



## Religious Radicalism Behavior: The Role of Pro-Violence and Dark Personality

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction.** The role of personality seems to have not been thoroughly and extensively studied in research on radicalism and views that support violence. Several recent research results reveal that it is very important to see radicalism and proviolence associated with dark personalities. This study aims to determine the relationship of dark personality with radicalism and Proviolence. **Method.** The study population comprised students (N=469) at the Balikpapan State Polytechnic were given a random online questionnaire to fill out. Data analysis in this study used Partial Least Square (PLS) based on structural equation modelling techniques. **Result.** The goal was to find out if dark personality has a direct effect on proviolence and radicalism and if proviolence can act as a bridge between dark personality and radicalism. The results reveal that dark personality traits like psychopathy and narcissism have a direct effect on proviolence, except for dark personality traits like Machiavellianism. Meanwhile, the dark personalities' Machiavellianism and psychopathy have a direct effect on radicalism, except for the dark personality's narcissism, which has an indirect influence through proviolence as a mediator. The findings of this study indicate that dark personality has a direct and indirect influence on radicalism, and that proviolence can become a mediator between dark personality and radicalism. **Discussion.** Research findings are discussed, with the implication of considering personality factors in detecting and assessing radicalism.

**Keywords:** *Radicalism; Dark Personality; Proviolence, Machiavellianism; Psychopathy; Narcissism*

### **Introduction**

In the study of political and religious radicalism movements today, the terms "radical," "radicalism," "radicalization," "extremism," and "deradicalization" are often used (Ismail et al., 2021). The radicalism movement that gave birth to various kinds and forms of terrorism is a common threat to human civilization today. Although the discourse on the definition of radicalism and terrorism has been debated by experts to date, radicalism is not a myth (Neumann, 2013). In fact, radical groups use various means, including violent ones, to achieve political goals (Schmid, 2013). The meaning of radicalism (radix), which comes from Greek, means root or something very fundamental (Barker, 2001; Widyaningsih et al., 2017), gave birth to various interpretations by experts. Although it has a very broad meaning, radicalism is currently widely defined as a fundamentalist movement that uses all means (including violence) to achieve its ideological goals.

Only followers of some religions are currently accused of becoming radicalized. Islam, for instance, is regarded as a religion that encourages and supports radicalism and terrorism (Delia Deckard & Jacobson, 2015; Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2020). Although in fact, many Muslims reject and denounce extremist ideologies. So, we need to see radicalism as a response to the fact that politicians in a country can't make life fair and good for everyone (Prinsloo, 2018).

Radicalism as a political movement, in fact, does not only move in civil society but also in higher education institutions, such as students (Sirry, 2020; Suyanto et al., 2019). The radicalism movement in higher education is evidenced by the results of various studies conducted by Bräuchler (2004), Ismail et al (2021), Sirry (2020), and Sugihartati (2020). The results of research by Bräuchler (2004), Ismail et al (2021), Sirry (2020), and Sugihartati (2020), according to researchers, are very important to be a common concern because they endanger the next generation of human civilization. However, previous studies discussed in the articles by Bräuchler (2004), Ismail et al (2021), Sirry (2020), and Sugihartati (2020) focused more on radicalism research in universities from a religious point of view, without considering the influence of personality. Students are human beings who have the potential to be influenced by radicalistic ideology. Meanwhile, personality has a major influence on a person's behavior, way of thinking, and movements within a certain period of time, so it is very difficult to understand (Alwisol, 2016). Thus, personality has the potential as a tool to analyze a person's tendency to do something (Rizal & Handayani, 2021), including radicalism.

The first research on the impact of personality, particularly psychopathology, on radical behavior was done by (Pearce, 1977). Since the last two decades, research on radicalism and personality has shown a few novel changes in the terrorist movement, terrorism campaigns, and public strategies to counter the radicalism movement. Additionally, Crenshaw's study from (2000) discovered that it is impossible to isolate terrorism's motivation from the effect of particular people, social groups, and societal politics. Because the personality of terrorism can be like the personality of those who have not been exposed to radicalism, it is exceedingly challenging to determine the personality traits of terrorism with only a few tests (Horgan, 2003; Taylor & Horgan, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to conduct personality and radicalism research to ascertain the likelihood that various individuals may support or join the radicalism movement.

Recent personality and radicalism studies have been associated with elements of dark personality consisting of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism (Mededović & Knežević, 2019; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). In more detail, Duspara & Greitemeyer (2017) show in their study on a sample of psychopathy adults that narcissism has a weak but positive relationship with political extremism. The study of Chabrol et al. (2020) also shows that dark personality consistency has a positive relationship with female radicalism based on religious clusters. The higher the level of a woman's dark personality, the more likely they are to be easily exposed to radical Islam's ideology. Recent studies have shown a consistently positive relationship between dark personality and extremism with proviolence as a mediator (Pavlović & Wertag, 2021). Thus, research on dark personality, which is associated with radicalism and proviolence as a mediator, has not been widely studied by previous researchers.

We chose proviolence in this study not only as a mediator between dark personality and radicalism but also to determine the relationship between dark personality and proviolence in universities. According to the results of previous studies, proviolence has generally supported dark personality (Pailing et al., 2014) and has become a link between dark personality and political extremism (Pavlović & Wertag, 2021). In fact, in some models of political violence, proviolence becomes an inseparable part of political violence. But there aren't many studies that look at the link between a dark personality, radicalism, and proviolence, so we base our suggestions on the research concept shown in fig. 1.

Therefore, this study focuses on providing answers to several research questions. The first research question focuses on examining the relationship between dark personality (Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Narcissism) and radicalism specifically, as presented in fig.1. This study also aims to

contribute to strengthening the tests carried out by previous researchers. In line with previous research presented by Chabrol (2020), Duspara & Greitemeyer (2017), Morgades-Bamba et al (2020), Pavlović & Wertag (2021) we hope that there is a positive relationship between dark personality and radicalism.

The second research question is focused on testing whether there is a relationship between dark personality and proviolence. The third research question focuses on testing whether proviolence is able to be a mediator between dark personality and radicalism, specifically on each indicator of dark personality. Research on dark personality, proviolence, political extremism, and radicalism is not the first, but research that discusses them in detail is very limited, as in this study. Based on these research questions, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1: Machiavellianism has a positive effect on radicalism
- H2: Psychopathy has a positive effect on radicalism
- H3: Narcissism has a positive effect on radicalism
- H4: Machiavellianism has a positive effect on Proviolence
- H5: Psychopathy has a positive effect on Proviolence
- H6: Narcissism has a positive effect on Proviolence
- H7: Proviolence mediates the influence of Machiavellianism on radicalism
- H8: Proviolence mediates the influence of Psychopathy on radicalism
- H9: Proviolence mediates the effect of Narcissism on radicalism

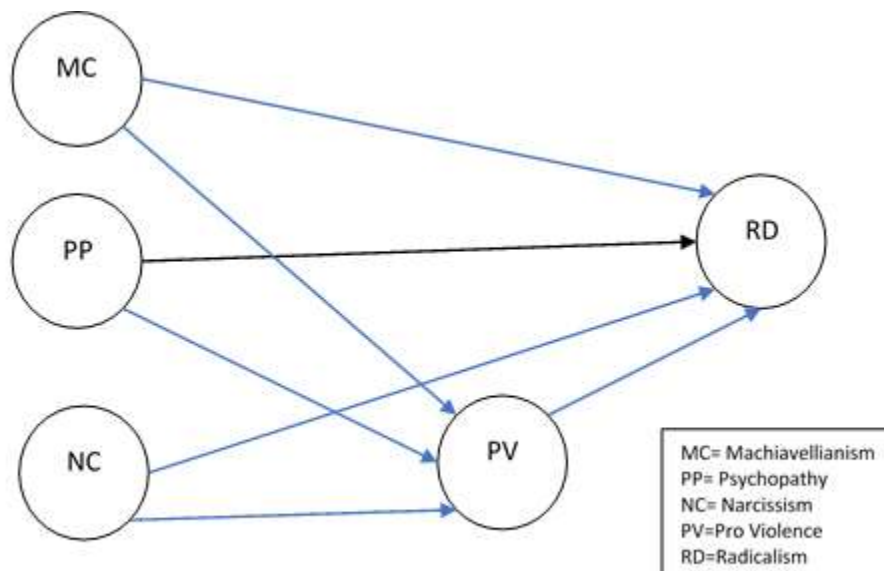


Fig.1. Research Conceptual Model

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Dark Personality and Radicalism**

Dark personality is an evil personality possessed by humans. Individuals with a high dark personality are more likely to commit crimes, cause social harm, and cause other social problems (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Rizal & Handayani, 2021). Dark personality is a personality type consisting of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism (Kayış & Akcaoğlu, 2021). Meanwhile, radicalization is a process that leads individuals or communities closer to adopting violent or extremist ideologies. If someone is radicalized, they either subscribe to an extreme ideology or are willing to use violence as a tool to promote their political or ideological goals (Trimbur et al., 2021). The process of radicalization into terrorism has a relationship with personality as described by Trimbur et al (2021) including dark personality.

The first dark personality is Machiavellianism, which has a tendency to be manipulative by building a good reputation according to expectations, has a cynical tendency towards others, tends to form coalitions with others to carry out its mission, tends to prepare cunning plans and is full of lies to benefit him (Ramsay, 2012; Saputri & Wirama, 2015). The second is psychopathy. According to Jones & Paulhus (2014), psychopathy is the worst dark personality because it has anti-social tendencies and does not have compassion for others. Even those who have a psychopathy tendency have a tendency not to regret their actions (Rizal & Handayani, 2021). The third dark personality is narcissism, which tends to feel superior to others, has high fantasies and imaginations about himself, and is excessive in imagining his success. People who have this kind of personality tend not to accept criticism from others and find it difficult to cooperate with others because they feel excessively amazed by their strengths or beliefs (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

According to several previous studies, dark personality has a relationship with radicalism, such as research conducted by Chabrol et al (2020). Morgades-Bamba et al (2020) shows that women who have a dark personality tend to have the potential to be more easily exposed to radical ideology with dogma as the mediator. Thus, we propose a hypothesis:

H1: Dark personality Machiavellianism has a positive effect on radicalism.

H2: Dark personality Psychopathy has a positive effect on radicalism.

H3: Dark personality Narcissism has a positive effect on radicalism.

### **2. Dark Personality and Proviolence**

Support for various forms of violence cannot be separated from various factors, one of which is the personality factor. Various previous researchers have shown that personality has an important influence on a person's attitude to supporting violence (Stone & Dover, 2007). Recent research has shown that proviolence is a mediator between dark personality and behavior that supports extremism (Pavlović & Wertag, 2021). In addition, proviolence is an important factor that supports the mind-set of people committing acts of terrorism (Stankov et al., 2010).

Proviolence, in addition to having a relationship with personality (Stone & Dover, 2007) is also an important part that supports the militant way of thinking of extremism (Mededović & Knežević, 2019). As far as we are known, not many scholars have thoroughly examined the connections between the three dark personalities. Therefore, we suggest the following:

H4: Machiavellianism has a positive effect on proviolence.

H5: Psychopathy has a positive effect on proviolence.

- H6: Narcissism has a positive effect on proviolence.  
H7: Proviolence mediates the influence of Machiavellianism on radicalism.  
H8: Proviolence mediates the influence of psychopathy on radicalism.  
H9: Proviolence mediates the effect of Narcissism on radicalism.

## **Methods**

This study involved new students at universities in Indonesia as respondents. A total of 500 people were targeted in this research, with various scientific backgrounds such as exact sciences and social humanities. The final sample received consisted of 463 respondents who filled it in, consisting of 296 males and 166 females. This research data was gathered with the help of Google forms. Links to questionnaires were sent to all students who took part in this study as respondents.

Data analysis in this study used Partial Least Square (PLS) based on structural equation modelling techniques. In PLS, the recommended minimum number of samples is in the range of 30–100 samples (Ghozali & Latan, 2020). This study used a sample of 391 respondents, with a total of 9 paths in the model. If you follow the suggestions, the minimum number of samples that must be met is 60 samples (Haryono, 2022).

We collected research data using previously validated instruments. The dark personality instrument consists of three components: (1) Machiavellianism, (2) psychopathy, and (3) narcissism (Jonason & Webster, 2010). Each has a Cronbach Alpha of .72, .66, and .85. These components are used to measure dark personality using five items for Machiavellianism, six items for psychopathy, and nine items for narcissism. For example, (I want others to admire me).

Meanwhile, the attitude of proviolence is measured using an attitude scale to support political violence (Kalmoe, 2014; Pavlović & Wertag, 2021). The instrument consists of 7 items. For example (I like playing violent games). Meanwhile, the attitude of radicalism is measured by two indicators. The first indicator uses an extremism measurement scale (Ozer & Bertelsen, 2019), which consists of 13 items. Items generally have a Cronbach's Alpha .95. For example, democratic forms of government need to be removed if we are to have a decent and better society). The second radicalism scale indicator was adopted from extremist activism (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009), which consisted of 10 items with a Cronbach Alpha of .86. This measurement uses a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). For example (I refuse to follow all government instructions for restricting, disbanding, or banning my organization).

Data analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Using the SEM approach allows researchers to test hypotheses with variables influenced by several indicators. The SmartPLS 3.0 application is used as an analytical tool in this study (Ghozali & Latan, 2020; Haryono, 2022). As long as 200 samples are needed to get a good model.

## **Results**

The results of data analysis using structural equation modelling with Partial Least Square (PLS) with a significance level of 5% indicate Machiavellianism does not have a direct positive effect on proviolence with a value of (0.409) (table 1) but has a direct effect on radicalism with a value of (0.019) (table 1). In addition, the results of the analysis also show that narcissism has no direct effect on radicalism with a value of (0.059) (table 1).

Meanwhile, the results of the analysis show that proviolence does not mediate Machiavellianism with radicalism with a value of (0.412) (table 2). Although narcissism does not directly affect radicalism, proviolence is able to mediate between narcissism and radicalism with a value of (0.000) (table 2).

This finding shows that dark personality (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) has an influence on radicalism either directly (Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) or indirectly (narcissism). Dark personality (narcissism and psychopathy) has a direct influence on proviolence, but Machiavellianism does not have a direct influence on proviolence. In addition, the measurement results show that proviolence is capable of being a mediator of narcissism with radicalism as presented in table 2.

Table 1 Path Analysis Results between variables

Hubungan	(O)	(M)	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P	Result
MC -> PV	0.045	0.048	0.055	0.826	<b>0.409</b>	not significant
MC -> RD	0.110	0.117	0.047	2.347	0.019	Significant
NC -> PV	0.261	0.259	0.059	4.444	0.000	Significant
NC -> RD	0.101	0.107	0.053	1.895	<b>0.059</b>	not significant
PP -> PV	0.225	0.226	0.054	4.161	0.000	Significant
PP -> RD	0.301	0.299	0.055	5.524	0.000	Significant
PV -> RD	0.344	0.342	0.050	6.891	0.000	Significant

MC, Machiavellianism; PP, Psychopathy; NC, Narcissism; PV, Proviolence; RD, Radicalism  
O, Original Sampel; M, Sample Mean; STEV, Standar Deviation, T Statistic; P, Velues

Table 2 Pro-violence mediator using bootstrapping testing

Mediator	(O)	(M)	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P	Result
MC -> PV -> RD	0.016	0.016	0.019	0.821	<b>0.412</b>	not significant*
NC -> PV -> RD	0.090	0.089	0.025	3.645	0.000	Significant*
PP -> PV -> RD	0.077	0.078	0.023	3.433	0.001	Significant*

MC, Machiavellianism; PP, Psychopathy; NC, Narcissism; PV, Proviolence; RD, Radicalism  
\*significance level 5%

O, Original Sampel; M, Sample Mean; STEV, Standar Deviation, T Statistic; P, Velues

Based on these findings, it shows that proviolence has a role as a mediator between dark personality narcissism and in addition. These results reinforce previous research (Pavlović & Wertag, 2021), that found proviolence mediates dark personality with support for the extremism movement.

## Discussion

This study produced several important findings regarding the relationship between dark personality and proviolence, the relationship between dark personality and radicalism; and proviolence as a mediator between dark personality and radicalism. In general, these findings show the consistency of the relationship between dark personality and radicalism even though the respondents have different

cultures, ideologies, geography, and genders. In addition, this finding further strengthens the notion that dark personality has a direct positive influence on proviolence.

This study emphasizes that radicalism is not only influenced by religious elements such as religion and culture, as some previous studies (Carvalho, 2020; Cinoğlu, 2010; Dawson, 2010; Rink & Sharma, 2018). In fact, radicalism is mostly imposed on certain religions and groups as an example of Islam (Dauda, 2021; Sandberg & Colvin, 2020; von Sikorski et al., 2017). This research directly and indirectly shows that terrorism is not only influenced by one factor, but there are also many factors that influence the behaviours of radicalism, extremism, and acts of terrorism. Personality, or dark personality, is one of the factors that contribute to the emergence of radicalism (Chabrol et al., 2020; Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017; Mededović & Knežević, 2019; Pavlović & Wertag, 2021).

Our research reveals that dark personality Machiavellianism has a direct effect on radicalism but has no effect on proviolence as a mediator variable. This means that there is or is not an attitude of proviolence, but someone who has a dark personality like Machiavellianism then directly has an attitude of radicalism. Because someone who has Machiavellianism will tend to be manipulative by building a good reputation according to his expectations, have a cynical tendency towards others, tend to form coalitions with others to carry out his mission, tend to prepare cunning plans and be full of lies to benefit himself (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Paulhus, 2016). This builds on previous research (Morgades-Bamba et al., 2020), which showed that Machiavellianism had an influence on the process of radicalization of women. The same thing was also expressed (Pavlović & Wertag, 2021), that Machiavellianism has a relationship with radicalism. However, our study does not only influence women but has an influence in general on various genders.

Dark Personality Psychopathy's later findings show that psychopathy has a positive effect on radicalism directly and indirectly through proviolence. This means that dark personality psychopathy has a direct impact on proviolence and radicalism, so that whether or not there is proviolence, people who have dark personality psychopathy will have an attitude of proviolence and radicalism. This supports previous research (Mededović & Knežević, 2019), which shows that dark personality psychopathy is the main characteristic of someone who has an extremist ideology. Dark personality Psychopathy is thought to be the worst type of dark personality because it can lead to many kinds of bad behaviour (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

The last finding is a dark personality Narcissism shows that narcissism does not directly affect radicalism. However, narcissism has an indirect effect on radicalism with proviolence as a mediator, meaning that someone who has personality narcissism does not directly have a radical attitude. However, someone with a narcissistic personality can be radical if he also has a provocation attitude. This supports previous research conducted by Mayer et al. (2020), which revealed that narcissistic behaviour tends to have an indirect influence on support for radical groups but requires other factors such as ideology and other factors.

Apart from various other factors that influence radical attitudes such as gender (Morgades-Bamba et al., 2020; Pavlović & Wertag, 2021), ideology and political choices (Mayer et al., 2020), and other factors that cannot be explained in this study, the dark personality and proviolence factors show direct and indirect effects on radicalism. This means that someone with a dark personality is more likely to have a radical ideology, especially if he supports or believes in using violence to solve various social and political problems. Although this behaviour encourages violence, it could be due to factors other than a dark personality.

In the end, the results of this study are important findings in the study of dark personalities that can be used to detect proviolence and radicalism behaviour in society. This means that our research has important implications for future studies of dark personality, proviolence, and radicalism. Although this

research only focuses on the influence of dark personality on proviolence, radicalism and proviolence are able to mediate dark personality with radicalism. The findings of this study show that the consistency of the influence of dark personality has an influence on radicalism that cannot be ignored. This is a big step forward in the study of radicalism from different perspectives, so that it can be found from different angles, like the person's personality.

This study has several limitations. The biggest limitation is that the use of radicalism instruments still uses political extremism instruments (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009) and radicalization (Ozer & Bertelsen, 2018, 2019) Where each country has its own definition of radicalism, this has the potential to generate biased data. So, the researcher suggests that a radicalism instrument be made based on what is known about radicalism in general at the time the research is done.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study reveal that dark personality traits like psychopathy and narcissism have a direct effect on Proviolence except for dark personality traits like Machiavellianism, which do not have a direct effect. Dark personality Machiavellianism and psychopathy have a direct influence on radicalism, while narcissism does not have a direct influence on radicalism, but proviolence can be a mediator between narcissism and psychopathy with radicalism.

Dark personality either directly or indirectly has an influence on radicalism, Proviolence is able to become a mediator of dark personality Psychopathy and narcissism with radicalism except for dark personality Machiavellianism. This study will provide recommendations for further research and as a reference in assessing and detecting radicalism in society, not only using social and religious political instruments but also using personality aspects as an important part in detecting and tackling various forms of radicalism in society.

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