



Hedayah

Countering Extremism
& Violent Extremism



**7th International
Countering Violent Extremism
Research Conference 2022:
Recommendations for Policy,
Programs and Research**



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INTRODUCTION

Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Extremism and Violent Extremism, hosts an annual International Countering Violent Extremism Research Conference in response to current and evolving violent extremist and terrorist threats and challenges. Previous conferences organized with support from international organizations, governments, and academic institutions achieved tremendous success in gathering a vast pool of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners worldwide.

The seventh International CVE Research Conference was held in Granada, Spain, from May 23rd to 25th, 2022, with a hybrid format which allowed participants to join both in-person and online. The Conference was sponsored by the Spanish government, and co-hosted by Hedayah, the Euro-Arab Foundation for Higher Studies (FUNDEA), the University of Granada, the United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism (UNOCT), the European Institute for

Counter Terrorism and Conflict Prevention (EICTP), the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) and Moonshot. Strategic Partners for 2022 included the Cyber Threats Research Centre (CYTREC), Tech Against Terrorism (TAT), and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview of Hedayah's 2022 Research Conference by presenting P/CVE recommendations that can inform researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. A more detailed description of the presentations will be provided through essays contributed to the annual edited volume. The following sections summarize key takeaways and recommendations made during presentations, discussions, and debates that took place throughout the separate sessions of the three-day Conference¹. The sections are delineated by theme, in alignment with the session topics of the Conference.

1. Please note that this brief is based on the presentations made and discussions had during the conference, held under the Chatham House Rule. Accordingly, this Brief is based on notes taken of presentations and discussion during the event which are not distributed and does not attribute any specific speakers or sources.

THEMATIC SESSIONS

THEMATIC SESSION 1: The Implications of COVID-19 on Violent Extremist Actors and P/CVE Efforts

The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on violent extremist (VE) actors and terrorist groups has been seen worldwide, a relationship which this session explored. The researchers discussed their recent findings related to violent extremism and terrorism potentially linked to or influenced by the pandemic and, more broadly, unpacked some of the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted extremist activities and narratives. The session highlighted the global variations in the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on radicalization and violent extremism. In general, the public health measures and restrictions imposed during the pandemic limited the number and severity of violent extremist and terrorist activities on the ground and their ability to radicalize, recruit, and organize in person. However, as more people spent time online, the panelists agreed that (the risk of) radicalization increased, and increased online engagement was clearly exploited by VE groups during the pandemic. The panelists also noted a more complex relationship at play than a simple increase in radicalization or VE activity resulting from increased time spent online, which required further study. Overall, COVID-19 contributed to the ongoing hybridization of VE threats that are less easily categorized into specific group-based threats. Importantly, the experts in the session noted that as the restrictions eased in 2021, terrorist acts and violent extremist activities on the ground largely rebounded to previous or increased levels.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Utilize systemic risk and transparency regulation from and/or in collaboration with social media platforms as opposed to solely content moderation approaches;

- ▶ Ensure that policy creates space and continues to focus on addressing 'looser' VE movements and individuals in those ecosystems, not only cohesive violent extremist organizations (VEOs);
- ▶ Include curricula and community initiatives for deployment at the broader general population level in prevention approaches;
- ▶ Focus on international collaboration and coordination in P/CVE on the transnational nature of threats;
- ▶ Continue to focus on offline radicalization leading to VE as much as online extremism.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Engage in capacity building by training civil society organizations, media groups, and credible messengers, particularly including the development, tailoring, and delivery of counter-narratives;
- ▶ Focus programming not only on groups but rather broader communities, given the current context of hybrid extremism;
- ▶ Continue and increase international coordination among non-governmental organizations.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Rigorous and contextualized research should continue to illuminate our knowledge and understanding of the influence of the global pandemic on VE actors, presently but also in the post-pandemic world.

THEMATIC SESSION 2: Internet, New Technology, Violent Extremism, and P/CVE

The internet and new technologies continue to present new and evolving challenges for preventing and countering extremism, with a landscape that can change at a rapid pace. The advent of COVID-19, as discussed in the first session, only further highlighted this – the same restrictions that saw much of the world driven to work, connect, and communicate via online spaces also led VE and terrorist groups to increase their online activities seeking to exploit the online world. In this context, definitional frameworks – that is, shared and agreed standards of what constitutes terrorism or violent extremism online – are vital foundations for P/CVE efforts, enabling actors who seek to moderate content, and develop programming and policy responses, or to understand the phenomena. Beyond developing such taxonomies to classify what constitutes terrorist activity, which can be fraught with bias and slow to respond to new developments (with few radical right groups, for instance, included on such lists currently), applying these definitions and designations in real terms is growing increasingly challenging with the use of dog-whistle tactics.

This panel also highlighted the role of gaming in both radicalization and prevention. Significant and well-known but often under-studied online spaces such as gaming platforms have long been seen to have a connection with increased violence and are known sites of radicalization, but may also have pro-social benefits that can be created and amplified by positive and healthy gaming communities. Similarly, gamification of learning and developing behaviors that can increase resilience to radicalization, utilizing inoculation theory approaches, appears to have been effective in some interventions based on experimental evaluations conducted and also to have potentially been more effective at engaging users than websites. It is important to note that such approaches, however, require an iterative, contextualized approach.

In addition, the discussion following the session highlighted the linkages between these online

platforms and misogyny and critically that this must not simply be seen as a gateway to violence but a form of violence itself – an understanding that has not yet been captured by most designation or definition frameworks.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Develop and improve legal frameworks to support and facilitate efforts to moderate, research, and respond to crises;
- ▶ Develop infrastructure to engage researchers and practitioners to facilitate improved evaluation and learning.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Work to address the significant gap in, and growing need for, moderation in gaming spaces;
- ▶ Develop cross-platform solutions, including hash-sharing databases (digital fingerprinting) that can be used in combination with designation lists to identify specific content and broadening such databases to include images, video, PDFs and URLs;
- ▶ Expand crisis response capacity to enable improved, more rapid content takedown in the context of potentially live-streamed or real-time VE content;
- ▶ Ensure platforms have meaningful data transparency frameworks to support content moderation and research;
- ▶ Seek to harness the positive effects of gaming, like sense of community, potential for education and skills development, entertainment, etc. in programming efforts;
- ▶ Utilize gamified elements in programming to increase engagement;

- ▶ Consider the benefits of the inoculation approach to help build resilience, including learning points and incorporating a positive feedback loop;
- ▶ Seek opportunities to ensure individuals, including those at risk, can play an active and positive role.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Continue research on the effectiveness of gamification and inoculation;
- ▶ Consider further research on how to deal with bystander effects online, particularly in online gaming communities and platforms;
- ▶ Focus on advancing media literacy, and on measuring and assessing impacts of these efforts, to improve engagement with a broader audience.



THEMATIC SESSION 3: The Effects of Environmental Change on Violent Extremism

Climate change and its wide array of effects are also creating human security challenges by potentially giving rise to VE and terrorism. The session focused on North Africa and the influence of climate change in this region, suggesting that although empirical research does not point to a direct relationship between climate change and political violence, it is important to explore how these elements feed off each other. This session elaborated on the notion that the effects of climate change can affect vulnerability to VE and terrorism and vice versa. More specifically, climate change can contribute to VE by exacerbating grievances, creating new needs resulting from the impact of climate change, eroding government legitimacy and institutional capacity, and feeding narratives on marginalization and exclusion spread by VEOs.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Develop and improve legal frameworks to support and facilitate efforts to research and respond to crises;

- ▶ Develop infrastructure to engage researchers and practitioners to facilitate improved evaluation and learning.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Explore the ways in which programming can help to reduce radicalization leading to violent extremism as a result of climate change consequences.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Intensify and continue research on climate change and its influence on radicalization leading to violent extremism, especially amid a global climate change crisis.

THEMATIC SESSION 4: Addressing the Rise of the Radical Right

The past decade has seen a resurgence of radical right ideologies across many parts of the world and increasing incidences of radical right extremist activity. While radicalization of the radical right is by no means an exclusively online phenomenon, the radicalization of actors in digital subcultures has become increasingly apparent. In such spaces, terrorism is enacted as theater and combines game and 'chan' culture with the lure of online infamy and the 'santification' of terrorism, linked to heroic masculinity, acting as key driving forces. Gender, and gendered ideologies, have also been harnessed and weaponized by the radical right and in other extremist milieus, both online and offline. Radical right actors leverage public fear and political concerns to radicalize around gender and link gender to theories like the 'great replacement', while glorification of masculine violence and the protection of white women and girls. These narratives are being used by radical right actors to drive a shift toward more conservative understandings of gender.

While awareness of such radical right narratives has increased in mainstream media and forums, work to counter these narratives through the use of counter or alternative narrative campaigns used in strategic communications and P/CVE has been limited, as has research into their effectiveness against radical right narratives specifically. Recent research suggests that while counter-narrative campaigns can be effective against radical right messaging, they must be carefully developed, tested, and deployed to avoid unintended risks and increase effectiveness.

The session also highlighted, however, that these online radicalization processes should not have solely online solutions and noted a need for prevention to continue to happen offline with friends, family, and community members. Offline community resilience remains a key factor in addressing radicalization into radical right ideologies online, with informed family members and friends playing vital roles.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Ensure that counter-narrative campaigns implemented are tested and contextualized to lower unintended risks while increasing their effectiveness;
- ▶ Treat and understand radical right online spaces as an extension of society, as real community spaces interact with and are influenced by offline communities;
- ▶ Address contextual social anxieties and grievances through community resilience building, including education and awareness raising.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Conduct testing and/or formative research before creating and deploying counter-narrative campaigns;
- ▶ Educate communities and, in particular, practitioners, teachers, and parents on digital subcultures and educate media to reduce the potential impacts of extremist content and propaganda that may be shared in the aftermath of atrocities;
- ▶ Focus equally on offline approaches such as enhancing resilience, creating norms that promote responsibility in cyberspace, and dismantling mis- and disinformation online;
- ▶ Provide mental health and resilience-building services and resources to groups known to be most at risk;
- ▶ Identify existing gaps between ideology and practice that may be useful for interventions.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Continue research to better document and

understand the processes of cross-pollination of narratives between conspiracy theorists and extremist actors to better address their exploitation by radical right actors;

- ▶ Continue research to improve understanding of how gender is used to persuade and animate grievances and to mobilize through fear.

THEMATIC SESSION 5: Countering Ideologically-Inspired Extremist Groups

The defeat of Daesh in Syria in 2019 did not end ideologically-inspired extremist and terrorist groups and their activities. Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, Daesh, its affiliate groups, and “lone wolf” supporters have continued to carry out attacks. This session raised interesting new and continued findings related to this form of extremism.

The session discussed the continued existence of multiple drivers of VE, including at macro, meso, and micro levels. The experts agreed that influential members of religious communities could play an important role in helping mitigate violence, reduce radicalization, and marginalize extremists within communities. These leaders can also support efforts to combat violent extremist organizations or groups who attempt to shape their group members or target potential group members or perceptions of their identity in ways that limit their shared identities and thus discourage connection and engagement with perceived out-group members. Further, institutions in states with stronger linkages between religious and government institutions have also demonstrated success in countering VE, as research on best practices and lessons learned presented during the session demonstrated.

Recent research discussed also demonstrated a shift in communications between ideologically inspired extremists to more decentralized peer-to-peer networks, with most content circulated in vernacular languages. The observed interplay

between online and offline recruitment was also noted, highlighting, as other experts during the Conference had also done, the need to ensure that holistic approaches combining online and offline elements are utilized.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Enhance current coordination between government entities to better support P/CVE efforts;
- ▶ Ensure that the advancement of strategies and action plans continues to keep pace with the rapidly developing landscape of extremist groups;
- ▶ Incorporate a gender-balanced approach in P/CVE activities, both for prevention and awareness raising and for reintegration and rehabilitation activities;
- ▶ Engage religious leaders on counter strategies, providing support with methods;
- ▶ Understand that religious leaders can play a role at multiple stages of P/CVE and various levels from local through to international, and support them to lead on preventing and countering violent extremism.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Work to create shared definitions and understanding of problems to counter

extremism;

- ▶ Integrate messaging such as counter or alternative narratives into holistic programs that consider online and offline spaces;
- ▶ Develop and foster public-private partnerships to support programming efforts.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Map wider social norms and ecologies that inform or influence ideologically-inspired extremist groups in order to improve understandings and inform programming responses.



THEMATIC SESSION 6: Disengagement and Deradicalization: Lessons from Criminology and Psychology on VE and P/CVE

Violent extremism remains understudied in the fields of criminology and psychology. This session sought to tease out key lessons learned and findings from these fields, focusing on disengagement and de-radicalization and what criminological or psychological factors should be considered in P/CVE interventions.

Research suggests that aspects of violent extremism are rooted in the brain; anger and emotions, for instance, can explain the motivation for violence, and a burgeoning literature on the relationship between pain, motivation, and pleasure has begun to explain propensities for violent behavior. Research has demonstrated the addictive nature of violence, though the full impacts of such findings for P/CVE require further exploration. The panelists also discussed the ability of psychology to measure aggression and the importance of applying a multidisciplinary approach to explore genetics, psychology, neuroscience, brain imaging, and bio-psycho-social behavior.

An additional topic discussed was the factors influencing public attitudes towards rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Support for rehabilitation and reintegration was shown to depend on the offender's crime type and the extent of harm inflicted on the victims. The panelists concluded that the ideology of the offender(s) in question had an impact on public support for rehabilitation and reintegration. Moreover, more conservative groups were clearly

less likely in the population studied to support reintegration and rehabilitation efforts, especially in the cases of ideologically-inspired offenders.

Finally, the discussion was steered toward sports that could be used as a mechanism of de-radicalization and how different psychosocial variables potentially contribute to the prevention of violent extremism, taking as a reference the 3N Model (need and motivation, narrative, and network).

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Develop public communication strategies to educate broader society about the value of rehabilitation and reintegration, especially in the case of religiously inspired terrorists;
- ▶ Create specific messages for more conservative audiences to increase their public support in order to change attitudes;
- ▶ Empower frontline practitioners with clear expectations and high-quality training.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Train journalists and media outlets to enable them to be positive actors who are providing objective information, and to avoid sensationalistic aspects that sometimes arise;

- ▶ Utilize the 3N model, which can be a facilitator of impactful interventions in future P/CVE efforts;
- ▶ Ensure proper attention is granted to transition periods (e.g. education, migration processes, prison/parole etc.);
- ▶ Evaluate further, compare and contrast P/CVE programs and combine CVE and therapeutic approaches to addressing radicalization and VE.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Conduct additional research studies on other contexts where the exclusion of rehabilitated VE group members is common;
- ▶ Adopt a multidisciplinary approach that explores research on genetics, psychology, neuroscience, brain imaging, and biopsychosocial behavior is essential.



THEMATIC SESSION 7: Gender, Youth and P/CVE

As earlier sessions highlighted, gendered stereotypes and misogynistic attitudes have been linked by various studies to radicalization, and with gendered ideologies exploited by radical right actors to agitate and create fear. A recent study presented during this session demonstrated further that misogyny should be considered a potential predictor of attitudes and intentions, though empirical research examining the overlap of risk factors for VE with parallel areas, such as domestic violence, is limited.

Gendered ideologies may also have other linkages to violent extremism. Decreases in political spaces for women resulting from gendered ideologies that limit women's access, agency, and mobility were also discussed in terms of how they have been documented as creating risk factors for radicalization among women. Amongst younger audiences, the prevalence of gendered stereotypes in children's animation is a key challenge, similar to the lack of diverse voices and representation despite recent progress. However, evaluation of programming which seeks to teach children tolerance and resilience through animation has shown that for younger children, engagement with such media improved life skills, and for older children, it resulted in changes in attitudes and perceptions associated with increased resilience to radicalization.

Overall, the panel highlighted how critical it is to develop a nuanced understanding of the role of gender in violent extremism – as a potential factor of radicalization, as a key risk factor to identify, and as a tactic exploited by VE actors, and conversely in effectively preventing and countering violent extremism.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Treat toxic masculinities seriously as a driver of radicalization in policy, programming, and analysis around VE;
- ▶ Recognize the linkages between gender-based violence and political violence.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Ensure that programming is designed with direct action to challenge gendered stereotypes with young audiences at an early stage;
- ▶ Recognize misogyny as a potential risk factor for violent extremism;
- ▶ Harness the power of storytelling mediums such as cartoons, animation, and comic books to change normative values and ideas and to

counter specific behaviors, including reducing radicalization and increasing resilience.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Continue to research the impacts of exclusion, in particular gender-based exclusion, on radicalization, including developing better understanding of changing power relations and their impacts;
- ▶ Conduct research to contribute to establishing the relevance of misogyny as a risk factor for (extremist) violence in order to provide evidence for more targeted prevention and intervention programs.



THEMATIC SESSION 8: Current and Future Challenges of P/CVE

The final thematic session of the Conference highlighted key issues for the future of P/CVE. While there are many other pressing challenges in the field, this session focused on gendered drivers of VE, the changing nature of terrorist use of the internet, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of those engaged in VE and their families.

Evaluations for a large, multi-year program that included over 1000 interviews, saw a set of recurring themes emerge – hidden, gendered drivers of VE, namely gender-based discrimination – specifically, narrowing women’s identities to a singular identity of motherhood in ways that hinders other facets of identity; and domestic violence, which fuels familial dysfunction, and is linked directly to VE. These linked phenomena play out at the individual and family level and, more broadly, in communities. At an individual level, gender discrimination can create a singular identity limiting women to the domestic sphere, isolating women, and limiting their exposure to broader viewpoints. At a family level, mounting evidence shows, as also discussed in earlier sessions, that misogyny is both a risk factor for and an early warning sign of VE – this tendency was evident in all the contexts where programming took place. When attitudes linked to VE are not contested and flourish in the home, it has broader societal impacts, given it is known that those who support or perpetrate gender-based violence are more likely to engage in VE.

Adversarial shifts in terrorist use of the internet are a vital area of research to ensure an up-to-date understanding of how VE groups are using the internet and the many associated platforms for engagement, messaging, and coordination. A better understanding of these also supports efforts to predict these shifts before they occur. Terrorist use of the internet varies based on the intended purpose of usage – however, the main adversarial shifts highlighted in recent reporting noted the use of decentralized file sharing and content hosting; increase in terrorist and VEO-operated websites; increased use of good operational security approaches on behalf of such groups; and use of mirror platforms and services to evade content takedown or moderation efforts. While it is clear that virtually every form of terrorism or VE uses the internet, often having large amounts of content available online across various platforms or sites, more research is needed to understand the nature and proliferation of this content, particularly given how much content there is to assess and the continued evolution and creation of this content. This makes it more difficult to detect and respond, particularly for smaller firms or platforms or for actors outside these platforms. Tech Against Terrorism’s recent transparency report also noted the differences in approaches between violent extremist groups, with radical right groups sharing less content, but also being less successfully

moderated or addressed, with only fifty percent of radical right content being taken down by platforms compared with more than ninety percent of the content generated by ideologically-inspired extremist groups.

Finally, the session considered the challenges of rehabilitation and reintegration. It provided as a case study an overview of Kosovar 'authorities' early rehabilitation procedures and reintegration initiatives. These initiatives were undertaken in response to the challenge presented by the Kosovar people who visited Syria and Iraq in 2012 either to join organizations that have been labeled as terrorist organizations or to migrate to areas that these organizations governed or administered. It emphasized potential best practices, persistent difficulties, and chances for inclusive collaborations with key stakeholders. The discussion included suggestions for better program effectiveness, implementation procedures, and increased sustainability. There have been difficulties in adopting this proactive repatriation strategy, but Kosovo is, nonetheless, now at the forefront of initiatives to rehabilitate and integrate juveniles and women who have been repatriated from Syria into society, underlining not only the possibilities for successful and sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives but the need for implementing such approaches.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- ▶ Take into account lived experiences of women and engage with them in P/CVE programming, directly addressing the 'invisibility' of women in the design of policy;
- ▶ Continue to engage with platforms and the tech sector to ensure that policy supports reporting and moderation efforts;
- ▶ Develop a communications strategy for engagement with receiving communities and the press on the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees and P/CVE efforts in general;

- ▶ Integrate representatives of local government and civil society organizations in the development of the revised national CVE strategy and action plan;
- ▶ Support the development of tailored municipal/ regional rehabilitation and reintegration plans aligned with the strategic priorities of the national CVE strategy;
- ▶ Provide adequate financial assistance and opportunities for economic stability to repatriated families to avoid further radicalization as well as childcare systems and personalized long-term care for child returnees

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- ▶ Promote programming that encourages women-led networks and directly applies a gender lens, including directly seeking to increase the number of women engaged in P/CVE networks and programming at the local level;
- ▶ Ensure reporting of terrorist or VE groups to relevant platforms;
- ▶ Balance the need for content moderation and de-platforming with an understanding of the consequences of these efforts and limitations on the freedom of expression;
- ▶ Collaborate with the government authorities, representatives of religious communities, and international partners or communities that could support P/CVE work.

Recommendations for Researchers:

- ▶ Consider the dilemmas of highlighting these platforms or groups through research; a careful balance between understanding the challenge and leading people to extremist content is required;
- ▶ Conduct further research to understand the mechanisms of reintegration and the best approaches to this process.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

► BREAKOUT SESSION A: Future Directions of P/CVE

This session engaged participants in developing their ‘big ideas’ for the field of P/CVE – ranging from key challenges to address, research needed, recommendations for change, and gaps in knowledge to be filled. Among these ideas proposed were:

- Learn from the ‘public health’ approach when focusing on and investing in the resilience of online communities and utilizing inoculation methods in the P/CVE field;
- Developing a comprehensive index or catalogue of existing CVE policies and approaches worldwide to provide a benchmarking mechanism for the P/CVE field and ensure the sustainability of prevention efforts as well as supporting sustainability and effectiveness through better monitoring and evaluation;
- Focusing on a bottom-up approach to better connect those who implement with their donors.

A range of other possibilities were also highlighted, spanning topics like research methods through to improving coordination. One possibility in

the research space noted was the potential for designing mechanisms for P/CVE research to support and develop policy recommendations that utilize consensus-building or consensus-based models that allow for finding common and key elements in the absence of agreement on approaches or of scientific data. Another topic raised was the need to bring greater focus to ensuring that the rule of law is applied when dealing with radicalized individuals and their families, from both an ethics and effectiveness perspective; yet another was the need to continue to enhance efforts to bridge the gaps between government and civil society actors to improve outcomes in CVE more broadly.

Participants also underlined the need for continued improvements to research and research practices, including more multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral approaches, and more diverse voices, including both those of researchers from the Global South, affected communities, and across relevant fields such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), child protection, and peacebuilding.

► **BREAKOUT SESSION B: Ethical Challenges in P/CVE Research** - OSINT & Digital Spaces

Those who are not directly engaged in research within the CVE community often overlook ethical challenges in P/CVE research. However, these are of vital importance in terms of both the safety and security of researchers and in applying a do no harm approach to all those who may take part in or be represented by research. This should include not only research participants but also academics and researchers.

The session covered a number of elements of ethics and security, including digital hygiene on online platforms and positive intervention methods to ensure safety. Among the key challenges noted were adequate protections for academics and researchers at all levels and the need for better provision of mental health support in academic contexts.

Key recommendations given during the session discussion included:

- Researchers should be sure to devise an ethical approach to collecting research data that ensures not only the safety of participants in a do-no-harm approach, but also their own safety;
- Best practice rules and formalization of values and approaches in this space should be developed and supported by institutions, including threat-reporting protocols and institutional support in the case of threats.

► **BREAKOUT SESSION C: Innovative Methodology & Techniques for P/CVE Research**

The breakout session presented cutting-edge research involving various research methods (interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc.) to examine pre and post-observations of beneficiaries in programming that produces and distributes quality family programming that is entertaining and educational, seeking to reduce radicalization, hate, and violent tendencies, primarily targeting youth who are taught inclusion, positive values, and coping with anxiety, among other aspects of positive development. It highlighted two main programs – one which targets youth to counter Daesh recruitment narratives, resulting in the development of seven comic books, out of which a million copies were distributed to youth in high-risk areas.

The research in this context was focused on understanding push and pull factors and their relationship to radicalization, and included interviews with extremists to uncover relevant narratives. This research demonstrates that the link between push or pull factors and radicalization is not always straightforward, and that greater exposure to such factors does not necessarily mean a greater risk of radicalization – individual factors, such as agency and resilience also play a key role. The programs highlighted were designed to help address this challenge, intended to build greater resilience through contextualized counter-narratives. Statistics demonstrate their success - in one study, attitudes linked to resilience increased by 16%, while in another, there was a decrease of 50% in positive views on VEOs.

Another program focuses on building resilience, teaching basic fundamental values such as inclusion and gender equality, and making accessible content to teachers who may use it in their classrooms. The program's impact was measured using randomized control groups, and data from previous and current programs and showed overwhelmingly positive results.

Key recommendations highlighted included:

- ▶ Governments should include programs that build resilience in policy agendas to prevent radicalization leading to VE;
- ▶ Practitioners should seek ways through which they could incorporate entertaining and educational family programming into their curriculums;
- ▶ P/CVE organizations and experts should work with digital media organizations and explore innovative ways to disseminate contextualized and effective counter-narratives.



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