Article Title

Community Identification and Response to the Threat of Terrorism in Makassar City

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a complex global threat, and understanding community responses to this threat is crucial. This qualitative case study aims to explore in-depth the identification and responses of the Makassar City community to the threat of terrorism, particularly following the bombing in front of the Cathedral. Research data was obtained through in-depth interviews with residents, community leaders, religious figures, and security officials, as well as analysis of documents and media reports. The results show that the Makassar City community identifies terrorist group characteristics through factual knowledge and stereotypes. This identification process also involves analyzing the responses of certain groups to government policies and maintaining awareness of the potential for issue manipulation by political elites. Furthermore, the mass media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions and responses. This research confirms that inaccurate identification can trigger stigmatization and discrimination. Community responses to government policies and local political dynamics become important indicators in identifying potential terrorist movements. In conclusion, community identification of and response to the threat of terrorism is a dynamic and multidimensional process requiring a comprehensive and participatory approach to prevention efforts.

Keywords: Community Response; Mass Media; Movement Identification; Perception; Terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has emerged as one of the most significant challenges to global stability and security in the contemporary era (Filippo, 2020). Terrorist acts not only inflict material damage and loss of life but also disrupt social order and trigger protracted conflicts (Lu et al., 2020). The complexity of terrorism extends beyond the violent acts themselves, encompassing a dimension of social construction, wherein the label "terrorist" becomes a powerful political tool to define and control groups deemed threatening. This construction, shaped by perceptions, political interests, and social-psychological dynamics, influences policy formulation and legal responses at both international and domestic levels.

The monumental attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States catalyzed a paradigm shift in global counterterrorism efforts (Xue et al., 2022). This tragedy dramatically altered the international security landscape, prompting nations worldwide to strengthen anti-terrorism policies and enhance cross-border cooperation. The ensuing global response reflected a collective awareness that terrorism had reached an unprecedented level of threat. Consequently, enhanced intelligence sharing and harmonizing security policies became central to international cooperation agendas.

The response to terrorism is not limited to repressive measures but also involves intensive multinational collaborative efforts. International organizations, particularly the United Nations, play a pivotal role in coordinating global strategies to suppress terrorist activities (Roele, 2022). These efforts encompass various aspects, ranging from increased physical security at airports and borders to developing stricter surveillance legislation and disrupting terrorist financing through international legal and financial cooperation. The overarching goal is to create a secure environment without compromising human rights principles.

The landscape of terrorism in Indonesia is characterized by a complex interplay of ideological factors, religious fanaticism, and separatist aspirations (Sukabdi, 2021). The long history of conflict in various regions of Indonesia provides a fertile context for the emergence of terrorist acts. The rise of religious fanaticism, sometimes manifesting in the form of extreme violence, adds a complicating dimension to this phenomenon. Furthermore, movements demanding independence or autonomy from the Indonesian state often employ tactics categorized as terrorism, which not only cause casualties but also deepen social tensions and hinder conflict resolution.

The Indonesian government has responded to the threat of terrorism by adopting a comprehensive legislative framework, most notably through Law Number 15 of 2003. This law provides a strong legal basis for prosecuting perpetrators of terrorism while strengthening inter-agency cooperation mechanisms in terrorism prevention and mitigation. This legislation reflects the state's commitment to upholding national security while upholding human rights principles, an approach that balances security needs with the protection of civil liberties.

The suicide bombing in front of Makassar Cathedral on March 28, 2021, serves as a stark illustration of the ongoing threat of terrorism in Indonesia (Romadhon & Saputra, 2021). This act, perpetrated by a newly married couple, highlights the complex motivations and recruitment processes of terrorists. The attack not only caused physical damage and casualties but also left deep psychological trauma within the Makassar City community. The motive of revenge for the previous arrest of members of a terrorist network underscores the cyclical dynamics of violence that often accompany the phenomenon of terrorism.

The identification of perpetrators and the timing of terrorist attacks are crucial elements in prevention and mitigation strategies. Identifying potential perpetrators before they carry out an attack allows law enforcement to take preemptive action, such as arrests or surveillance. Understanding terrorist networks, their ideologies, and individual motivations is also integral to the identification effort. In the case of the Makassar attack, the timing—just before the month of Ramadan—demonstrates how terrorist groups exploit religious moments to amplify the symbolic resonance of their actions, a strategy aimed at maximizing the psychological impact on the community.

Despite extensive research on terrorism, studies specifically exploring community responses in Makassar City following the bombing remain limited. Miyarso (2011) research on the internalization of religious values to counter-terrorism shares a similarity in examining community perspectives, but that study was conducted on a national scale, whereas the current research focuses on the local context of Makassar. Meanwhile, the research by Matussa'dah et al. (2022) on community perceptions of stigmatizing "terrorist villages" is relevant in examining perceptions. However, the current study differs by focusing on communities in areas not labeled as terrorist strongholds.

This research focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of how the community of Makassar City identifies and responds to the threat of terrorism. This study aims to develop effective, community-based prevention strategies by analyzing community perceptions, attitudes, and participation. Furthermore, this research will explore how local knowledge and community wisdom can be integrated into formal security systems, creating synergy between law enforcement and citizens and examining which communication strategies are most effective at raising community awareness and participation. Thus, this research fills a gap in the literature by providing a more specific and contextualized understanding of the Makassar City community's response and examining the potential for integrating local knowledge into broader prevention strategies.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore in-depth the phenomena of community identification and response to the threat of terrorism in Makassar City (Whitney, 1960). This approach is considered relevant because it prioritizes understanding individuals' meanings, perceptions, and subjective experiences regarding the complex and multidimensional issue of terrorism. Furthermore, the qualitative approach aligns with conflict sociology and communication science frameworks, which emphasize exploring subjective realities and social interactions. Thus, this study seeks to capture nuances challenging to measure quantitatively rather than statistical generalizations.

The research design employed is a case study focusing on the bombing in front of Makassar Cathedral and the subsequent community responses. The case study approach was chosen to enable an in-depth and detailed investigation of this phenomenon within a real-life context. By concentrating on this single case, the study aims to identify patterns, influencing factors, and social dynamics related to community identification and response to the threat of terrorism within a specific urban setting.

This research is located in Makassar City, South Sulawesi. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that the city represents a multicultural urban context where the issue of terrorism, particularly the bombing in front of the Cathedral, has had a direct impact and strong resonance. The research period spanned six months and included in-depth interviews from July to September 2022.

The research data is derived from primary and secondary sources (Neuman, 2003). Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants selected purposively. Informant inclusion criteria included residents living near the incident location, community and religious leaders, security personnel handling the case, and individuals with direct or indirect experience related to the attack. Determining the number of informants was guided by the principle of data saturation,

where interviews were stopped when no new significant information emerged. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected through a literature review encompassing the analysis of official government documents, media reports, news archives, and relevant scholarly publications.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary technique for collecting primary data. This technique allows for flexibility in eliciting in-depth information from informants while remaining focused on key issues relevant to the research questions. The interview guide was developed based on the research's conceptual framework and was reviewed by sociology and communication experts to ensure its validity and reliability. As a complement, field observations were conducted to directly observe social interactions, community behavior, and environmental dynamics around the incident location and other relevant public places. These observations provide a richer contextual understanding of community responses.

Data analysis was conducted inductively, beginning with verbatim transcription of all interview recordings and field notes. This qualitative data analysis process included open coding, where units of meaning in the data were coded to identify key concepts. The next stage, axial coding, linked these codes to construct more abstract categories and explore relationships between categories. Finally, selective coding integrated and refined these categories to produce a coherent theoretical narrative explaining the phenomenon under investigation to reach a conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Identification of Terrorist Group Characteristics: Between Public Knowledge and Stereotypes

Identifying terrorist group characteristics in the community of Makassar City is a complex phenomenon involving the dynamic interplay of factual knowledge, social construction, and evolving stereotypes. The community is not passive in receiving information. However, it actively processes various sources of information, including mass media coverage, law enforcement reports, social media discussions, and personal experiences, to construct their understanding of the traits associated with terrorism. This social construction of "the terrorist" becomes a lens that influences how the community perceives and interacts with individuals or groups deemed to share those characteristics. Furthermore, this social construction is susceptible to oversimplification and generalization.

One crucial dimension in identifying terrorist group characteristics is the analysis of temporal patterns and target selection (Campedelli et al., 2023). The Makassar City community, having directly experienced the bombing in front of the Cathedral, tends to associate terrorist groups with timing that holds symbolic significance, such as major religious holidays. Places of worship are also often perceived as potential targets, reflecting the community's understanding of the

ideology of terrorist groups that oppose specific religious values. However, it is important to note that generalizations based on temporal patterns and targets, while potentially increasing vigilance, also risk creating prejudice against groups not involved in terrorism.

In addition to temporal patterns and targets, the community also attempts to identify terrorist groups by analyzing their operational patterns. Information regarding recruitment methods, training, and the execution of attacks, although often incomplete and fragmented, becomes part of the community's collective knowledge. The sources of this information vary, ranging from media coverage that dramatizes terrorist acts to rumors circulating within the community. In this context, diffusion of innovation theory can explain how information (or misinformation) about terrorist group characteristics spreads and is adopted by the community, influencing their perceptions and attitudes (Zayas & Matusitz, 2021).

The collective response of the Makassar community following the terrorist attack also shaped their perspective in identifying potential threats. Solidarity and rapid recovery efforts, driven by substantial social capital, created a collective awareness of the importance of cooperation between citizens and law enforcement. Community policing programs and increased surveillance technology are manifestations of early identification efforts. However, implementing these strategies must consider the potential for over-surveillance and discrimination, which could be counterproductive in building inclusive social resilience.

Labeling theory provides a crucial analytical framework for understanding the social implications of identifying terrorist group characteristics (Hobson & Moghadam, 2024). When the community, based on limited or biased information, labels individuals or specific groups as "potentially terrorists," that label can have significant consequences. This label can trigger stigmatization, discrimination, and even violence against the targeted groups. Therefore, critical literacy on terrorism issues, including distinguishing fact and opinion, valid knowledge, and harmful stereotypes, is key to building a resilient and just society.

B. Identification of Terrorist Movements Through Analysis of Responses to Government Policy

The community of Makassar City, in a complex effort to identify and anticipate potential acts of terrorism, utilizes the responses of specific groups to government policies as a crucial indicator. The analysis of these responses is not limited to verbal manifestations such as statements or open protests but also includes a more subtle reading of patterns of violent action associated with dissatisfaction with specific policies. From a conflict sociology perspective, government policies can be viewed as an arena of competing interests, where groups that feel marginalized

or disadvantaged may choose violent means as a form of resistance, especially when conventional channels of political participation are perceived as ineffective or closed (Piatkowska & Stults, 2022).

The history of interactions between groups considered radical and the government is an important element in this identification process. The community tends to pay greater attention to groups with a track record of confrontation with the government, particularly regarding sensitive issues such as regional autonomy, religious freedom, or unfair economic policies. The narratives of injustice constructed and disseminated by these groups, often through social media and other informal communication channels, become cognitive frames that influence how the community interprets events and identifies potential threats. The perception that government policies violate fundamental rights or injure a group's sense of justice can be an influential driving factor for mobilizing violent action.

The choice of timing and targets of attacks by terrorist groups often carries symbolic messages closely related to the government policies in question. These groups may choose moments with historical or political resonance, such as anniversaries of the enactment of controversial laws or dates related to past violent events. Targets are also strategically chosen to maximize the impact of the message they wish to convey; symbols of state power, vital public infrastructure, or even individuals considered representative of the opposed policies can become targets. By observing these patterns, the community and law enforcement attempt to build an early warning system to anticipate potential attacks.

The mass media, as an institution with significant power in shaping public opinion, plays a central role in the process of identifying terrorist movements through the analysis of responses to government policy. Comprehensive, balanced, and contextualized reporting can help the public understand the root causes and motivations of terrorist groups and the complexity of the issues underlying acts of violence. However, the media also has the potential to exacerbate the situation if the reporting is sensationalist, biased, or trapped in framing that oversimplifies the problem. In this context, agenda-setting and framing theories in communication studies highlight how the media can influence what the public thinks about (agenda-setting) and how the public thinks about it (framing) (Muzakkir, 2015).

Efforts to prevent acts of terrorism triggered by dissatisfaction with government policies require a holistic, participatory, and social justice-oriented approach. While important, increased physical security and intensified surveillance will not be sufficient if the root causes of dissatisfaction and marginalization are not seriously addressed. The government needs to open up inclusive and equitable spaces for dialogue with various community groups, including those with critical views of government policy. Deliberative participation mechanisms, where

citizens can actively engage in policy-making, can be important instruments for building trust, reducing tensions, and preventing conflict escalation into violence (Nikoghosyan & Ter-Matevosyan, 2023).

Conflict and structural violence theories offer relevant analytical frameworks for understanding the dynamics between government policies, terrorist group responses, and community identification efforts. Coser (1956) emphasizes that conflict is not always negative but can also function as a mechanism for social integration if managed appropriately. Meanwhile, Galtung (1969) highlights that violence is not only physical but can also manifest in the form of structural injustices, such as poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, which can trigger broader cycles of violence. Thus, identifying terrorist movements through analyzing government policy responses must be considered part of a more significant effort to build a just, inclusive, and sustainable society where conflict can be channeled through peaceful and democratic mechanisms.

C. Identification of Terrorist Movements in the Context of Issue Manipulation by Political Elites: A Community Perspective

Within a political landscape characterized by power struggles and complex interests, the community of Makassar City develops a critical awareness of the potential for issue manipulation by political elites through acts of terrorism. The community no longer views acts of terrorism as a singular phenomenon motivated solely by ideological or religious factors but also as potential political instruments used by certain actors to achieve their goals. Within the framework of instrumentalism theory, acts of terrorism can be analyzed as tools deliberately created or exploited by political elites to divert public attention, discredit political opponents, or mobilize support by creating a common enemy (Feyyaz & Bari, 2024). This awareness was particularly heightened following the attack and was linked to the issues that were developing at the time, giving rise to various speculations and interpretations in the community.

Identifying terrorist movements in the context of issue manipulation involves careful analysis of the patterns of relationships between terrorist groups and political elites. The community tends to look for indications of support, either direct or indirect, provided by political elites to terrorist groups. This support may include financial assistance, logistical provision, legal protection, or even the orchestration of the terrorist act itself. In addition, the community also analyzes the alignment of agendas between terrorist groups and certain political elites. Does the terrorist act occur at a time advantageous to certain political elites? Is the narrative promoted by the terrorist group aligned with the interests of political elites? These critical questions form the basis for the community in shaping public opinion and their political assessments.

The profile of terrorist perpetrators involved in acts suspected of being issue diversions also becomes an object of intense analysis by the community. The community tends to associate such acts with perpetrators who possess capabilities above the average terrorist acting individually or in small groups. These capabilities include trained military or paramilitary skills, access to weapons and explosives, extensive intelligence networks, and the ability to plan and execute complex, high-impact attacks. The existence of an intellectual actor behind the scenes, possibly from political elite circles or other interest groups, is often a fundamental assumption in community analysis. This assumption does not always have a solid basis but crystalizes to form a structural theory.

The choice of timing and attack targets becomes a crucial element in the community's efforts to identify potential issue manipulation. Attacks on the eve of elections, amid political scandals involving certain elites, or during the discussion of controversial policies tend to trigger greater suspicion (Marua & Muzakkir, 2023). Attack targets are also carefully analyzed; if the target has high symbolic value and is directly related to the issue being debated publicly, or if the attack targets parties considered political opponents of certain elites, the interpretation of issue manipulation becomes stronger. In this context, the community develops a kind of informal political calculus to assess whether a terrorist act is a "pure" act or part of a larger political scenario.

The mass media, as an arena for contesting public discourse and shaping opinion, plays a decisive role in shaping public perception of the existence or absence of issue manipulation in acts of terrorism. Gramsci (1971) theory of hegemony provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how political elites can use the media to shape dominant consciousness in society, including directing interpretations of terrorist acts. Media controlled by political elites, or those with interests aligned with political elites, will tend to present news that supports the narrative desired by the elite, for example, by highlighting the aspect of "security threats" and obscuring allegations of issue manipulation. On the other hand, independent and critical media can act as a balancing force by conducting in-depth investigations, uncovering hidden facts, and providing space for diverse perspectives, helping the community form a more objective assessment (Eldridge, 2020).

The community's response to terrorist acts suspected of being issue diversions is highly diverse, reflecting varying levels of political literacy, trust in state institutions, and access to different sources of information. Some community members may accept official government explanations and mainstream media coverage without critical analysis. However, others, especially those with higher levels of education and access to information, tend to be skeptical and seek alternative information, perhaps even developing conspiracy theories to

explain the event. This phenomenon indicates social fragmentation and political polarization within the community, which can pose a challenge in building social consensus on how to deal with the threat of terrorism.

To build community resilience against issue manipulation through acts of terrorism, systematic and sustained efforts are needed to increase political and media literacy, strengthen the role of civil society, and promote government transparency and accountability. Critical civic education is crucial, as it equips the community to analyze information objectively, identify biases and interests behind news coverage, and understand the dynamics of power and politics. In addition, the government needs to open up the most expansive possible space for community participation in policy-making, especially regarding security and counter-terrorism issues. Thus, identifying terrorist movements in the context of issue manipulation is no longer solely the domain of security forces but becomes the collective responsibility of all elements of society based on critical awareness, active participation, and a shared commitment to maintaining the integrity of democracy.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the identification and response of the Makassar City community to the threat of terrorism is a complex and multidimensional process involving the interplay of knowledge, stereotypes, political dynamics, and the role of the media. *First*, this research confirms that the Makassar City community identifies terrorist group characteristics through a combination of factual knowledge sourced from mass media, law enforcement information, and direct experience, with stereotypes and prejudices prevalent in the community. This inaccurate identification process is characterized by overgeneralization and oversimplification, which triggers stigmatization and discrimination against certain groups. This misidentification has serious social consequences, reinforcing polarization and hindering efforts to build inclusive social resilience.

Second, this research reveals that the Makassar City community uses the responses of certain groups to government policies as an important indicator in identifying terrorist movements. Analysis of the history of interactions between groups considered radical and the government, perceptions of policy injustice, and the choice of timing and targets of attacks form the basis for the community to assess whether a group is using violence as a form of resistance. Government policies can become an arena of competing interests that trigger violent responses from aggrieved groups. This analysis highlights the crucial role of the mass media in shaping public perceptions of the link between government policies and terrorist acts.

Third, this research shows that the Makassar City community is aware of the manipulation of issues by political elites through acts of terrorism. In complex political

dynamics, the community develops an awareness of exploiting terrorist groups or collaborating with political actors to achieve specific goals, such as diverting public attention or delegitimizing political opponents. The identification process in this context involves analysis of relationship patterns, agenda alignment, perpetrator profiles, and the choice of timing and targets of attacks. Political elites can use the mass media to shape dominant consciousness in society, which in turn influences community responses and attitudes towards terrorist acts and the underlying issues.

Based on the above conclusions, it is recommended that the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) strengthen prevention strategies based on an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of community identification and response to the threat of terrorism. BNPT must develop comprehensive literacy programs to improve the community's ability to distinguish between accurate information and misleading stereotypes about terrorist groups. In addition, BNPT needs to improve the quality of intelligence analysis by incorporating dimensions of community perception and response and analysis of the potential for issue manipulation by political actors. Strategic partnerships with civil society organizations, religious leaders, and community leaders need to be strengthened to build effective communication networks that are responsive to developments at the grassroots level. Finally, regular evaluations and adjustments to prevention strategies should be carried out based on feedback from the community and relevant research findings.

It is suggested that the mass media improve the quality of reporting on terrorism issues by prioritizing the principles of responsible, accurate, balanced, and contextual journalism. The mass media should avoid using sensationalist language or framing that can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices against certain groups. Reporting should provide ample space for in-depth analysis of the root causes of terrorism, including the underlying social, political, and economic factors. The mass media also needs to act as a balancing force by investigating the potential for issue manipulation by political actors and providing space for diverse perspectives, including voices from marginalized groups. Furthermore, the mass media can enhance its role by regularly providing accurate, balanced, and in-depth information.

The Makassar City community, as the party most affected by acts of terrorism and the accompanying social dynamics, needs to continue to increase critical awareness while strengthening social capital and social cohesion. The community is encouraged to participate actively in community-based terrorism prevention programs and develop early detection mechanisms based on local wisdom and knowledge of the surrounding environment. Media and political literacy need to be improved so that the community can analyze information critically, identify biases and interests behind news coverage, and not be quickly provoked by misleading issues. Social solidarity, interreligious tolerance, and intercultural dialogue must continue to be fostered as a bulwark against attempts to divide society and spread ideologies of violence.

Thus, collaboration between the central government, local governments, community organizations, security forces, and all elements of society is needed to address terrorism comprehensively.

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