

## **Why Youths Join the Terrorist Movements?**



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**ABSTRACT:** The salient role of terrorist movements is to recruit more members from different countries and cultures. Hence, it became palpable that terrorist movements, for instance, Al-Qaeda and ISIS have a clandestine method of recruitment that is obscure from the governments' eyes. The incident of 11/9 had brought the attention of sociologists and politicians to examine the recruitment process of terrorist movements. Conclusively, several studies founded that terrorist movements utilise various techniques to recruit men, youths, children and women. The terrorist movements have been utilising the Islamic ideology as a fundamental ideology. They have been utilising social media as a pulpit for their propaganda. Still, the intricacy of terrorist movement recruitment is believed to be obscure. It is arduous for governments to cease the recruitment process of those movements, albeit the usage of modern technologies nowadays. Thus, sociologists and psychologists initiated investigating the socialisation process of terrorist movements and the brainwashing towards the newly recruited members. However, this paper examines sociologically and psychologically to answer the vital question: Why Youths Join the Terrorist Movements? By looking in-depth into some cases that stripped off their previous teachings, norms and behaviours to become new – fighters – for ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Therefore, this paper analyses the answer to the paper question from sociological and psychological perspectives.

**KEYWORDS:** Al-Qaeda, ISIS, terrorist movements, recruitment, socialisation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The definition of terrorism revolves around attacking unarmed people and causing pernicious. Based on this definition, terrorism has remarkably emerged in different occasions of history. Initially, the influence of the Catholic Church in the fifth century on Europe during Pope Pius IV instigated a civilian pandemonium. The civilians lived in fear and terrorism due to the inquisition that murdered thousands of Christians beneath the Pope supervision. Conclusively, after Pope Pius IV death in 1559, the civilians sought vindictiveness from each one who had contact with the inquisition (Frattini, 2008). Antithesis from Europe, the United States observed the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan KKK, the group is known for its extremist ideology of white supremacy against the black people (Goldberg, 1996). In the nineteenth century, the group recruited thousands of Americans who participated in inculcating fear in black people. Hitherto, the KKK instigate terrorism and violence against black people. However, terrorism had taken and still taking place in the Middle East. Terrorist groups did not emerge because of the war against political Islam, but they materialised during the caliphate, where Muslims conquered Europe and Asia. For instance, the Order of Assassins, in the Arabic dictionary known as *al-Hashashin*, Shia group that consisted of youths: they had an extreme preemptory for Hassan-i Sabbah. Sabbah systematically brainwashed his cohorts. They followed his instruction without argument (Mandel, 1966). Thus, *al-Hashashin* caused terrorism among Muslim Sunnis: they assassinated clerics, scholars and governors. *al-Hashashin* also had an abortive attempt to assassinate Salah Al-Din, sultan of Egypt and Syria and founder of the Ayyubid dynasty. The 20th century in the Middle East remarked the emergence of several terrorist movements, such as *Takfir wal Hijrah*, al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Taliban. Albeit the physical war against those movements but this war had – regrettably – indicated the indestructibility to abrogate those movements. Thus, sociological scholars have been ascertaining the recruitment and socialisation process of the terrorist movements (Gomaa, Pandian & Pazil, 2021). By looking profoundly at the reasons behind joining those movements, it is ostensible that the reasons are perhaps religious motivation or social interests. However, as a constituent of the sociological researchers' pursuit, this paper ascertains and attempt to answer: Why Youths Join the Terrorist Movements?

### **ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY**

Political Islam has been involved in the fight and support of terrorism. The dissenters of political Islam assume that terrorism occurs due to the Jihad that took part in Islamic teachings. While Islamists – intermediate Islamists – believe that Islam plays no role in shaping terrorists. This discursive is ceaseless. Critically, Quran, the holy book for Muslims, contains verses that urge Muslims to Jihad against non-Muslims, but those verses demand Jihad against those who attack Muslims. It is additionally significant to state

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Islamists themselves argue regarding the concept of Jihad. Relatively, Islamists are bifurcated into different categories. For instance, Emissary Islamic Movements, such as Tablighi Jamaat. Tablighi members eschew politics and democracy (Alexiev, 2005). The movement embargo the utterance regarding politics among its members. Furthermore, intermediate Islamic movements are represented in the Muslim Brotherhood, Nahda in Tunisia and PAS in Malaysia (Striem, 2005). Those movements believe in political Islam as an ideology without referring to violence. Ultimately, terrorist movements: those movements eschew political discourse and democracy. Ultimately, Terrorist Movements: those movements eschew political discourse and democracy. They consider those who resort to democracy as – the slave of juggernauts. Terrorist movements, however, are disputed in terms of Jihad and curriculum. Notwithstanding, their process of recruitment and violence was formed by the amalgamation of mutual interests. Both movements follow the same method of clandestine recruitment. Thus, there could be possible cooperation in terms of the exchange of information. Accordingly, terrorist movements such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda had been in dispute with the Muslim Brotherhood as the latter embrace the ideology of political discourse and democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood assume that the usage of violence to obtain a political motivation is pejorative (Hoffmann, 2011). However, ISIS and Al-Qaeda generally utilise the recruitment network to cajole more members worldwide. Terrorist movements constantly resort to the Islamic ideology to propagate its ideology by utilising different pulpits. Essentially, social media, online websites, books and face to face communication. The Islamic ideology of ISIS and Al-Qaeda is in a distinction with other Islamic Intermediate Movements. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, promote its concept by socialising and educating its members based on the Islamic teachings: it somehow rebuffs the political violence to attain its propaganda. This process had, of course, placed the Muslim Brotherhood in many Western governments' accounts. After London Bombings in 2005, the British government adjured the Muslim Brotherhood to promote the intermediate Islamic ideology that disavows terrorism. The Muslim Brotherhood had to share religious awareness among Western Muslims. Still, Islamic ideology does not revolve around political Islam and jihad, but it is a concept that has no finite development. According to Snow & Bryd (2007), the Islamic movements seek to identify their ideology because it is the core of their values, beliefs and objectives. Despite that, terrorist movements are in a profound argument to identify their ideologies. For that reason, ISIS and Al-Qaeda are in divergence regarding their Islamic ideologies. Both movements claim they are the combatants of God on earth – *Jund Allah* – (Perlmutter, 2005), but the fact is that their Islamic ideology is inchoate. Those terrorist movements have the dynamic to recruit and instigate political violence where they are. Furthermore, it is vivid that Islamic ideology has numerous definitions with antithesis from each other. This argument had left nonetheless remark for political researchers, who investigate the altered Islamic ideology among the so-called felicitous Islamic ideology.

### Al-Qaeda

The history of terrorism had unfortunately ceased on the Al-Qaeda platform. Al-Qaeda is known as the knavery terrorist movement. Albeit its existence in the Middle East but Al-Qaeda had succeeded in entrenching an adequate recruitment network in Europe (Neumann, 2012). This network had recruited the perpetrators of the September Attacks in 2001 and London Bombings in 2005. In fact, the agenda of Al-Qaeda is obscure and not vividly understood among its members themselves. According to Pandian (2020), the Al-Qaeda network is widely clandestine, but its recruitment method has been in the eyes of West security, particularly after the September Attacks. However, prior to the emergence of Al-Qaeda during the Soviet-Afghan War, the United States parallel to Arabian Regimes funded Al-Qaeda financially (Burke, 2021). Consistently, Islamic movements in Egypt, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat Islamiyah, had the mantle of encouraging Muslim youths for jihad in Afghanistan to participate in the holy war against the Soviet Union. Despite that, Arabian regimes embargoed Islamist movements to recruit their members for jihad. This recruitment methodology had the askance that those mujahideen conceivable repatriate and shift to a threat for the state. Conclusively, after the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, the Arabian regimes vigorously rebuffed the mujahideen repatriation. Those mujahideen were undoubtedly socialised physically and trained on the utilisation of weapons. Besides that, they were socialised to abominate the Westerns and carried abomination towards the Arabian regimes who abnegated their repatriation. For Arabian Regimes, those mujahideen had a dissolute life.

According to Roy (2008), most of those who join Al-Qaeda in Europe are born to families originally from Africa, Pakistan and the Caribbean. Roy argues that people agglutinate Al-Qaeda due to racism issues they faced on European soil. Accordingly, they find Al-Qaeda is devoid of racism and racial issues. On the contrary, Gomaa (2021), argues that people join Al-Qaeda to seek vindictiveness against the Western influence on the Islamic culture, especially in the Middle East. For instance, the preparators of the September Attacks came from a well-to-do family. They were a postgraduate student in the best universities in Germany and the United States. Mohamed Atta, for instance, had no social problems within his family. But the tangible altercation in his personality to become a terrorist had remarkably amalgamated the abomination of the West. Besides, the influence of his peers, who were members of Al-Qaeda. Atta did not solely become a militant and morphed from a researcher to a militant, however, he became a suicide bomber. To become a suicide bomber means Atta was brainwashed and not just had been recruited to augment more members to Al-Qaeda. Psychologically, a suicide bomber is considered a cavalier, who bear peremptory to his leaders, and is willing

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to follow their instructions without caring for the consequences. It is a common fallacy for brainwashed people to believe their leaders. On the one hand, their leaders tantalise them the paradise – *Aljannah*.

However, the history of Al-Qaeda is full of a discrepancy. Al-Qaeda is not a revolutionary movement that seeks liberation in its motherland. It is not even an intermediate Islamic movement that believes in the political discourse with its dissidents. Al-Qaeda is known as an extremist organisation. This radicalisation led Al-Qaeda to commit violence in Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Prior to extremism, Al-Qaeda was not looking askance. It was considered a resistance movement that fought the Soviet Union and led to its failure on the Afghani soil.

The history of Al-Qaeda network recruitment is ostensibly bifurcated into two parts. Firstly, during the Soviet-Afghani War when the focus was on Arab youths coming to Afghanistan for jihad. Secondly, the recruitment strategy of Al-Qaeda concentrates on Westerns and Muslims globally. Thus, Al-Qaeda has a great influence in Indonesia, the Philippines (Roger, 2004), and Europe. It is also dispensable to utilise the Islamic ideology in its propaganda to recruit more youths. The case of Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines is ample argumentation that nationalism and race conceivably play a role in Al-Qaeda recruitment rather than Islamic ideology. According to (Niksch, 2007), Abu Sayyaf members fought alongside Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghani war. This, of course, brought the Philippine government to fight Abu Sayyaf in the Southern part of the country, where Abu Sayyaf is active and has a tangible influence on the Muslim communities there. Besides, after the September Attacks, the United States dispatched its troops to the Philippines. The United States also funded the government of the Philippines on its war against terrorism.

## ISIS

The origin of ISIS emerged in 1999, but its influence took place after the Arab Spring in 2011. The meaning of ISIS is Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The founder of ISIS, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was, in fact, a member of Al-Qaeda. He had joined Al-Qaeda in 2004 during the American War on Taliban in Afghanistan. However, the political chaos in Iraq after the American invasion had brought al-Zarqawi to lead a holy war against the Shia. With this, al-Zarqawi recruited thousands of Arabians to fight, juxtaposed him in the so-called Shia-Sunni civil war.

Antithesis from the Shia-Sunni civil war, ISIS had its peculiar strategy to recruit children from Europe. Sociologists believe that children are dexterous to get brainwashed. Hitherto, the number of the recruited children brought from Europe to ISIS in the Middle East is obscure due to the chaos in Syria and Iraq since 2013. For instance, Shamima Begum. She is a British child affixed to ISIS during her childhood (Masters & Regilme, 2020). According to Shamima, she joined ISIS when she was 15 years old. However, a question that seeks to answer why Shamima joined ISIS conceivably does not bring the consummate attention. Withal, what did she do during her existence with ISIS? is the question that fixates on the core of understanding the psychology of ISIS recruitment. Such a child needs a protracted and special method of socialisation. Additionally, children from Europe are educationally different from the children of Syria and Iraq. Profoundly, the children in Syria and Iraq were born during the civil war. For them, war became a constituent of their culture, which they acclimate to it. The case of Shamima, however, brings the neglect of family towards their children. This delinquency is gratuitous. It is, unfortunately, one of the reasons the transmission of children happens to become terrorists (Gomaa, 2021).

The argument of this study why youths join the terrorist movements delve into the background of the agglutinated members of those movements. As an instance, al-Zarqawi was Jordanian fighting on the Iraqi soul (Warrick, 2015). Thus, nationalism did not take a part in ISIS ideology in the Middle East. Thus, the membership of ISIS encompasses Arabians, Europeans, Asians, and ultimately the recruitment network of ISIS reached the United States. There are United States inhabitants who embraced ISIS ideology and joined the movement in Syria and Iraq. According to Farwell (2014), ISIS utilise Twitter as its recruitment tool to bring more combatants to fight in Syria and Iraq. Farwell augmented that the recruited members are cajoled to complete their religious duty by revitalising the caliphate in the Islamic world. Furthermore, ISIS disguises the background of its new recruited members. Profoundly, ISIS claimed to be an Islamist movement, yet its socialisation strategy based on Islamic teachings is concealed – and – obscure. The concealment of ISIS socialisation brings this question: what is the Islamic qualification of ISIS members to understand the Islamic teachings? Ultimately, this question has not been answered by ISIS members. The recruited members of ISIS were not socialised Islamically or understand the Islamic teachings. Alas, they were brainwashed (Nacos, 2015), and falsely promised to obtain paradise. However, the background of the recruited members of ISIS highlights vital questions here – who are ISIS members? What was their previous role in society?

The answer to these questions does not include biological relationships. It is known that genetics conceivably influence character where the person is born as a terrorist because his parents were terrorists. In fact, biological scientists did not prove the fact of this ideology. On the contrary, it is proved that sociological and psychological perspective assume that people join the terrorist movements due to a failure to understand and define their identity, besides, a dereliction of family's duty (Gomaa, 2021). However, this paper investigates profoundly the sociological and psychological influence in those who join the terrorist movements.

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### THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The incident of the September Attacks led the sociological scholars to look profoundly into the perpetrators' background to examine their early life and the reason that led them to become terrorists. Many sociologists believe that the dereliction of the four agents of socialisation (family, school, peers, and media) conceivably lead to a transmission in the personality. So far, the rapprochement of youths who join the terrorist movements bear convergence rather than divergence. For instance, an argument regarding the combatant's background did not occur. Briefly, the recruited members of al-Qaeda and ISIS brought from different cultures, languages and identities. The fulcrum of those movements is seemingly the Islamic ideology. However, as a constituent of the socialisation process, the recruited members in terrorist movements are completely re-socialised based on the movement's ideology. At this juncture, an epiphany occurs when the new members realise their new roles in society. Re-socialisation in terrorist movements does not delve into mysticism. Notwithstanding, prepare the members to become combatants – or as they call themselves *Junnad Allah*, soldiers of God (Phillips, 2008).

Regarding the agents of socialisation, each agent effectively plays a vital role in individual life. Such a child needs to learn from his family the language, norms, and culture. Furthermore, the children embrace the same religion as their parents. Hence, the family is the most crucial agent among other agents. Even al-Qaeda members recruit their children to become members. But al-Qaeda does not educate its children to become engineers or doctors but combatants (Gomaa, 2021). Alas, some children become suicide bombers. The community itself provides all elements for children to strip off their childhood and shift to terrorism.

However, most of those who join the terrorist movements have been influenced by an external factor that reshaped their identity. Samantha Lewthwaite, the most wanted terrorist nowadays, was born to British parents (Ateş & Parsa, 2021). But the divorcement of her parents led her to shift into another identity, which is terrorism. The problem regarding Samantha is not that she morphed to terrorism, but how did she embrace Islam? What are the reasons that led her to become Muslim? Samantha embraced Islam because of her peer, who was Muslim. Her peer coaxed her to become Muslim. Hitherto, it is enigmatic to understand who guided Samantha to the terrorist trajectory. Sociologically, the influence of Samantha peer confirms that the peers as an agent of the socialisation process are adequate and conceivably replace the role of the family. Furthermore, the whole transformation of Samantha's identity assigns a nebulous question regarding her life after becoming a Muslim. It is vivid that the recruited Muslim members to the terrorist movements take a method of brainwashing, which encompass online chat communications, propaganda, and face to face communication. On the contrary, the westerners who embrace Islam are somehow advantaged to recruit more members on the Western soil because of their passport advantage. Arguably, the case of Samantha is not obscure as she did not solely become a terrorist member, but she was the main culprit of the London Bombings in 2005 (Century & Sjoberg, 2016).

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The emergence of unidentified terrorist individuals and numerous terrorist movements have provided a measure of urgency to advance knowledge on the psychological factors that influence this kind of behaviour. Various studies have been conducted to determine the psychological dynamics and vulnerabilities that encourage youths to become violent and join terrorist movements. The psychological approach focuses on the individuals "recruitment and induction into terrorist groups, their development, personalities, beliefs, attitudes, motivations and careers as terrorists" (Hudson, 1999). This occurs by assessing the different psychological theories that discuss motivations and behaviours that deter such behaviours.

One of the many hypotheses that explain the influence of young people joining the terrorist organisation is the frustration-aggression hypothesis. This hypothesis argues that certain aggressive behaviours are preceded by frustration. According to Joseph Margolin (1977); Hudson (1999), who suggests that "much terrorist behaviour is a response to the frustration of various political, economic, and personal needs or objectives". Their frustration can be explained either internally or externally. Internal factors are the opposition of assertive government policies that create inequality and injustice, whereas external factors include occupation and family (Berkowiz 1989). Based on this, young individuals feel that they are deprived of their right to strengthen in society. Hence, they aim to express their frustration by practising violence and terrorism. According to Gurr (1970), a professional on violent movements and acts argues that this hypothesis is derived from the relative deprivation theory, which states that individuals who feel deprived of substance, such as economic and social rights are prone to agglutinate terrorist movements to fulfil their emptiness. This theory "aggravates existing complexities which eventually escalates tensions within already socio-economically marginalised groups" (Abbasi, Khatwani & Soomro 2018. "Currently, the violent militant groups in Muslim countries claim their actions as a counteraction against the Western encroachment in the political affairs of their countries" (Irshad, 2011). Irshad claims that the appearance of Taliban and Al-Qaeda targeted to derive out western military presence from Muslim land and their intervention in those countries.

Erik Erikson, an ego psychologist, proposed the negative identity hypothesis that reflects upon the influence of society upon an individual's personality. His book "Eight Stages of Man" discusses the lifespan of individual development. The book explains that during each lifespan, an individual encounters difficulty and needs to subsume a synthesis of the problem. If the problem is not

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correctly dealt with, then negative characteristics will prevail upon the development and is destined to emerge in the form of psychopathology (Abbasi, Khatwani & Soomro 2017). Moreover, Erikson states in his book that ages three to six years, the child is eager to understand his surroundings and is full of curiosity. Predominantly, if the child is criticised for his curiosity: he will eventually develop guilt and self-destructive (Randy, 2000). Also, discouraging and not appreciating the child's work will ultimately injure the ego for the next stage (Sokol, 2009). Profoundly, this vividly highlights how child development plays a considerable role in shaping the individual's personality. According to Abbasi, Khatwani & Soomro (2017), the negative-identity theory suggests that "terrorists consciously reject bitterly roles and values laid to them by family, society and community and they resort to terrorism." This is due to discouragement and disappointment to experience failure in attaining goals and needs. Therefore, this stimulates frustration which eventually leads to acts of terrorism.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The motivation to become a combatant in terrorist movements is not solely a religious motivation – or – seeking vindictiveness from the so-called enemy of God, but some combatants join the terrorist movements to receive financial support. The expansion of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, for instance, is an ample case to highlight the annexed banks, traffic oil, and oil products that developed ISIS revenue (Clarke et al, 2017). ISIS did not merely become a terrorist movement that seeks to implement its agenda. It, however, became a key player in the political scene. The annexed products led the governments to negotiate with ISIS a deal to receive its rights in the oil. However, the wealth of ISIS had irrefutably helped the recruitment network to bring a diversity of combatants from Europe, the Middle East and Asia. ISIS disenfranchised the opportunity of its wealth to endorse its arsenal, especially in the War in Iraq. This helped ISIS to annex lands until Karbala (Terrill, 2014), the holy land of Shia Muslims (Pinault, 2016).

ISIS did not promise its new recruited members the highest place in Jannah. Historically, this recruitment method primarily took place during the recruitment of crusaders by the Pope to conquer Jerusalem and bounce the Muslims and Jews. With this, the Pope promised the crusaders – sale of indulgence – which means their sins are forgiven, and the penance is futile (Housley, 1982). Alas, ISIS had titillated its combatants to receive financial support. Of course, with the annexed oil, ISIS had no problem with money. According to CNN (2016), Each combatant received approximately 1200 USD. Equally, combatants' wives were paid monthly. This formidable payment inveigled youths from poor countries to fight in Syria and Iraq. Poverty has regrettably concealed the consequences those combatants may face there. However, the fall of ISIS in Iraq had placed the movement under financial pressure. Conclusively, ISIS cut 50 % of its combatants' salaries (CNN, 2016).

Antithesis from ISIS, the emergence of Al-Qaeda did not meet financial pressure. Al-Qaeda was completely funded by the United States, Arabian Regimes and Bin Laden companies. However, during the Soviet-Afghani War, the combatants were not recruited because of financial support rather than to get wealthy. The agenda of Al-Qaeda was to bring mujahideen for the so-called holy war (Bergen, 2002). America had also played a salient role in Al-Qaeda propaganda by considering communists, the enemy of Islam. This propaganda led thousands of Arabs to agglutinate Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Still, the September Attacks led the Arabian Regimes and the United States to disown Al-Qaeda. Hitherto, Al-Qaeda is active in Asia, the Middle East and Africa (Pandian, 2020). Its finance plan has been revolving around illegal work to fund its necessities.

### CONCLUSION

The emergence of terrorist movements has remarkably highlighted the role of their members in the transmission of their personalities. Sociologists believed that the youths join the terrorist movements, for instance, Al-Qaeda and ISIS, because of the neglect of their families and school. Also, the influence of peers plays a tangible role in shifting the youths from normality to extremism. The case of Shamima Begum and Samantha Lewthwaite is evidence of the neglect of families towards their children. Shamima agglutinated ISIS during her childhood. She was only 15 years old. While Samantha was known as a typical British teenager, but the elucidate transmission of her personality had left a vacuum in understanding the terrorist behaviours. Samantha was such a new recruited member who embraced Islam did not become a traditional member in Al-Qaeda. She played a salient role in London Bombings in 2005 and hitherto has mantle in various terrorist attacks.

Psychologically, the deprivation of economic and social roles in society may lead the individual to become a terrorist. The individuals consciously rebuff the given roles by family and society. Rather than solving their problems psychologically, they prefer to agglutinate the terrorist movements. At this juncture, the youths realise that their deprived rights to strengthen in society is ineffective. For this reason, they resort to terrorism where they believe they can play a role and express themselves. This psychological problem had eventually led psychologists to help the youths to express themselves in their society. Besides, they are socialised to play a vital role among their family members.

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