



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PREVENTING RADICALIZATION

Research shows that the image of the uneducated participant of a violent extremist group does not match the actual profiles of radicalized youths. It became clear that radical movements do not only recruit low-skilled but also well-educated young individuals. School environments act in these processes often as attractive recruitment places. Based on this, the education sector is considered crucial in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.



Relationship between education and radicalization

1. *Level of education of radicalized individuals*

Studies on radicalization show that young men between the ages of 15 and 25 are most likely to engage in terrorism or political violence. Radicalization is linked to the adolescent phase, and the process is divided into four phases: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization. Most radicalized individuals have obtained a degree in secondary or higher education, with over 60% of Salafi-Jihadists and 88% of their leaders completing higher studies. However, not every study makes the same conclusions, and the level of education varies among offenders. Some studies have found a combination of well-educated and less educated participants in violent extremist groups.

2. *School environments as recruitment places for extremist groups*

Terrorist organizations often see school environments as attractive recruitment places, along with prisons and the Internet. As enrolment rates in schools have increased across the developing world over the past two decades, recruitment strategies have adapted and became more successful. This is due to already existing networks in school environments, which can provide opportunities for recruiters. Especially successful were those that started providing education, housing, health and employment services to recruit new members.

3. *Limited Access to Education*

The relationship between education and radical beliefs or participation in terrorism is not clear, but studies show that there is a connection between low educational levels and the risk of conflict. Unequal access to education can lead to tension, frustration, and exclusion, which can lead to

violence and rebellion. However, political and socioeconomic variables may mediate this relationship. Higher levels of education, such as university education, reduce domestic terrorism in countries with more favourable conditions. Equal access to education alone does not necessarily minimize the risk of radicalization, but when combined with civic engagement opportunities, it can steer youth away from violence.

4. Quality of education

The quality of education in Arab countries, Pakistan, and West Africa is substandard, with many students failing basic numeracy and literacy tests and lacking the skills required in the 21st-century market. The style of education in these countries often emphasizes rote memorization and obedience, leaving students vulnerable to extremist narratives. Poor education infrastructure and a lack of dedicated teachers have contributed to the radicalization of many youths in West Africa and the Sahel. Additionally, the content of curricula largely influences the quality of education and can lead to the creation of a generation of radicalized youth. The solution to radicalization is not education as such but the quality of education that is provided, which should teach students critical thinking, encourage open discussions, and promote understanding of international and domestic realities.

5. Education and job market

The relationship between education and job opportunities is important in preventing radicalization. Well-educated individuals who cannot find jobs that match their qualifications may become frustrated and more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Studies have shown that under-employment and limited job opportunities can lead to disaffection, unemployment, and unrest, which in turn increases the risk of conflict. Providing job opportunities and allowing expectations to drive change for the increasingly educated population can help prevent radicalization.

Education is necessary to improve societal commitment processes and to prevent violent extremism, whether it is provided through school systems, clubs and community associations or at home.

REFERENCE:

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