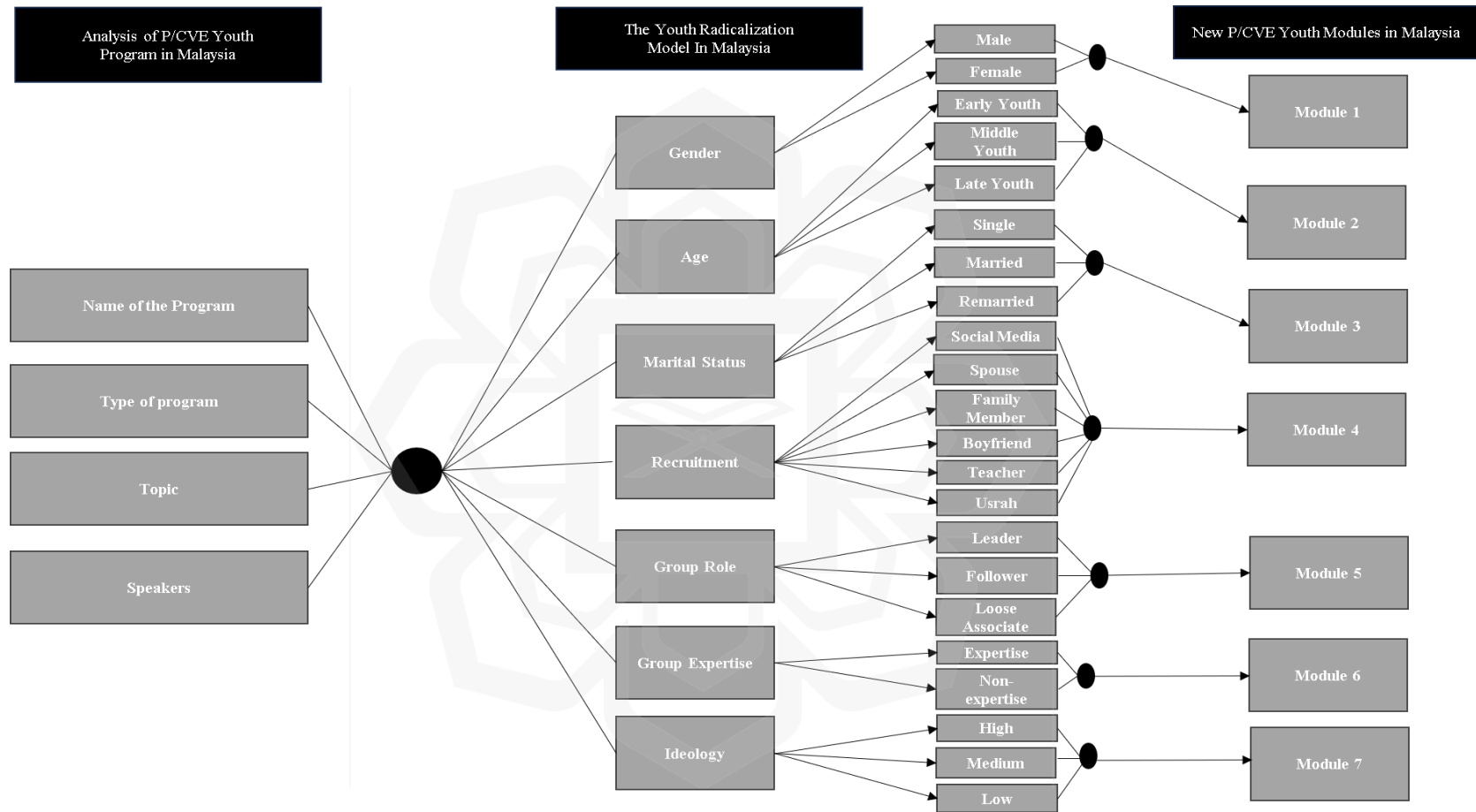


Figure 4.1 Process for developing a new PCVE youth module

#### 4.2 PCVE YOUTH MODULE IN MALAYSIA

Based on the analysis, the following are the suggested PCVE youth programs in Malaysia, which address key factors such as gender, age, marital status, recruiter, group role, group expertise and ideology. These factors are critical in shaping the program's design and delivery to effectively target the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of youth in relation to violent extremism.

Figure 4.2 PCVE youth module



#### 4.2.1 Gender

The PCVE modules for youth in Malaysia will construct two modules such as male and female. PCVE youth programs for male will be cater on psychological perspective such as heroic sentiment, narcissistic and low self-esteem. The suggested program is Expert Insights on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Interventions for Preventing Violent Extremism. This seminar, led by psychologist focuses on the principles of CBT. The aim is to help individuals recognise and challenge extremist thoughts, replacing them with constructive and positive alternatives. The session will provide insights into how CBT techniques can be applied to address harmful thought patterns such as heroic sentiment, narcissistic and low self-esteem and promote healthier ways of thinking. It will help in changing individual cognitive patterns, which in turn can lead to changes in their behaviour and emotional experiences. It is particularly effective because it focuses on present thoughts and actions, helping individuals take active steps to address their issues in a structured and goal-oriented way.

PCVE youth programs for female will be focus on emotional attachment style of program specifically discussing on the impact of the joining Muslim VE groups since most the profiler's motivation to join Muslim VE groups was *jihad al-nikah*. The suggested program is talk on Forum HERSHield (*Harnessing Empowerment to Resist Radicalization*) and Video Screening: Insights from Former Female Prisoners on Rehabilitation and Reintegration. The seminar was led by psychologist, aims to give an awareness on the women on the terrorism issue. The session will provide and a real case scenario situation why women joining VE groups, how they have been recruited, what are the ideologies and sentiments used by the VE groups and the impact of the joining VE groups. This session will help the women on the real situation of their recruitments and how to instil empowerment among women and how to react when they have been targeted for the VE groups for the recruitment purposes. It is particularly effective because women profiles are easily to be influenced with VE groups group through love and attachment sentiments.

This counter-messaging campaign session will feature a video with interviews from former female detainees who share their personal stories of being recruited by

extremist groups through social media platforms. The aim is to deliver a compelling message to women, highlighting the devastating consequences of extremism while encouraging them to reject radical ideologies. It is particularly effective because women can listen from the previous detainees and make them realized that its true.

PCVE youth programs for both male and females will be focused on lack of understanding of Islamic understanding, impulsive-aggressive, anti-Malaysia government and anti-western government. The suggested programs are counselling and therapy programs for preventing violent extremism, civic education and governance with title national security and stability by the Ministry of National Unity and terrorism from an Islamic perspective. This module, led by a professional counselor, focuses on the importance of counseling and therapy for individuals at risk of radicalisation. The aim is to provide mental health support, helping those affected to address underlying issues and emotional struggles, and guiding them toward healthier coping mechanisms to prevent further radicalisation. The session will provide insights into listen to their problems. It will help the detainees or at-risk youth person to talk with a to cater their train of thought. It is particularly effective because usually they do not have a closed relationships with families nor friends.

The topic on civic education and governance with title national security and stability by the Ministry of National Unity, aims to raise awareness and deepen understanding of the roles of the Malaysian government, Western governments and citizens in promoting peace and stability. The session will provide insights on anti-government ideologies and encourage adherence to the rules and regulations established by the government. It will help the individual to have a clear mindset of its purpose and reaction towards the government. It is particularly effective because individual who joined VE groups because they have a hate sentiment towards Malaysian government and Western government.

The topic on Peace in Islam by JAKIM aims to provide an Islamic perspective on terrorism, emphasising that terrorism is strictly prohibited in Islam. It aims to tell the truth to the individual that VE groups have distorted the Quranic verses and Hadith. The session will provide insights on how VE groups manipulate and selectively quote Quranic verses and Hadith to support their violent ideology. The program will clarify

how these groups misuse the words of Islamic scholars to justify their actions. It will also talk about the *fatwa* that has been mentioned on the religious extremism issue. It will help to equip youth with the knowledge to identify these distortions and effectively counter extremist narratives. It is particularly effective because youth have a low understanding about Islamic teachings and they tend to follow blindly the VE group due to the promoting Quranic verses and Hadith.

#### **4.2.2 Age**

The PCVE programs will be focusing on three age youth groups such as early, middle and late age. The PCVE program targeted for secondary school is Peace Week, Youth Peace Convention for tertiary-level students, and the Peace Forum for working youth. While the tentative schedule for all three programs will remain the same, the speakers will vary depending on the locality of the event. This allows the content to be specifically tailored to address the unique challenges of each locality, with speakers invited for their expertise and experience in managing local issues. These differences programs tally with the target group.

PCVE youth program suggested for male in their early youth is Peace Week, meanwhile male and female for middle youth program were suggested the Youth Peace Convention. The programs and durations are the same. The rationale for this is because suitable for the participants to be held in one week due to varieties of programs. The programs will be held at the school and university. Below are the identified programs suggested.

- 1) Gimmick from RMP to arrest the detainees and bring them to the police, and then the event start. This is to attract participants on the programs and to show them how the real situation when there is a terrorism related-offence happens in Malaysia.
- 2) The Motivational Talk will be conducted by the Counselling Department at schools, colleges, institutes, universities, and workplaces. The aim is to instil a strong sense of self-worth and vision, encouraging individuals to develop a positive mindset and future-focused aspirations. The session

will provide insights on how to be independence and positive in life. It will help the students to always be positive. It is particularly effective because youth usually will have a negative thought if they are failing or did not get what they wish.

- 3) Empowering Youth for Peace: A Comprehensive Program Briefing. This session will provide an introduction to the definitions of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. The aim is to give a clear understanding to the participants about the program and definition of words usage. It will provide an outline the key components and structure of the Youth Peace Program and insights on the tentative and definition of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. It will help the participant to have a clear overview and understanding about the program. It is particularly effective because it will know the purpose of the program.
- 4) Mapping the Pathways: Profiling Youth in Malaysia. This session will present a model for understanding youth radicalisation in Malaysia. It aims to raise awareness of the factors that contribute to youth vulnerability and provide insights into identifying at-risk individuals. The session will provide an insight individual characteristics and the pathways that lead to radicalisation. It will help the participant to identify if they have the characteristic or to check whether their families or friends to have those characteristic. It will help in paying attention to the at-risk and vulnerable individuals. It is particularly effective because it will give an awareness on youth about themselves and others characteristics.
- 5) Briefing on Youth Involvement in Terrorism: Insights from E8, RMP. This briefing, conducted by the E8 unit of the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) from each specific locality. The aim is to raise awareness about the factors driving youth participation in terrorism-related offenses and the activities that lead to their arrests. The session will provide insights on the current trends in Malaysian youth involvement in terrorism-related activities. It will help the individuals aware and understand what are the activities that could not do and will be arrested. It is particularly effective because sometimes youth did not know the activities that are under terrorism related offense.



- 6) Legal Perspectives on Violent Extremism and Terrorism: A Discussion by the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC). This briefing, conducted by the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC). The session aims to raise awareness about prohibited offenses under these laws, highlighting the legal repercussions of engaging in violent extremism and terrorism-related activities. The program will provide insights on key legislation, including Prevention of Crime Act 1959 (POCA), the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA), the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001 (AMLATFA), the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA), and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA) as well as cases of youth involvement in terrorism in Malaysia. It will help the participant to aware with the terrorism related in acts in Malaysia. It is particularly effective because usually youth did not aware with the act and thus, they commit the terrorism related offense.
- 7) Exploring the Impact of Social Media on Terrorism: A Briefing by SEARCCT. This briefing, conducted by SEARCCT. The aim is to educate youth on the influence of social media and teach them how to effectively use it for positive purposes while recognising and countering harmful content. The session will provide insights on will focus on the impact of social media in spreading extremist ideologies and recruiting new members to groups like VE groups. It will help to cover techniques for countering these messages and narratives through social media platforms. It is particularly effective because VE groups used social media in countering the new member, hence by this the Malaysian youth can be resilient and in fact counter the narrative.
- 8) Understanding the Role of Women in Terrorism: A Briefing by the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development. This briefing, conducted by Women, Family, and Community Development. The aims are to raise awareness about the exploitation of women in extremism and to empower women to take on the role of peace agents in their communities. The session will provide insights on the involvement of women in terrorism and its impact on families. It will help the women to aware on the impact of terrorism towards the family members

especially the children. It is particularly effective because women are easily to be recruited if they have been given the hope to get married.

- 9) Malaysia's Youth Policy: The Empowerment of Youth by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This session will delve into the background of Malaysia's Youth Policy. The aim is to foster a deeper understanding among young people of their inherent potential, empowering them to gain clarity and purpose in shaping their future. The session will provide insights on highlighting the significance of youth as vital human capital and their potential as future leaders of the nation. It will help the youth to have a good mindset and brave to be a future direction of the society. It is particularly effective because youth sometimes did not know their capabilities and purpose in the society.
- 10) Understanding Youth and Psychology: Insights into Behavioural Patterns and Development. This briefing, led by psychology experts. The aim is to help participants enhance their self-awareness and cultivate a positive sense of self-esteem. The session will provide insights in examining the stages of psychological development in youth and their impact on individuals. It will help the individual to understand their development and attitudes. It will help in making sure the individuals are aware with the situation. It is particularly effective to understand the development of individuals.
- 11) Exploring Terrorism Through an Islamic Perspective: Insights from JAKIM. This briefing, conducted by JAKIM. The aim is to raise awareness about the VE groups and explain its actions in light of Islamic teachings, emphasizing that such ideologies are fundamentally incompatible with Islam. The session will provide insights on fatwa regarding radicalism, extremism and terrorism. It will help participants in fully understand the ideologies of VE groups. It is particularly effective because it will give a clear understanding on the issue.
- 12) Bridging Beliefs: The Role of Interfaith Dialogue in Fostering Understanding and Peace. This interfaith dialogue on terrorism brings together representatives from diverse religious communities. Its aim is to foster mutual understanding and solidarity among different faith groups while addressing how terrorism is frequently misrepresented or

manipulated in the name of religion. The session will provide insights on the causes, impacts and religious perspectives on terrorism. It will help the participants to understand the differences of each religion and understood that they are not religion of terrorist. It is particularly effective because it will give an understanding on the issue in depth between every religion.

- 13) Implementing Effective Deradicalisation Strategies: A Workshop on Rehabilitating Radicalised Detainees in Malaysia. The session led by Malaysia Prison Department Malaysia. This workshop will provide a briefing on the implementation of the deradicalisation program for radical prisoners within prison institutions. The session aims to discuss the strategies and approaches used to rehabilitate individuals involved in extremist activities and encourage the community to support their reintegration into society. It will provide an insight on the rehabilitation strategies. It will help the participants on the clear understanding about the strategies in handling terrorism related-offense. It is particularly effective because it will instil fear to the participants on the rehabilitation strategies.
- 14) Seminar on Combatting Terrorism Financing: Investigative Approaches and Strategies by Bank Negara Malaysia. This briefing, conducted by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). The program aims to give an awareness on money laundering. The session will provide insights on a comprehensive overview of terrorism financing, covering financial intelligence, Malaysia's legal framework for countering terrorism financing, and the country's strategies to address this issue. It will also explore international counter-terrorism financing tools and the roles of various agencies involved. The objective is to equip participants with the ability to distinguish between money laundering and terrorism financing, examine different typologies of terrorism financing, and analyse case studies from both Malaysia and international contexts. It will help the participants to have a clear understanding on the issue. It is particularly effective because most of the youth did not know there is a terrorism financial act.

- 15) Rehabilitation Insights: Sharing Experiences from Former Violent Extremism and Terrorism Offenders. This session will involve sharing experiences from ex-detainees. The aim is to provide firsthand insights into the realities of the VE groups and offer advice to youth, based on the experiences of those who have undergone rehabilitation. The session will provide insight on regarding their involvement with VE groups and the impact of joining the group. The session will help to offer valuable guidance and advice to prevent others from being drawn into extremist activities. It is particularly effective because it will give a clear picture about the VE groups and its impact in joining the group.
- 16) Panel Discussion on the role of NGOs and CSOs in addressing radicalisation, extremism and terrorism: effective strategies, key challenges and collaborative Solutions. This session will explore the initiatives led by NGOs and CSOs. The discussion aims to inspire youth involvement in volunteerism with NGOs, promoting positive social contributions and active participation in efforts to counter violent extremism. The session will provide insight on how youth can engage through PCVE programs and supporting the rehabilitation of radicalised prisoners in Malaysia. It will help the youth to understand the real situation on terrorism related-offenses. It is particularly effective because it will show the path to join the NGOs and to avoid them to spend their time idly.
- 17) Sharing for Youth-by-Youth Club. This session led by youth club. This initiative aims to empower young people to understand the dangers of radicalisation and to actively participate in conversations about building resilience against extremist ideologies. This session will provide insight on personal experiences, challenges, and insights related to the risks of violent extremism. It will help participants to join youth club and find their meanings. It is particularly effective as to create a platform where youth can openly discuss and reflect on the factors that lead to extremism and how they can collectively contribute to preventing radicalization in their communities.
- 18) Seminar on the Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issue. The session led by UNDP. This seminar, aimed at

international students, will focus on the terrorism threat in Malaysia and explore strategies for countering extremism. The session will provide insights on the understanding on terrorism in Malaysia and their countries. It will help to empower participants to become change-makers in their home countries. It is particularly effective because it can apply the knowledge and skills gained to address similar challenges.

- 19) Interactive Exhibition on the Dynamics of Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Understanding, Impact, and Prevention. The exhibition from Malaysia Prison Department, Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), AGC, psychologists, Ministry of Religious Affairs, KBS and Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese Traditions club, sports and culture and arts. The aim is to educate and engage the public by exploring the evolving nature of violent extremism and terrorism. The exhibition will provide insights into the root causes, ideological drivers, and the far-reaching consequences of these issues on individuals, communities, and societies. It will help the participants to have a clear understanding and explanation from the first-hand information. It is particularly effective because it raises awareness, encourage critical reflection, and inspire proactive involvement in addressing violent extremism.
- 20) Interactive Exhibition by the Prison Department. An interactive exhibition organized by the Malaysian Prison Department will feature materials and methods used during the rehabilitation process of terrorism detainees in Malaysia, including tools such as caning equipment and other corrective measures.
- 21) Interactive Exhibition by the RMP. An interactive exhibition by the police will display materials seized in connection with terrorism offenses in Malaysia. These include homemade bombs, passports of detainees who travelled to Syria, confiscated reading materials, logos, flags and detailed explanations of terrorism-related offenses in Malaysia.
- 22) Interactive Exhibition by AGC. An interactive exhibition organised by the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) will offer an in-depth exploration of the legal framework employed in Malaysia to address and prosecute terrorism-related cases.

- 23) Interactive Exhibition by Psychologists. An interactive exhibition showcasing the psychological profiling of former youth detainees involved in terrorism cases in Malaysia. The exhibition will also include mental health screenings for participants from schools, colleges, institutes, universities and workplaces.
- 24) Interactive Exhibition by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. An interactive exhibition organised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs will showcase items confiscated from terrorist groups in Malaysia. These include banners, prayer mats and skullcaps, providing insight into the materials associated with VE groups.
- 25) Interactive Exhibition by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS). The Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) will host an interactive exhibition showcasing various youth organisations and associations across Malaysia. This initiative seeks to promote active youth engagement in constructive programs and activities, fostering a sense of purpose and reducing opportunities for unproductive or harmful behaviours.
- 26) Interactive Exhibition by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese Traditions. This interactive exhibition will explore the histories of Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese traditions, offering insights into how these belief systems reject extremist ideologies. The goal is to educate participants on the core principles of each religion and cultural tradition, emphasising their commitment to peace, tolerance and social harmony while addressing and countering any misinterpretations linked to extremism.
- 27) Interactive Exhibition by Sport Clubs in Malaysia. This interactive exhibition will showcase a wide range of sports in Malaysia, including traditional, non-traditional, and *sunnah*-inspired activities. Examples of traditional sports include *sepak takraw*, *silat*, *wau*, *gasing*, *congkak*, *tarik tali*, and *galah panjang*. Non-traditional sports such as running, football, and tennis will also be featured, alongside *Sunnah*-inspired activities like horseback riding, archery and swimming. The purpose of this exhibition is to reconnect with our cultural heritage, embrace our identity and honour the *sunnah* as a meaningful way to spend our time, ensuring these traditions and values are preserved and celebrated.

- 28) Interactive Exhibition by Culture and Arts Club of Malaysia. The interactive exhibition will showcase various aspects of Malaysian culture, including traditional dances, music and attire. It will also feature artistic activities such as *batik canting*. The purpose of the exhibition is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Malaysian cultural identity.
- 29) Theatre on Radicalisation. Theatre titled Threads of Hope: Rewriting Our Narrative. This theatre production is designed to raise awareness among Malaysian youth about the dangers of terrorism and violent extremism. Through powerful storytelling and engaging performances, the play explores the personal, social and ideological factors that lead individuals toward Muslim violent extremist VE groups. It highlights the impact of radicalisation on individuals, families and communities while offering hope and practical guidance for undoing extremist ideologies. The narrative aims to empower youth with the knowledge and resilience to reject extremism, fostering a sense of unity, critical thinking and positive identity. By rewriting the narrative, the production aspires to inspire a collective stand against terrorism and build a future of peace and understanding.

#### **4.2.2.1 Youth at Working Age Program**

The study also suggest customised program for the youth at working age group is Youth and Peace Forum by Government Agencies and Interfaith Forum on Peace: Perspectives from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese Traditions. It is a forum because to make it short time with various speakers. The rationale of this program is suitable for youth that are working, a day program. The type is forum because, it will be covering one topic but in the forum style. They did not have much time if to conducted 1 week or more than 1 day (Discussion with MKN Johor, 2024). But it can have monthly forum talks, with different topics, as the following:

- 1) Youth and Peace Forum by Government Agencies. This forum will feature panel discussions with representatives from various government agencies, including academicians, the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), the Malaysian Prison Department, the Attorney General’s Chambers (AGC), the Ministry of Women and ex-detainees. The forum aims to provide insights and foster collaboration among stakeholders to promote peace and prevent youth involvement in extremist activities. The forum will provide insights on the challenges surrounding terrorism and youth, focusing on the factors that contribute to radicalisation and the role of society in addressing these issues. It will help the participants to listen from various agencies and how the cope with the issue. It is particularly effective because they will come out with various initiative in order to combat the issue.
- 2) Islamic Forum: “The Concept of Jihad and Youth Rejecting Extremism” by JAKIM This Islamic forum, organised by JAKIM, will feature contributions from academicians, NGOs and experts in the field. The forum aims to clarify the true concept of jihad in Islam, misconceptions and emphasise the importance of rejecting extremism. The session will provide an insight on Islam and terrorism. It will help the participants to gain understanding about extremism in the lenses of Islam. It is particularly effective because it will be an informed platform for discussions, helping young people better understand the core principles of Islam, promote peace and combat radical ideologies.



- 3) **Interfaith Forum on Peace: Perspectives from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese Traditions.** This forum will bring together representatives from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese traditions. The aim is to foster mutual understanding and cooperation among different religious and cultural groups by exploring the shared values of peace in each tradition. The session will provide insights teachings on peace, tolerance and coexistence. It will help the participants to combat common misconceptions and promoting interfaith dialogue. It is particularly effective because it will counteract the divisive narratives that fuel extremism and to inspire collaborative efforts towards a more harmonious society.

#### **4.2.3 Marital Status**

For the profiles who are single, married or re-married, customised programmes are also need to be organised for them, such as:

- 1) **Webinar on Single Status.** This webinar will focus on the role of single individuals in the context of radicalisation and violent extremism. It will explore the unique challenges and factors associated with single status individuals, including psychological, social and ideological influences that may contribute to the process of radicalisation. Experts will discuss strategies and interventions to prevent radicalisation among single individuals, emphasizing the importance of tailored PCVE approaches for this demographic.
- 2) **Webinar on Married Women and Terrorism.** This webinar will focus on the role of women in terrorism, examining how women may become involved in radicalised movements, including recruitment and support roles. It will also explore the impact of terrorism on women and families, as well as efforts to PCVE that specifically address the needs and concerns of women. The webinar will feature expert speakers from various fields, including law enforcement, psychology and social work, offering insights into how women can be both victims and perpetrators in the context of terrorism. The aim is to raise awareness and foster discussions on the unique challenges and solutions related

to women and terrorism. The medium chosen was webinar, because its aims are to give to all women through social media applications.

#### **4.2.4 Recruiter**

Both male and females' profiles were recruited through internet. Hence, the program will be focusing on how to counter-narrative through internet such as:

- 1) Social Edufluencer Post on Men Awareness. A social edufluencer refers to individuals or entities who use their online platforms—such as social media, blogs, YouTube, and other digital channels—to share educational content, promote learning and positively influence to the larger audience. The appointed social edufluencer will focus on raising awareness about radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, using their platform to reach and educate their followers. The goal is to spread this crucial awareness to a broader audience, fostering understanding and encouraging critical thinking to prevent the spread of harmful ideologies, particularly among men.
- 2) Social Edufluencer Post on Women Awareness. A social edufluencer refers to individuals or entities who use their online platforms—such as social media, blogs, YouTube and other digital channels—to share educational content, promote learning, and positively influence to the larger audience. The appointed social edufluencer will focus on raising awareness about radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, using their platform to reach and educate their followers. The goal is to spread this crucial awareness to a broader audience, fostering understanding and encouraging critical thinking to prevent the spread of harmful ideologies, particularly among women.

#### **4.2.5 Group Role**

Every profile male and females have their own roles. Hence, in order to cater their characteristic, the program suggested is to give them a role in playing sports. By playing sports, they will channel their role in a good way.

- 1) Sports. This module focuses on using football as a strategy to counter the influence and recruitment of individuals by groups like VE groups. It emphasises how engaging individuals, particularly youth, in football can provide an alternative to the extremist ideologies promoted by such groups. This module explores how netball, like other team sports, can be a powerful tool in countering terrorism and preventing radicalisation, particularly among youth at risk of being drawn into VE groups. Through netball, individuals can develop important life skills and values that promote peace, unity and resilience, countering the divisive ideologies espoused by VE groups.

#### **4.2.6 Group Expertise**

Every profile male and female have their own expertise. Hence, the suggested program was ICONS simulation because this is where they will be given their task and they need to be accountable to their task.

- 1) ICONSnet Environment: Interaction on the Social Media. The ICONS Simulation, organised by a task-force group, aims to create realistic and interactive scenarios that help participants develop critical skills and strategies for addressing violent extremism. Through role-play workshops and case studies, convention participants will be exposed to the factors that may lead to violent extremism and terrorism. The workshop will be facilitated by EARU, ISTAC-IIUM, providing participants with valuable insights and practical tools for countering extremism.

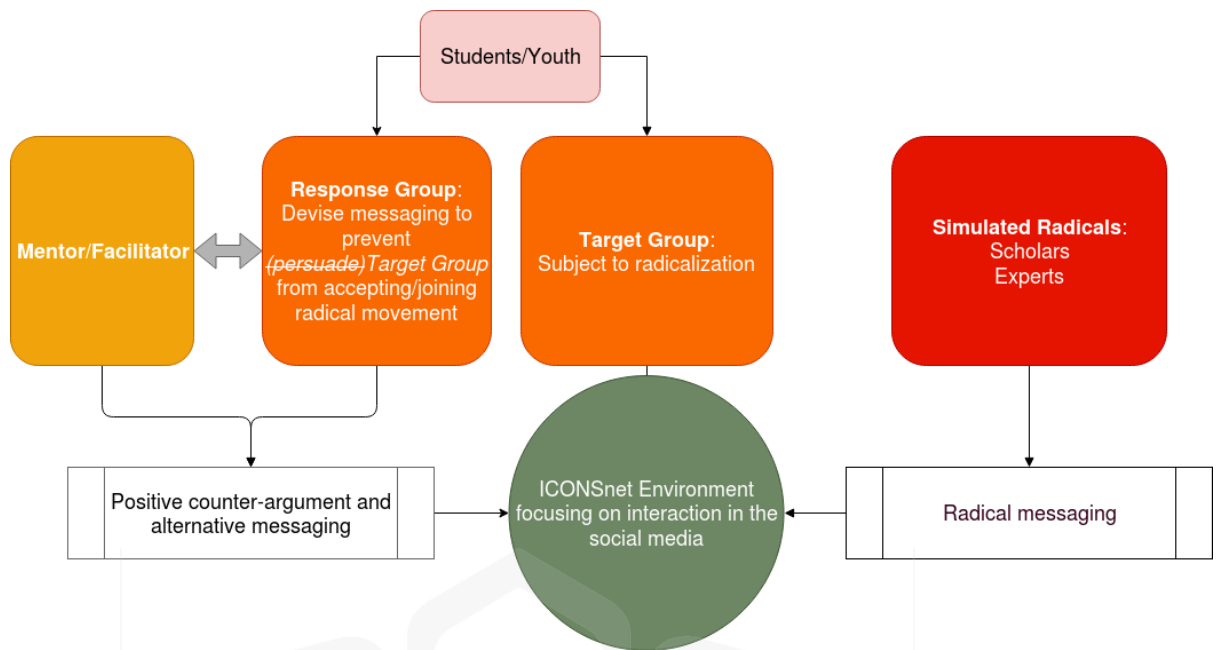


Figure 4.2.6.1 The dynamics of Devin's Malaysian ICONS is intact with the absent of "religious background" as the variables of the two groups, Response Group and Target Group.

The goal is to create youth empowerment. The radicalisation susceptibility is self-purification where the youths have the need to fight because of their lack understanding on their beliefs. The scenario is student engage in advocating counter, positive and alternative messaging. The goal is to create resilience against radical messaging.

- 2) Simulation on Cooperation: Returning Foreign Fighters to Malaysia (KBS Convention of PCVE (East Zone)). In this simulation, 18 participants will be grouped into three governing and non-governing bodies. Each group has a role sheet. Each member of each group is also given a role sheet. The purpose of this simulation is to see how engage are the participants on trying to prevent a catastrophic event. We will ascertain their cooperation skill and their ability to solve problems in a short period of time. The scenario of this simulation is as follows:

50 Malaysian have plead to return from the Daesh Group. In the transition between Pakatan Harapan and Barisan National after the general election 2018,

the 50 former Daesh members manage to enter the country on November 10th 2018. Despite public pressure, 30 was released from detention and rehabilitation by the Government on December 10th 2018. On December 23rd, 2019, KL Sentral was bombed during one of the busiest times of the year. This has raised suspicion and the public quick to insinuate that the perpetrator of this attract was the 30 former Daesh members.

ATM, PDRM, and ISTAC-EARU have been tasked to stop the next bombing. According to a communique, there will be 8 attacks in Kuala Lumpur City Center. You, coming from these actors, will communicate to come out with one name and stop the perpetrator. The scenario will be followed by injects that will unfold throughout the simulation. The injects is based on how the participants can solve the problem in the scenario.

#### **4.2.7 Ideology**

All profilers' males and females have their own ideologies, high, medium and low. The participants for this are individual who have a susceptible in joining VE groups, it can be detected in the early sign. Hence, in order to avoid them to recruit or join other person, we train them to make them accountable for others not join VE groups.

- 1) Training of Trainers (ToT) for PCVE: Empowering Facilitators to Lead Effective Counter-Terrorism and Prevention Programs. This program aims to train individuals, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to combat extremist ideologies. The goal is to empower them to become trainers who can then help other youth resist radicalisation and promote counter-narratives against violent extremism.

#### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

The initiatives and programs outlined above represent a comprehensive approach to combating violent extremism and radicalisation, particularly among youth. By fostering

dialogue, providing education and offering practical training these efforts aim to challenge and counter extremist ideologies, promote inclusivity and strengthen resilience within communities. Through collaborative efforts by government agencies, religious institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders, it can effectively address the root causes of radicalisation, support rehabilitation and reintegration efforts and ultimately build a more peaceful and tolerant society.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

After a thorough critical examination of the youth radicalisation model and PCVE youth module, this chapter aims to address the limitations encountered during the research process. It also provides recommendations for improving current initiatives and suggests potential research topics for future studies in this field.

#### **5.2 LIMITATION**

##### **5.2.1 Refusal of Interviews by Detainees and Ex-detainees**

Detainees at Perak Prison expressed reluctance to participate in interviews, primarily due to their anticipation of imminent release. According to the Tapah Prison Department officer, many detainees feared that engaging in such discussions might unintentionally delay their release process. Similarly, ex-detainees were unwilling to revisit and discuss their past actions, as it brought up painful or regrettable memories (Firdaus, 2023). This reluctance resulted in a significant limitation for the research, as it led to a scarcity of first-hand accounts and primary data sources.

##### **5.2.2 Limited Sample Size of Interviewees from Malaysian Ministries**

Not all Malaysian ministries consented to participate in interviews, primarily due to their limited knowledge and involvement in issues related to radicalisation, extremism, terrorism, and VE groups within the Malaysian context. This became evident when the researcher contacted certain government agencies via email, but either received no response or was informed that the agencies were not involved in such matters. Consequently, this lack of engagement reduced the sample size of interviewees, posing

challenges in obtaining comprehensive insights from a broader range of governmental perspectives.

### **5.2.3 Limited Access to Data Sharing**

The researcher faced restricted access to critical data, including detainee profiles and sensitive information such as intelligence reports maintained by the Malaysian Prison Department, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), due to confidentiality concerns. As a result, the researcher was unable to verify whether the collected profile details aligned with the records of these agencies, leading to gaps and incompleteness in the overall data collection process.

### **5.2.4 Emotional Impact of Exposure to War Aggression, Murder, and Violence**

The researcher faced significant emotional challenges over a five-month period while processing the brutal realities of war during data collection. This involved confronting detailed accounts of violence, including aggression, beheadings, killings, bombings and the abduction of children, women and the elderly. These harrowing experiences, gathered through extensive reading and interviews with agencies and terrorism experts, starkly contrasted with the researcher's own lived experiences, leading to feelings of emotional strain and demotivation. To manage these effects, the researcher sought daily support from psychiatrists and colleagues in the field, helping to rationalise and alleviate the psychological impact of such exposure.

### **5.2.5 Safety and Self-care**

The researcher encountered significant concerns about personal safety, especially after conducting interviews with ex-detainees who had been involved in high-risk criminal activities. The individuals' backgrounds and the nature of their past involvement in criminal behaviour raised potential security risks, creating a heightened sense of unease.



This situation required the researcher to take extra precautions to ensure both personal safety and the integrity of the research process.

### **5.2.6 Failure to Transcribe Interview Data**

The researcher faced technical difficulties with the phone used to record interviews conducted with the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), the Prison Department, and the Ministry of Defense Malaysia (MiNDEF). Due to these issues, the recorded data became inaccessible and as a result, the researcher was unable to retrieve or transcribe the interviews. This posed a significant challenge to the data collection process, leading to the loss of valuable insights from these interviews.

## **5.3 WAY FORWARD**

### **5.3.1 Distributing Social Media Pamphlets for PCVE Awareness**

Organizers of future PCVE youth programs are advised to distribute hard copy or soft copy pamphlets containing counter-narrative materials to participants. This initiative aims to educate and empower young audiences about the dangers of radicalisation and the importance of community-based counter-extremism efforts. The pamphlets should address key topics such as recognising signs of radicalisation, understanding the impact of extremist ideologies, and outlining practical prevention strategies. They should also offer actionable steps for youth to engage in peacebuilding and promote social cohesion initiatives (Suggestion from the 2020 Konvensyen Pemberdayaan Belia Mencegah Ekstremisme survey). Additionally, these pamphlets can serve as valuable resources for participants to share with friends or family members who were unable to attend the program, thereby broadening the reach and impact of the initiative.

### **5.3.2 Adopting a Holistic Approach**

Future research should adopt a holistic framework that considers the psychological, social, political and economic factors contributing to youth radicalisation. This approach should move beyond merely identifying risk factors to understanding the nuanced pathways to radicalisation and how interventions can address these various aspects. By examining radicalisation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, future research can develop more effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

### **5.3.3 Longitudinal Studies**

Future research should include longitudinal studies that track individuals over extended periods in order to assess the long-term impact of PCVE programs. This would provide deeper insights into how interventions shape the trajectory of at-risk youth and how long-term exposure to PCVE programs influences their attitudes toward extremism. Longitudinal research could help clarify whether these programs lead to sustained changes in behaviour or if short-term results fade over time.

### **5.3.4 Incorporating Youth Perspectives in Research Design**

Future studies should prioritise engaging directly with youth affected by radicalisation and extremism to gain their perspectives and valuable insights into the factors that drive their involvement in extremist activities. This approach will help design more authentic and effective interventions, as it is based on firsthand experience.

## **5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **5.4.1 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in PCVE**

This research will assess the impact of the proposed PCVE youth programs by drawing on insights from previous programs and integrating feedback from youth participants. The findings will be used to inform the design and improvement of future programs, ensuring that they are more effective in addressing the issues of radicalisation and violent extremism among youth.

### **5.4.2 Evaluation and Impact Assessment of PCVE Youth Programs**

This research will assess the effectiveness and outcomes of PCVE youth programs by evaluating multiple aspects, including changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, the study will measure the broader impact of these programs on the community, providing a comprehensive understanding of their success in preventing radicalisation and promoting positive social change.

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## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### 1. Introduction:

- a. Give Salam, Greet the participant and introduce myself.
- b. Briefly explain the purpose of the interview.
- c. Establish rapport and ensure the participant is comfortable.

### 2. Informed Consent:

- a. Clearly explain the voluntary nature of participation.
- b. Discuss the confidentiality of the information shared.
- c. Obtain verbal or written consent from the participant.

### 3. Interview Question (As attached in Index)

### 4. Interview Question (As attached in Index)

### 5. Closing:

- a. Thank the participant for their time and contributions.
- b. Reiterate the confidentiality of the information shared.
- c. Provide any contact information for follow-up questions or concerns