The Impact of Political Affiliation, Political Participation and life Satisfaction on Radicalization among University Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of Political affiliation, Political participation, and life satisfaction on radicalization among university students. A sample of 1116 students was drawn from four different Jordanian universities, namely Mutah University, Jordan University, Tafila University and Yarmuk University). A scale was developed for the study based on the extant literature. The construct validity of the scale was estimated by calculating the correlation between the radicalization items and the negative emotion items. Multiple regression analysis showed a significant impact of political affiliation, political participation and life satisfaction on religious, (F=8.5, α ≤0.000) political (F=4.9, α ≤0.002), and violent radicalization (F=2.7, α ≤0.04) among university students. However, no significant impact was found on personal and social radicalization. Significant impact was found in the impact of the political participation and life satisfaction on religious radicalization (t=3.266, α ≤0.001, t=3.502, α ≤0.00o respectively). Political affiliation was found significant on political radicalization. (t=-2.473, α ≤0.01). Moreover, Political affiliation was found significant on violent radicalization (t=-2.828, α ≤0.005). Finally life satisfaction was found significant on political radicalization (t=2.11, α ≤0.035). Some preventive, recruitment and political implications are discussed.

   Keywords: radicalization, political affiliation, political participation , life satisfaction, college students, Jordan.

Introduction

Jordanian society is a heterogeneous society. There are 26 universities and colleges, of them 10 public universities. The university environment is an attractive environment for radicals for many reasons: university community occupies a large segment of youth in society; easy to be convinced radical thoughts and radical religious beliefs and to engage in terrorist actions. University students are ordinary people and not under the security radar.   Moreover, students are active segment and the majority in society. University environment provides a safe and free setting for people to interact on different levels. Terrorist as well as radicals may look at the university environment not only as free and safe incubator, but as a heterogamous population, mobile (transformable) and has an attractive target group of youth, of whom the unemployment is waiting for, and feel injustice and unequal due to the social difference in the university. Recruited students will disseminate the radical's thoughts and plans to the wider society (Al-badayneh, 2010a).

Jordan society has experienced a transit stage of social development, this leads to high level of un reregulation or what is known in Durkheiem and Merton's terms "Anomie" of the social structure and the social functions of society. Jordan society has experienced a harsh economic situation reflected in high unemployment rate, poverty, immigrants from unrest neighboring countries (Syria and Iraq) and low quality of life.   As a consequence Jordan has witnessed a rise of radicalization, and a collective macro-micro level of violence (youth, students, health sector, education sector, and informal social sector).

Radicalization is a one consequence of the abrupt of the Jordanian social system, can be seen as complex multifaceted social problem that has been exploited by terrorists in disseminating their wicked ideas and radical ideologies , it can develop and emerge within any extremist group. Groups which support nationalistic movements, environmental issues, religious extremism, political ideology, animal rights, and political independence are included as examples of radicalization. (Pressman, 2008). Radicalization can be defined as "a personal and social process of change in which non-violent individuals, groups, and communities come to endorse, promote, willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence or fear to achieve a social change in society". Radicalization can be a path to terrorism when sentiments about perceived deprivation are deepest and most pervasive in vulnerable individuals, groups and communities that have a social and digital network such a university. University environment is a rich not for radicals only but for instigators who play a critical role in the origination of collective violence (Mandel, 2010)**.**

Understanding radicalization and the formation of radical group in the Arab world in general and in Jordan in specific drives beyond the traditional criminological, sociological and psychological

explanations offered by the western scholars and experts of violence. Social and cultural structures are the main source of the radical thoughts and behavior covered by strong religious and social believes. Believes that can be described as zero-order beliefs, that taken for granted and unquestionable. A mixed social taboos with religious education justifies most radical thoughts and practices. Formation of radical culture is affected by social traditional social bond, general strains, and social investment (Al-badayneh, 2012).

Radical profile in the Arab world does not fit many of the Westerns stereotypes and profiles that shape public expectations. Most radicals and terrorists and their leaders are ordinary people, and it is rare that individuals involved in terrorist incidents suffer from mental illness or disorders. But some are suffering general strains like failures in some social aspiration like education and work. The involvement in terrorism is a gradual process and sometimes is the result of radicalization, and a feeling of alienation, exclusion, inequality and unjust typically occurring over a period of years. Radicalization in in Jordan is shaped by religion extremist thoughts mixed with some social and cultural taboos. It does not necessary to adopt the use of violence to achieve its goals; but a belief in the use of force to restore Uma's dignity. Radicalization incubators like mosques, work, internet and universities may start and facilitate the initial contact with radicals. The relative isolation and deprivation of the individual from the significant others (family, relatives, friends, and local community) weakens his/her bond to society and enhance the individual bonding to the terrorist group. Radicalization creates the motivational or cognitive preconditions ripe for terrorism. (Al-badayneh, 2010b). Most countries adopt a common ground definition for radicalization that include adaptation of radical thoughts and willingness to use or threat to use violence and power as a mean of change. In **Europe** radicalization refers to "the process of adopting an extremist belief system and the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence and fear as a method of effecting changes in society" (Precht, 2007).

In his early study on radicalization, Albadyneh, (2010b) found an average percentage of the prevalence of the radical beliefs was 64.4% among the university students. Radical beliefs like martyrdom, unity by force, hatred & jihad were highly prevailed among university students. Findings raised the attention to the university security and encountering radical beliefs dissemination among university students. Security policies are needed to prevent hijacking the university by radicalism, and transiting the university as incubator for radicalization and path to terrorism. Further researches are needed with large sample size and with more a testable research instrument. Findings show radicalization prevalence in the university is on the alarming level. It can be said that university is in

the process of being incubator for radicalization, unless protective measures taken and forming radical encountering strategies.

Method

This paper is part of a research project on youth and radicalization. The term radicalization in this research refers to individuals using personal, violence, religion, politics, social or any other mean to justify the use or threats or violence. Currently, there is are few research tools and research studies on the subject of radicalization. This may be attributed to the fact that radicalization was associated with terrorism only following the terrorist attacks of 9-11. Therefore, items for the radicalization scale that were developed for this study were derived from relevant literature on radicalization, terrorism, group dynamics, and relevant theories. The questionnaire was written in Arabic and covered all theoretical aspects of radicalization including micro and macro levels. The questionnaire consisted of the following parts: (1). Demographic variables consisting of personal information (i.e., age, education, etc.) (2). Life satisfaction scale one item nominal scale measures general stain, and (3). Radicalization Scale (RS) consisting of the 51 items measure different dimensions of radicalization (political, social, religious, and personal).

Participants. A total of 1116 students were drawn from 10 mandatory classes in four public universities in Jordan . Students taking these courses were 20 years of age on average, belonged to different educational levels and different university colleges. The demographic of the sample included 40% males, 60% from Arts colleges, and 40.7% were first level students, 70% identified themselves as Eastern Jordanians, more than a third of the sample (37.2%) indicated that their fathers were unemployed .

Validity and Reliability. The construct validity of the scale was estimated by calculating the correlation between the Radicalization Scale and the Negative Emotion Scale. Results showed a positive significant relationship of 0.12 , $\alpha = 0.001$, indicating that the scale is valid. Further, the **Cronbach's Alpha** for the 51-item Radicalization Scale was high (0.903) suggesting a high internal consistency of the scale.

Results

Findings show different levels of radicalization are prevailed among students. On **Political radicalization** findings show **more** than half of students believe that using pressure is the only mean for reform, followed by rejecting the discussion with the opponents. Students believe that USA deserves the terrorist attack of 9-11. More than half of students believe in all items of this type. **Findings show religious radicalization appears in** more than half of students believe that religious

authorities must be the only source of power and authority in society. Followed by martyrdom for God alone will revive the Uma. The insult of a person of my religion is similar to the insult of my father- was the third highest radical statement in this type. Students expressed a radical response to all statements in this type with exception to Muslims who convert\ to other religions deserve to be killed with 48%. **However, Violent radicalization show** that the high percent of students believe that Westerners hates the Arabs, followed by Force alone can defeat the West. The highest third statement represent defaming the corrupted people. Students expressed a radical response to all statements in this type with exception to use impolite language in a dialogue with who opposes my opinion (25%). **Findings on Personal radicalization show** that students believe that "I consider the rape of a girl of my religion as the rape of my daughter; I believe that the Sharia is the only source of authority, consider the killing of a young man from my religious as a killing of my brother. More than half of students rated all other radical statements. **Finally findings show social radicalization appears in statements like** "The highest one was failure to keep up with advanced countries is a result of the abandonment of social customs and values, followed by the ideas of elders reflect the practices of sound social order, and by I am committed to the consensus of my relatives and clan on all issues, especially the elections and even if it was not convincing to me. More than half of students rated all other radical statements.

As can be seen from table 1 the regression analysis of political affiliation, political participation and life satisfaction on each type of radicalization among university students. Findings show significant impact of political affiliation, political participation and life satisfaction on religious, political and violent radicalization. However, no significant impact was found on social and personal radicalization.

Table (1) Regression ANOVA political affiliation, political participation and life satisfaction on each type of radicalization among university students

Type	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	**Sig.**
social	Regression	2.493	3	.831	1.642	.178
	Residual	521.821	1031	.506		
	Total	524.314	1034			
religious	Regression	17.083	3	5.694	8.492	.000
	Residual	693.320	1034	.671		
	Total	710.403	1037			
political	Regression	11.287	3	3.762	4.937	.002
	Residual	766.599	1006	.762		
	Total	777.886	1009			
violent	Regression	5.106	3	1.702	2.725	.043
	Residual	645.120	1033	.625		
	Total	650.226	1036			
personal	Regression	5.145	3	1.715	2.297	.076
	Residual	741.264	993	.746		
	Total	746.409	996			

Regression coefficients table Regression ANOVA political affiliation, political participation and life satisfaction on each type of radicalization among university students

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	sig
		B	SD	Beta		
religious	constant	1.996	.134		14.916	.000
	Political affiliation	-.001	.019	-.001	-.034	.973
	Political participation	.167	.051	.101	3.266	.001
	Life satisfaction	.180	.051	.109	3.502	.000
Political	constant	3.076	.144		21.343	.000
	Political affiliation	-.051	.021	-.078	-2.473	.014
	Political participation	.013	.055	.007	.237	.813
	Life satisfaction	-.175	.056	-.100	-3.157	.002
Violent	constant	2.530	.129		19.591	.000
	Political affiliation	-.052	.018	-.088	-2.828	.005
	Political participation	-.015	.049	-.010	-.305	.760
	Life satisfaction	-.024	.050	-.015	-.491	.623
Personal	constant	2.537	.145		17.544	.000
	Political affiliation	.001	.021	.001	.027	.978
	Political participation	.075	.055	.043	1.369	.171
	Life satisfaction	.117	.055	.067	2.110	.035

Regressing Political affiliation, Political participation and life satisfaction on **religious radicalization** among university students Political participation and life satisfaction has significant impact (t=3.266, α ≤0.001,t=3.502, α ≤0.000 respectively). On the other hand political affiliation has significant impact on political radicalization and violent radicalization (t=-2.476, α ≤0.01, t=-2.828, α ≤0.00). Moreover, findings show significant impact of life satisfaction on political radicalization(t=2.11, α ≤0.03).

Discussion

Political affiliation, political participation and life satisfaction on has significant impact on religious, political and violent radicalization among university students. This is attributed to the internal social, cultural, and political structure and socialization. Most of the political formal and informal affiliation are religious in nature. For example, the Islamic brother hood group (IBG) is the most effective and widespread party among Jordanian population. Its effectiveness is explained by its core religious zero-order belied that it stands for. The IBG utilizes the religion as tool to convince people to join or/and support the party. Majority of People in general, if they have a free choice will choose any religious party for two major reasons: first the religious parties focus on a holy principles that people take for granted, no one can argue about the validity of any of them, second comparing religious parties to any other political regime or party, the religious party is the less corrupted party and most effective party in providing voluntary and charity social services. When people encounter a corrupt and suppressed regime, they look for undefeated power to protect them such as "Allah or God" . Allah as represented by religious groups will free them from the harsh living condition including the suppression and humiliation of the political system. In this sense being radicalizing is to be representative of God's on earth (as represented by religious groups).

Taking these factors in consideration, people are affiliated to or support the religious party as a path to escape the harsh and strain reality and with a promise and hope to win the day after with infinity lifetime. Religious party is religious-centrism group who tend to compel other to take their positions and views towards everyday life social activities and issues. The room for accepting others and oppositions is limited. The believe that "they are the best' and they "preach the only right principles" and they 'represent Allah on the earth". All of what they do and what they practice are in accordance to the God's well and holy Quran. Theoretically, tolerance is the core of the religious speeches and practically lack of tolerance in accepting out group others and views. Not surprisingly to find high prevalence of radical thoughts, ideas and believes and sometimes actions among religious individuals and parties. In addition, religious parties have legitimate, socially acceptance access to people in schools and mosques, especially on Friday pray, and speech.

General stains and its impacts on people's action and emotions are major factors in pushing people to radical and terrorism action (Agnew, 1992, 2001, 2002, 2010). life satisfaction (dissatisfaction) is an indicator that might reflect the general levels of general strains that people feel. Life satisfaction was found significant on political radicalization. As expected people with low life satisfaction will be more vulnerable to radicalization and radical recruitments and may join terrorists group in future. Life stressers and life difficulties due to such situation like unemployment, and

poverty along with the high cost of living all pressure people and push them toward radicalization. Taking the unique contribution of each factor on each type of radicalization, findings showed significant impact in the political participation and life satisfaction on religious radicalization. Politically affiliated students are more radicals (political and violent radicalization).

Radical attitudes become a radical culture with cultural and social centrism. Moreover, as a radical culture, people comply with such culture and radicalization becomes part of socialization. In all types of radicalization, students express the use of force, power and centralism, prejudice, violence as the only means to achieve change. Rejection of others on the base of race and religion were high with much emphasis on ego, cultural and religious-centralism.

Students are vulnerable to all forms of radicalization, due to their characteristics such as being youth, educated unemployed and marginalized segment in society who feels excluded, disenfranchised, disgruntled, and alienated from the larger society. As a research by (Albadayneh 2010) showed that religious radicals find the university environment as an ideal environment for recruitment for their political parties and even for terrorist activities. Thus universities become an incubator for radicals (Al-Badayneh, 2010). Students in Jordanian universities students come from the same kinship and tribes or region may often fail to integrate in a democratic educational system. The external mainstream social and tribal culture controls the university culture. The general public is conservative in nature, and students carry this culture into the university environment. In a weak formal justice system students regress to their informal justice system (i.e. tribal justice system) and develop an informal network that protects them feel just and make them secure. Students turn back to their behavioral reference such as their own tribal, regional and ethnic group inside and outside the university. Such types of interactions can facilitate and lead to different forms and levels of radicalization. (Albadayneh, khelifa, and Alhasan, 2016) As Sirseloudi (2006: 6) described the radicalization in Europe as resulting from a " lack of political participation; repression of the opposition; social injustice resulting in high youth unemployment and a conflict over values between the western-oriented elite and the majority population created a fertile ground for the rise of Islamist mass movements. External factors like the Arab defeats in the Israeli-Arab wars; the Islamic revolution in Iran and the war in Afghanistan also contributed to a boost in Islamist opposition. Conflicts were triggered by groups claiming the unity of state and religion (Islam) and pursuing the postulate "Islam is the solution" via military means. The target of these actions was what they refer to as the overthrow of "heretic states" through an Islamic "society project". A growing number of students experience a sense of unjust and a "wall of distrust" , which means for some of them that they no longer take an interest in their environment and its rules and internalized stigma and lower

expectation from the significant other in society (Harris, 1995). Feeling unjust treatment and insecurity can lead to the development of radical beliefs and acts (Reinares et al., 2008).

Policy and preventive implications

Three pillars for any strategy to combat radicalization, violent radicalization and terrorism recruitment, they are: **youth**, **radical incubators** (educational institutions i.e., university, religious organization…et) and **cultural re-engineering**. Radicalization is induced by social incubators and significant others (i.e., parents, teachers..etc.), political parties and religious leaders. **Youth people** are the target and who can carry the radical thoughts and beliefs and transfer them into action. Also they transit them to future generations through socialization processes. **Youth** are the target for recruitment with their reinforcement environment for radicalizing like youth's identity crises and other social crises like economic pressure, unemployment, inequality and unjust and marginalization and exclusion from most important life aspects. Exclusion including but not limited to political participation and in decision making and policy formation that reflect their interests. To better understand what can be done to help youth and prevent them from being victims of radicalization, socialization incubators like family, school and university need to install positive curriculum contents that enhance tolerance and respect difference and human rights. This dissuade youth from being involved in radical behavior in future. Youth lack policies in education and development, to rectify this omission , youth needs a revised policies and strategies to be adopted to the global human values. Youth's education should not contemptuous others' social norms and values. De-radicalization becomes important to relapse radical prevention to forgo radical actions. Dissemination of the radicalization can hamper the future of human security and development as well as the social order.

Radical incubators can be formal and informal institutions and organizations. Incubator can effective radical environment for recruiters. **Religious institutions** are one effective radical incubators, where practices and activities failed in promoting tolerance and human rights, with a wide gap between what is preaching and what is practicing. Evaluation and mentoring of religious institutions is needed. **Education institutions** formal (schools and universities) and informal (family) represents another form of radical incubators. The contents and the methods of teaching and socializing are traditional and contain serious aspects that promote radicalization. Another failure in the education system (at all levels) feeds radicalization**. Culture re-engineering** is the third pillar, emerging radical culture bounds students free thinking and resect of human rights. with its structure and functions include its contents of life style ideas, formal and informal repository, social networks, tribal and interpersonal relationships provide critical connections for recruitment into radical organization.

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