

Strategies for Preventing Radicalisation: Insights from the Practitioner Perspective

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Abstract

Violent extremism is one of the biggest problems nowadays. Particularly, some characteristics of young people make them more vulnerable to radicalisation, so different prevention strategies have been developed. However, these strategies do not always take into consideration risk and protective factors, nor the skills that professionals should have. Therefore, this research aims at identifying prevention strategies through the reinforcement of protective factors that strength resilience against violent extremism considering the skills that professionals should have. A total of 70 professionals were interviewed on risk and protective factors in seven different countries of the European Union. After categorising these factors, a network analysis showed four clusters corresponding to four different prevention strategies: ‘empowering community identities’, ‘breaking out the brick wall’, ‘dismantling the extremist dynamics’, and ‘believing in higher values’. In summary, these four prevention strategies provide a conceptual framework of the skills needed to prevent adolescents from violent extremism.

Keywords

radicalisation, violent extremism, PVE strategies, resilience, risk-protective factors, network analysis, practitioners

Introduction

Nowadays, communities around the globe are facing major problems such as radicalisation and violent extremism. Although radicalisation and extremism do not always lead to violence, in some cases they cause violence (Wolfowicz et al., 2021), and when they lead to violence the consequences can be catastrophic. The best-known result of violent extremism is terrorism, which claimed the lives of 13,826 people in 2019 alone (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020). In the same year, 63

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countries suffered at least one terrorist attack (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020). Focusing on Europe, more than 4,500 attacks have taken place since 2002, claiming more than 2,500 lives, particularly 119 attacks with 58 casualties in 2019 alone (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020). Although these numbers decreased in 2020, 57 attacks with 21 casualties (Europol, 2020), the consequences of terrorism remain worrying. Moreover, in addition to this, 449 individuals were arrested for terrorism-related offenses during 2020, and most of them were youngsters (Europol, 2020).

In this context, different alternatives have emerged seeking to prevent the rise of violent extremism. However, not all initiatives start from an integrated framework that bears in mind risk and protective factors, nor from practitioners' knowledge. In a systematic review of primary and secondary prevention programmes, Hassan et al. (2021) highlighted the large number of prevention frameworks whose validity is questionable. In this respect, we point out two problems to be taken into account. The first is the lack of consideration of protective factors in conjunction with risk factors (Sieckelink & Gielden, 2018). The lack of joint frameworks that integrate both types of factors limits attempts to contextualise interventions that are contingent on the development of skills that, in certain contexts, are not necessary. The second lies in the role of professionals. Professionals working in this field must also have certain skills in relation to the skills they aim to develop in the beneficiaries of the programmes (RAN, 2017). However, this field has received limited attention. Therefore, the present research relies on practitioners' knowledge to propose different strategies to increase resilience based on a risk-protective factors framework and identify the skills that need to be developed in practitioners in each of the identified strategies.

Building Resilience to Prevent Violent Extremism

It would be accurate to see countering violent extremism (CVE) as an umbrella category under which prevention- and intervention-oriented initiatives are subsumed (Koehler & Fiebig, 2019). More precisely, this project focuses on the first category, the prevention-oriented initiatives. This category is referred to as 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE) and it encompasses all initiatives before a person is radicalised to the point of using violence, understanding radicalisation as changes in beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the ingroup (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2010). Looking at the public health model (Caplan, 1964), PVE is located in the primary and secondary prevention, which aims at averting the consolidation of risk factors. Primary prevention targets all individuals while secondary prevention specifically targets at-risk groups. Interventions within these frameworks include activities aimed at raising awareness, resilience, or community coherence (Koehler & Fiebig, 2019).

In this vein, activities aimed to increase resilience seem to be one of the main strategies when trying to prevent radicalisation (Koehler & Fiebig, 2019; Trujillo & Moyano, 2018). Resilience refers to multisystemic adaptive capacities leading to improved outcomes after a disturbance (Norris et al., 2008). It is often associated with the notion of 'bouncing-back': returning to a state of equilibrium following some form of

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stress or adversity (Bonnell et al., 2011; Masten & Reed, 2005; Rutter, 2012). Additionally, this concept has been expanded, and, rather than necessarily returning to its previous state, some authors discuss that a system may adapt or transform in the face of stress or adversity (Davidson et al., 2016;

Davoudi et al., 2012). From the point of view of the peacebuilding approach on PVE, the creation or strengthening of resilience would influence the prevention of radicalisation processes (Holmes, 2017; Stephens & Sieckelink, 2020). Hence, we understand that, in order to prevent radicalisation, we need to focus on protective factors that strengthen resilience while acting against the risk factors.

Individual Risk/Protective Factors

We assume that there are certain risks and protective factors that explain why some radicalised individuals go on and engage in radical behaviours, and why most do not (Stern, 2016). Accordingly, certain factors or skills in development may offer protection against future problems. They act as buffers or mechanisms against undesired behaviour (Ranstorp, 2016). Therefore, a risk-protective framework provides an integrative approach that is geared towards the identification of protective factors that promote resilience.

On the one hand, regarding risk factors, Campelo et al. (2018) found in a systematic review that individual (e.g., perceived injustice, personal uncertainty, abandonment), micro-environmental (e.g., family dysfunction, radicalized friends), and societal (e.g., group polarisation, perceived group threat, geopolitical context) factors were related to extremism in juveniles. For its part, Emmelkamp et al. (2020) performed a multilevel meta-analysis concluding that activism, perceived in-group superiority, and perceived distance to other people have a medium effect, while gender, personality, delinquency and aggression, lower educational level, negative peers, in-group identification, perceived discrimination, perceived group threat, perceived procedural injustice, perceived illegitimacy of authorities have a small effect, and poverty has a very small effect. On the other hand, regarding protective factors, in a systematic review, Lösel et al. (2018) found different preventive factors studied at individual (e.g., self-control-empathy, employment), family (e.g., having not relatives involved in violence, appreciating parenting behaviour), school (e.g., higher education, good school achievement, bonding to school), peer group (e.g., having nonviolent peers, more social contact), and community/society levels (e.g., basic attachment to society).

However, these risk and protective factors do not constitute a risk-protective framework. In order to contribute to this view, Sieckelinck and Gielden (2018) proposed different protective factors facing the risk factors proposed by Ranstorp (2016). They found that, in order to prevent political alienation, we should focus on fostering democratic citizenship; in order to prevent apocalyptic ideology, we should offer proper religious knowledge; in order to prevent identity crises, we should stimulate personal participation; in order to prevent the pull of the extremist milieu, we must provide a warm and/or supporting family environment; we should help to develop autonomy and self-esteem in order to help individuals to resist negative influences from friendship and kinship; in order to prevent feelings of exclusion, we should enhance social coping skills. Finally, they propose different features that institutions and policies should apply (i.e., dialogue, inclusion, care, vigilance, social safety, and education). Nonetheless, this structure does not delimit a framework of intervention nor propose different strategies for the generation of resilience as stated by the peacebuilding approach on PVE (Holmes, 2017; Stephens & Sieckelinck, 2020). All these reviews constitute an epitome of risk and protective factors but they do not investigate the interactions and co-occurrence of these factors, let alone the different strategies to be followed to build resilience.

Youth and Practitioners

Secondary prevention is aimed at risk groups. These risk groups usually share some attributes that are considered to be at risk. In the case of this research, we focus on age. In general, young people are considered more likely to accept more extreme views. Far from old research on radical profiles (Horgan, 2008), the age constitutes a sociodemographic characteristic that seems to be prevalent. Most individuals who engage in violent extremism are young (García-Coll & Marks, 2017). For example, the last TE-SAT report of Europol (2020) states that the average age of those prosecuted for terrorism in the European Union during 2020 was 31 years old, with almost half of the suspects being younger than 30.

The literature reveals different explanations. In the first place, adolescents experience more extreme and variable effects (Larson et al., 2002), given deficits in both emotional regulation and emotion reactivity (sensitivity) (Silvers et al., 2012). Young people are more sensitive to grievances, peer influence (Sebastian et al., 2010), and especially to rejection – indeed, peer ostracism outweighs other negative decision outcomes (Blakemore, 2018). Likewise, youth are particularly sensitive to propaganda efforts from violent extremist organisations' recruiters (Heinke & Persson, 2016). Furthermore, they engage more frequently in risky behaviours (Leather, 2009) and commit more violence than other age groups (Malti & Averdijk, 2017). Particularly, males are more prone to aggressive behaviour due to both biological and socialisation factors (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). In conclusion, some developmental factors make youth more sensitive to threats that can lead them to engage in political violence, so age is considered a root cause of radicalisation (Euer et al., 2014). Hence, one of the main focuses of PVE should be youth (Zimmerman et al., 2013).

Moreover, when it comes to building resilience, it is important to take into account the formation of the first-line practitioners working with youth. They must possess different skills that do not have to coincide with those they must foster. Thus, another question should be raised: what skills do practitioners who work with adolescents need in order to foster youth resilience? As the European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) has stated, training practitioners should be also of concern (RAN, 2017). The main skills highlighted by RAN are being charismatic, empathic, and possessing strong analytical skills. Also, they must have experience in the field and be able to deal with complicated issues. However, we find again that these skills are too general and do not relate to the framework of risk and protective factors.

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The Present Research

The peacebuilding perspective is concerned with seeking a comprehensive understanding of risk factors and building of capacities to be empowered to take action (Abu-Nimer, 2018; Holmes, 2017). Therefore, we propose that PVE should be based on developing protective factors that tackle risk factors in different contexts and levels. Furthermore, first-line practitioners in charge of promoting these factors should also develop some specific skills, promote resilience at different levels inside the communities, and have a comprehensive approach with adolescents. In order to effectively design PVE interventions, this research aims at identifying prevention strategies through the reinforcement of protective factors that strength resilience against radicalisation and violent extremism. To accomplish this objective, we make use of the practitioners' knowledge regarding the risk and protective factors that affect young individuals.

Method

Participants

A total of 70 people were interviewed in seven different countries of the European Union (Austria, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain). Interviewees were selected for their knowledge of radicalisation prevention, for their activity in prevention or for working directly with vulnerable youth. To screen them, a list of people who fit these parameters in each country was compiled and they were then contacted. Subsequently, the snowball technique was used by asking interviewees

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data per Country.

		Austria	Greece	Italy	Malta	Netherlands	Romania	Spain	Total
Gender	Men	4	5	4	5	4	1	9	36
	Women	3	4	4	5	4	8	10	34
Age	20–29	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
	30–39	2	4	2	0	3	3	8	22
	40–49	4	3	1	0	3	5	7	23
	50–59	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	8
	60–69	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	4
	+70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Field of expertise	Justice	1	2	5	6	4	1	2	19
	Youth service	6	1	3	4	5	1	7	27
	Health care	0	2	0	2	0	0	3	7
	Education	1	1	2	1	2	7	8	22
	National service	1	3	2	0	4	1	2	12
	Regional service	2	1	2	0	5	0	2	12
Years of experience	Local service	4	1	1	0	6	0	0	12
	1–3	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
	3–5	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	5
	5–10	3	2	0	0	3	0	2	10
	+10	4	6	6	2	5	8	10	41
Degree	PhD	0	4	3	1	0	4	7	19
	University	1	4	4	0	6	6	11	32
	College	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	6
	Other	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	4
Role	Researcher	0	3	0	0	3	0	6	12
	Policy-maker	0	4	1	0	4	0	0	9
	Practitioner	7	3	1	1	6	6	14	38
	Other	0	0	4	0	0	3	1	8
Number of interviews		7	9	8	10	8	9	19	70

for other persons of interest who might be willing to participate. The socio-demographic data of the participants is presented in Table 1. As we can see, gender equality was maintained among the interviewees, while most of them were between 30 and 50 years old. Regarding their field of experience, most of them worked with young people in the field of education and in the field of law, while they equally served at local, regional, and national levels, and had more than 10 years of experience in their field. Regarding their academic profile, most of them had a higher-level educational qualification: degree, master's degree, or PhD.

In order to classify the different interviewees, nine profiles were created depending on their occupation: teachers, researchers, social workers, health workers, law enforcement agents, mediators, consultants, jurists, and home providers (see Table 2).

- Teachers: interviewees who teach in secondary schools, including extracurricular activities.
- Researchers: people from universities or research institutes who investigate fields related to psychology, education, polarisation, violent extremism, and radicalisation.
- Social workers: interviewees with a variety of services such as assistance, support, primary attention, social services, empowerment, and reintegration.
- Health workers: interviewees who work on rehabilitation, psychotherapy, or psychiatric services in health institutions.

Table 2. Frequency of Interviewees' Profiles by Country.

	Teachers	Researchers	Social Workers	Health Workers	Law Enforcement Agents	Mediators	Consultant	Jurists	Home Providers
Austria	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0
Greece	0	1	1	1	4	0	0	0	2
Italy	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	1
Malta	0	1	7	0	2	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	1	1	3	0	2	0	1	0	0
Romania	5	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	1	4	6	2	0	1	3	1	1
Total	8	7	28	4	9	2	6	2	4

- Law enforcement agents: policemen who focus on police cooperation, fight crimes and terrorism, and maintain public order.
- Mediators: people who mediate conflicts and cover primary needs.
- Consultants: interviewees who offer important information about social problems, radicalisation, or strategies to solve problems.
- Jurists: people who coordinate or work on juridical services.
- Home providers: interviewees who carry out services of housing and hosting families and minors.

Measures

A semi-structured interview was specifically created as part of the project ARMOUR (A Radical Model of Resilience for Young Minds). This interview consisted of 14 questions (see Supplementary Material SM1: <https://osf.io/2bqdp>) in which the participants gave their opinion as practitioners on issues related to prevention, to the factors associated with radicalisation, and to build more resilient young people. We present the results of three different questions. The first question was: 'Do you think polarisation plays a role in the decision to get involved in radicalisation and violent extremism?' This question addresses the exposure of young people to risk factors of polarisation. The second question was: 'Based on your expertise, do you think ideologies play a smaller or a bigger role in minors and young people's involvement in radicalisation or violent extremism in comparison with other factors (such as socio-economic, education, family context, psychological characteristics, personal life experiences, or others)?' This question concerns factors that promote or facilitate radicalisation. The third question was: 'What skills, in your opinion, would you have to master in order to help minors and young people to be more resilient and less likely to be recruited by extremist groups?' This one concerns the protective factors that promote resilience.

Procedure

A different interviewer for each country was responsible for conducting the interviews, which had a duration of between 30 and 150 min. The final sample was collected between March and May 2019, and all the interviews were translated into English afterwards. Regarding the modality of the interviews, there were three possibilities: they were all conducted either face-to-face, by telephone/video call, or in written form.

Analytical Strategy

In order to analyse the corpus of data, it was decided to follow two different but complementary analytical strategies. Firstly, answers were categorised using inductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs,

2008). This approach allowed us to create different categorical systems for risk and protective factors. Secondly, a network analysis was carried out in order to find the relations between the factors that influence and trigger radicalisation and those that enhance resilience based on the co-occurrence of the risk and protective factors.

Results

The results are presented according to the following analytical techniques. On the one hand, the codification of factors of radicalisation and resilience and, on the other hand, the results of the network analysis, which correspond to the prevention strategies.

Risk and Protective Factors for Radicalisation

By following the content analysis methods (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), we were able to create several categorical systems inductively. Consequently, we divided the results into two thematic blocks, which correspond to the analysed questions. The following sections show the different categories found in each of the two thematic blocks: risk and protective factors.

Risk factors. We found six major categories which group together all the radicalisation factors given by interviewees, and which are divided into two different roles. On the one hand, three categories relied on the role of precursors of radicalisation: *individual needs*, *interpersonal relations*, and *environment*. This role represents the factors at different levels that push individuals through a process of radicalisation. On the other hand, three more categories relied on the role of *extremist narratives*: *ideologies*, *polarisation*, and *indoctrination*. This role represents the different narratives used by radicals as well as the methods used to inculcate them. All factors, roles, and categories are presented in the Supplementary Material (SM2) with their frequencies.

Precursors of radicalisation. We found three different categories that constitute the precursors of radicalisation. The first category is *individual needs*: individual aspects related to personality, lack of skills, or negative experiences; this category was made up of 25.44% of the factors. The main subcategory is *feelings* (e.g., feeling isolated, feeling discriminated), which are translated into negative *emotions* like anger or fear. *Personality and characteristics* would be the second subcategory, which includes important traits like being *open minded* or a *critical thinker* as well as being a more *conflictive* or *violent* person. The third most relevant subcategory refers to the *needs* in a broad sense, that is, beyond the classic view, therefore, this subcategory includes not only subsistence or well-being but also other aspects related to needs of affection, protection, or participation. Another relevant subcategory is *life experiences* (e.g., injustice, violence, grievances, discrimination), which can reinforce other aspects of vulnerability like traumas, insecurities, self-esteem, or self-concept. Lastly, other relevant subcategories are *lost-uncertainty* and *purpose in life*, which are related to the subcategory of *identity* and refer to the significant research. Furthermore, different kinds of psychological disorders, mental illnesses, and psychiatric problems are also mentioned (i.e., subcategory of *mental illness*). The second category, composed of 18.40% of the factors, was *group relations*: factor related to the relationships with other people, group dynamics and the feelings derived from group membership. The main subcategories are *family* and *friends and relations*. Both are the most important groups for youth that create their reality in terms of norms, values, and ideologies. At the same time, both satisfy the *sense of belonging* and give *recognition*. Without both of them, *isolation and loneliness*

appear. Moreover, in this group level, *group-dynamics* (e.g., conformity, obedience, group-thinking) are more likely to appear, always in interaction with the *environment and community*.

The third category, formed by 14.67% of the factors, was *environment*: factors related to the external context and perceptions of material conditions. The most relevant subcategory is *lack of opportunities* and abandonment of *education*. In fact, the lack of opportunities is connected to other subcategories as *discrimination and grievances*, *poverty*, *marginalisation*, and *criminality and gangs*. The absence of future (*no-future*), the need of *status*, or the *large inequalities* are other factors contributing to the radicalisation

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within this subcategory. Finally, it seems important to highlight that no single group of factors leads to violence. Instead, it seems that the main trigger is the interaction between factors in different categories.

Extremist narratives. Inside the extremist narratives, we found another three categories. The first category, named *ideologies*: different belief systems and their functions, was composed of 21.53% of the identified factors. Although the ideology is not the predominant factor, it is almost always present. The main subcategory is *ideology as an excuse*. In other words, the ideology appears *a posteriori* to justify the acts previously committed. It is a kind of ‘lifebuoy’, a mechanism of legitimisation and moral disengagement. Other subcategories correspond to the different types of existing ideologies: *religious*, *far-right*, *far-left*, *ethnonationalism*, and *machismo*. As stated above, they take the role of *legitimisation*.

The second category, *polarisation*: extreme social division, was formed by 11.94% of the factors. The influence between polarisation and radicalisation is considered reciprocal; it is often depicted with terms such as a vicious cycle. Polarisation is related to and dependent on an outgroup, the *otherness*. This outgroup poses a *threat* that wants to *invade* the *host-society*, which arises *fear* and feelings of *victimisation*. Polarisation is reinforced by *media exposure* and *politics*, who use Manichean narratives and native symbols against these ‘foreign’ customs. Therefore, it is an ‘us and them’ narrative.

The third category was named *indoctrination*: the influence of third parties in establishing different thinking systems, and it is composed of 8.02% of the radicalisation factors. Among its subcategories, we highlight the *manipulation* strategies used by recruiters taking advantage of the individual *vulnerabilities*, together with the role of *leaders*, crucial in these recruitment strategies, as well as the *violent disinhibition*, which is necessary to use violence and represents the end of the radicalisation process.

Protective factors. The protective factors mentioned by the respondents fall into two roles. On the one hand, the skills or abilities practitioners working in the forefront youths’ radicalisation prevention should have (i.e., *practitioner role*). On the other hand, those that young people should possess so that they become resilient to radicalisation (i.e., *youth role*). However, many of these abilities should be shared by both. A table with the different skills named by the interviewees, their frequency (number of respondents who name them), the role each skill should play, and the description of each of them is in the Supplementary Material (SM3).

In the first place, the practitioners should have the ability to adapt to changes in specific contexts and different situations, (i.e., *adaptability*). Therefore, they need *communication*, *social*, and *observation skills* together with *empathy* and *assertiveness* to establish a close *relationship of trust* with youth. Furthermore, they should have an *open mind*, *cultural intelligence*, *tolerance*, and *awareness* to

value diversity and *patience* to deal with youth. Other necessary skills are *critical* and *lateral thinking*. Finally, even when practitioners should establish a close relation, they also should have the ability to exercise command, *authority*.

Regarding the teaching, a *previous formation* (including *online education*) is demanded together with *experience* in the field. They should be able to *motivate* young people, give them *positive reinforcement*, and know how to *manage a team*. They have to personalise treatments (i.e., *good practices*), *make decisions* and *resolve conflicts*. They should teach the *values* they share through *active participation*; that is, teaching by doing. Finally, they have to be ready to offer *accompaniment* at any moment.

In the second place, the youth need to learn basic skills such as *communication* and *social skills*. Moreover, they should know how to express themselves with *assertiveness* and *think critically* and *laterally*, which requires a *mental opening*, *empathy*, *tolerance*, along with *emotional* and *cultural intelligence*, as well as *education in equality*. Regarding the danger of extremist recruiters, youth should acquire *persuasion strategies*, and know how *group thinking* works, and how to carry out *fact-checking* together with *online education*.

Adolescents should also be able to express their concerns and defend their beliefs politically. Therefore, they need not only to have democratic *values* supported by *positive role models*, but also to take *active participation* in democratic processes and legal demonstrations. Lastly, considering that to err is human, they also need the practitioner's *accompaniment*, and *conflict resolution* and *decision making* skills, together with the ability to *adapt*. However, the ultimate goals are: *personal autonomy*, *self-control*, and *responsibility*, including a *work performance* in order to accomplish their objectives.

Relations Between Risk and Protective Factors

A network analysis is presented below. The co-occurrence matrix obtained from content analysis has been used to build a network of relations between the subcategories. It reports the number of times the same interviewee mentions each pair of subcategories (i.e., the edges). In addition, the degree of centrality and the betweenness centrality were calculated, being *ideology as an excuse* and *feelings* the nodes with highest scores (see all metrics of the network in Supplementary Material SM4). The degree of centrality makes it possible to identify the categories with the highest number of connections within the network, while the betweenness centrality shows the categories that act as a bridge, connecting different categories in the network (Brandes et al., 2005; Park & Leydesdorff, 2013). Moreover, a modularity classification algorithm was used to identify communities of categories within the network based on the degree of association (Emmons et al., 2016). To visualise the network, a gravitation algorithm was used between nodes (Fruchterman-Reingold), which is based on the attraction of nodes that have more associations and the repulsion of those that are not related (Cherven, 2015). These analyses were supported in Gephi0.9.2 software. The final result of the network can be visualised in Figure 1.

The following conventions must be taken into account to interpret this network: (1) each node or circle represents a subcategory; (2) the thickness of the relationships represents the strength of the relationship between each pair of subcategories; (3) the size of each node represents the degree of centrality, number of connections with other subcategories, so a larger circle has more connections; (4) the position of the nodes reflects the degree of closeness they have between them depending on the strength of the relationships; and (5) the colour represents the four identified communities of categories.

The network analysis yielded an interconnected network with 34.8% of the possible connections between subcategories present (i.e., density), in which each subcategory was related, on average, with 39 subcategories (i.e., the average degree of centrality). As can be seen in Figure 1, four communities were identified. Each one represents different prevention strategies against radicalisation, which are explained in detail below.

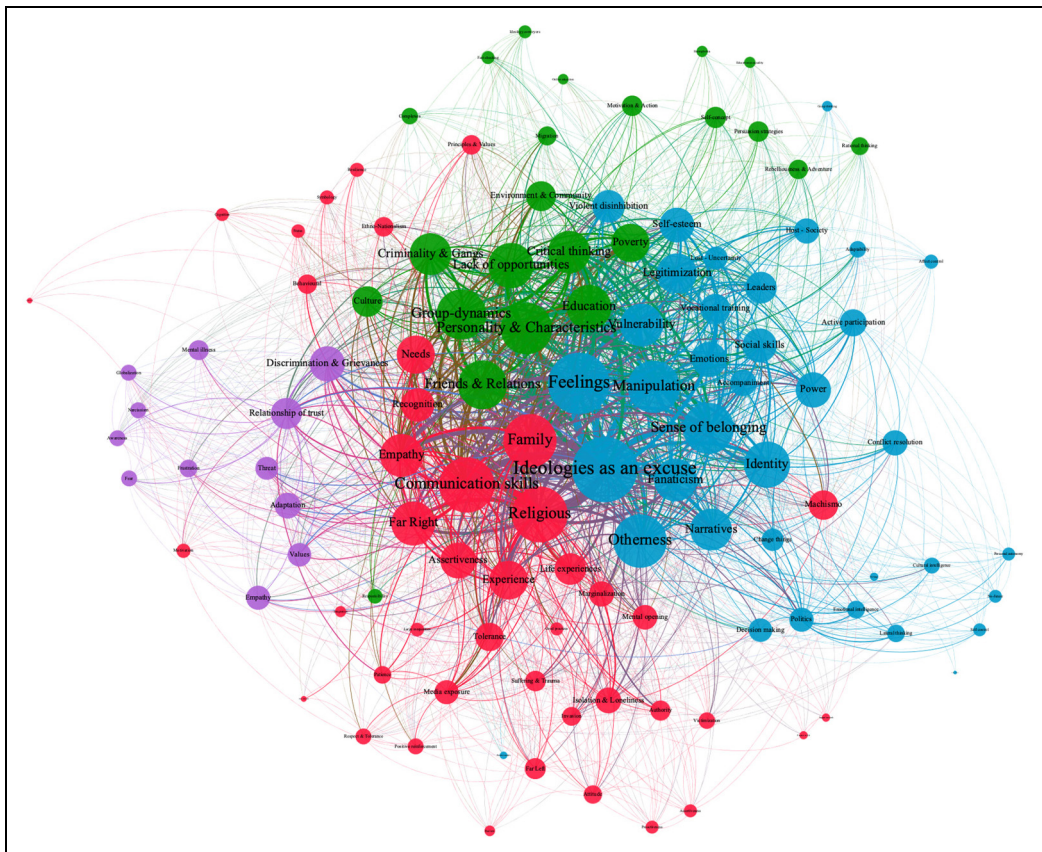


Figure 1. Graph of the radicalisation and protection factors provided by interviewees.

Empowering community identities. The first preventive strategy is named ‘empowering community identities’. It is formed by 37.39% of the subcategories. The different subcategories within this strategy are represented in Figure 2, where tones of red represent the precursors of radicalisation, tones of pink risk the extremist narratives, and tones of blue the protective factors.

In this case, ideologies are used as an excuse to get individual benefits such as power and self-esteem. Adolescents who feel that their identity is not being recognised want to change their identity. Recruiters manipulate those adolescents while charming extremist leaders offer them a new radical identity that places them as heroes. Therefore, radicalisation starts with a need for belonging, and it is established with a new social identity. This process of radicalisation coincides with those proposed by other authors. Firstly, it is similar to the 3N model of radicalisation which proposes three psychological forces whose intersection gives place to radicalisation: needs, narratives, and networks (Kruglanski et al., 2019). In this way, individuals are motivated by a loss of significance and look for narratives supported by different groups. When these narratives are violent, the interaction between the loss of significance, the narrative, and the group dynamics leads them to a certain degree of radicalisation or support for violent extremism. Secondly, according to Roy (2017), the difficulty in integrating a modern European identity with the traditional religious one of their countries of origin is what leads the second generation to opt for more radical identities. This identity imbrication leads them to look for new identities, preferably those that explain the world in a

simple, authoritarian way, such as Salafism. Thirdly, it also coincides with the seekers' role proposed by Neumann (2016), in which the individuals are motivated by identity, community, power, and a feeling of masculinity.

The preventive strategy is focused on creating healthy identities and support networks. It starts with the development of social skills (i.e., behaviours that allow us to interact effectively and satisfactorily with others). This set of behaviours will allow young individuals to create healthy networks and develop abilities of conflict resolution and decision making, which will allow them to face different problems that may arise.

Furthermore, they need some accompaniment and guidance in possibly critical situations. Adolescents also need to value the means that allow them to achieve their goals. Work and activism are nonviolent means that can suit this need. Moreover, the youth need to develop adaptability skills so they can adapt to changes in specific situations and contexts. In conclusion, all these skills would allow adolescents to build healthy identities. Regarding practitioners, they should have the same skills they will teach, possess high social skills, be prepared to do accompaniment, know how to resolve conflicts, make decisions, be able to adapt to different situations, have access to the labour market and be able to defend their rights and values peacefully.

Breaking down the brick wall. The second preventive strategy is 'breaking down the brick wall'. This community is formed by 32.17% of the subcategories. These subcategories are presented in Figure 3 using the same colours as in the previous case.

Groups with authoritarian and conformist ideologies which lack recognition, present certain needs, or feel marginalized, could take a radical drift. Feelings of isolation, together with media exposure, can reinforce their political grievances and polarise their ideas. This polarisation could lead them to accept violence as a legitimate means to reach their objectives, always related to a more authoritarian view of the world. Likewise, if these groups, usually with right-wing or nationalist/separatist ideologies, perceive a threat to their values, usually related to nationalism, right-wing, and family, could think that the only available means to defend their values is violence. This process of radicalisation has been stated by other authors. In the first place, the radicalisation mechanisms by McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008, 2016) describe an extreme shift in like-minded groups and political grievances as two of these mechanisms. In the second place, the devoted actors model (Atran, 2016; Gómez et al., 2017; Gómez et al., 2016) proposed that individuals who fused their personal identity with the social identity and who perceived group values as sacred are more prone to use violence in defence of their group or values.

In this case, the preventive strategy is focused on going out of conformism. A first step is to develop communication skills, that is to say, the ability to express oneself correctly in different contexts. Other skills needed to communicate correctly are empathy – identify and share others' feelings – and assertiveness – communicate one's points of view with confidence while respecting others. Once adolescents know how to communicate, they should develop respect and questioning not only for their own thoughts, but also for others' values and beliefs. These skills would make young individuals more tolerant towards contrary positions, which is often associated with a questioning of one's own values and grievances. Therefore, discussions would not lead to polarisation. Which skills do practitioners need to teach communication skills? First of all, they need empathy to identify youth's feelings, as well as assertiveness while questioning their arguments from a cultural perspective, skills that are acquired with experience. Finally, practitioners should be able to adopt an authoritative stance when the situation requires it.

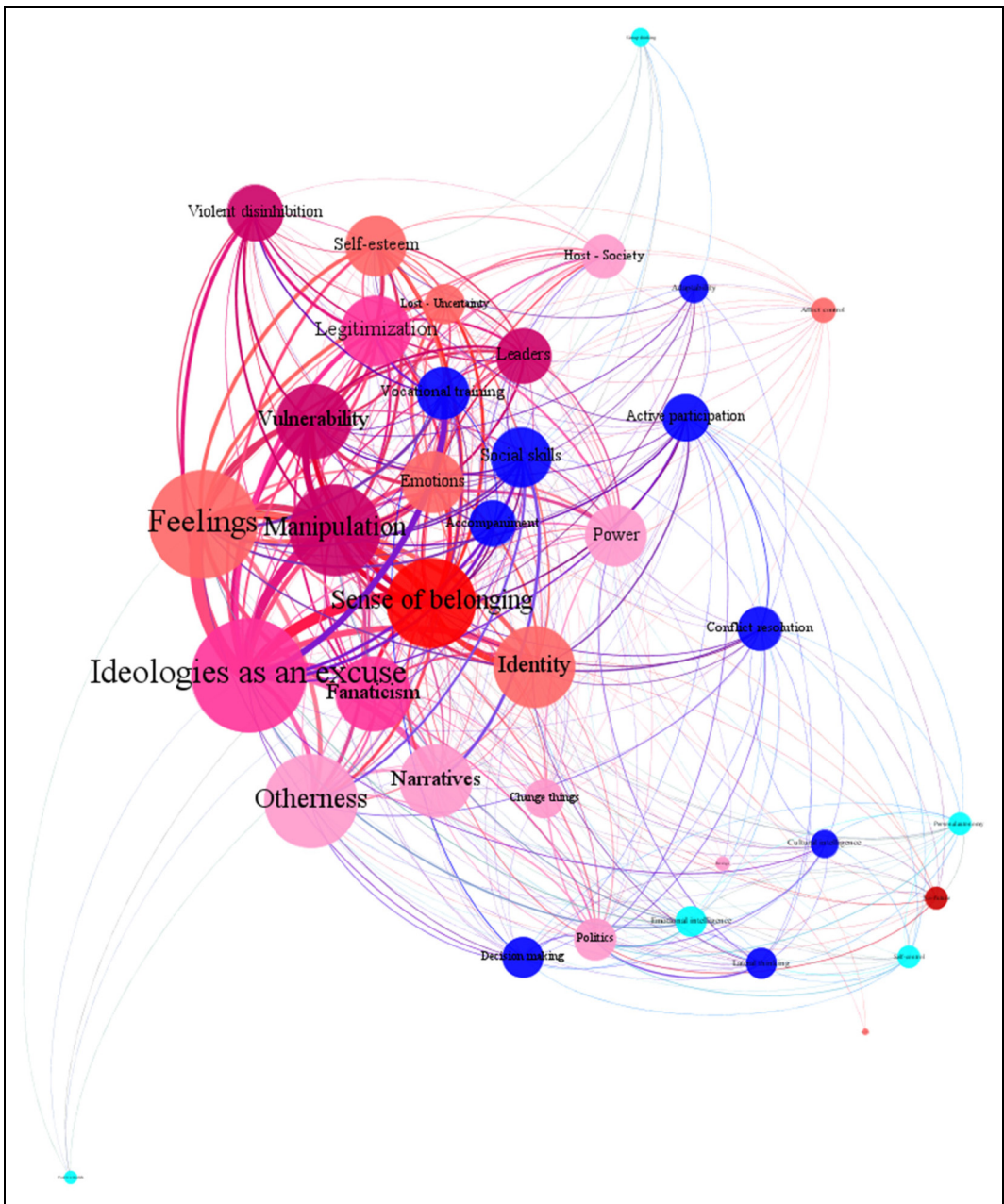


Figure 2. Graph of the radicalisation and protection factors inside the ‘empowering community identities’ strategy.

Dismantling manipulation strategies. The third strategy, named ‘dismantling the manipulation strategies’, is formed by 20% of the subcategories and is represented in Figure 4 using the same colours as in the previous strategy.

Certain personal characteristics such as a narrow mind, low tolerance to uncertainty, and sensation seeking, make individuals more vulnerable to recruiters. These personal characteristics interact with

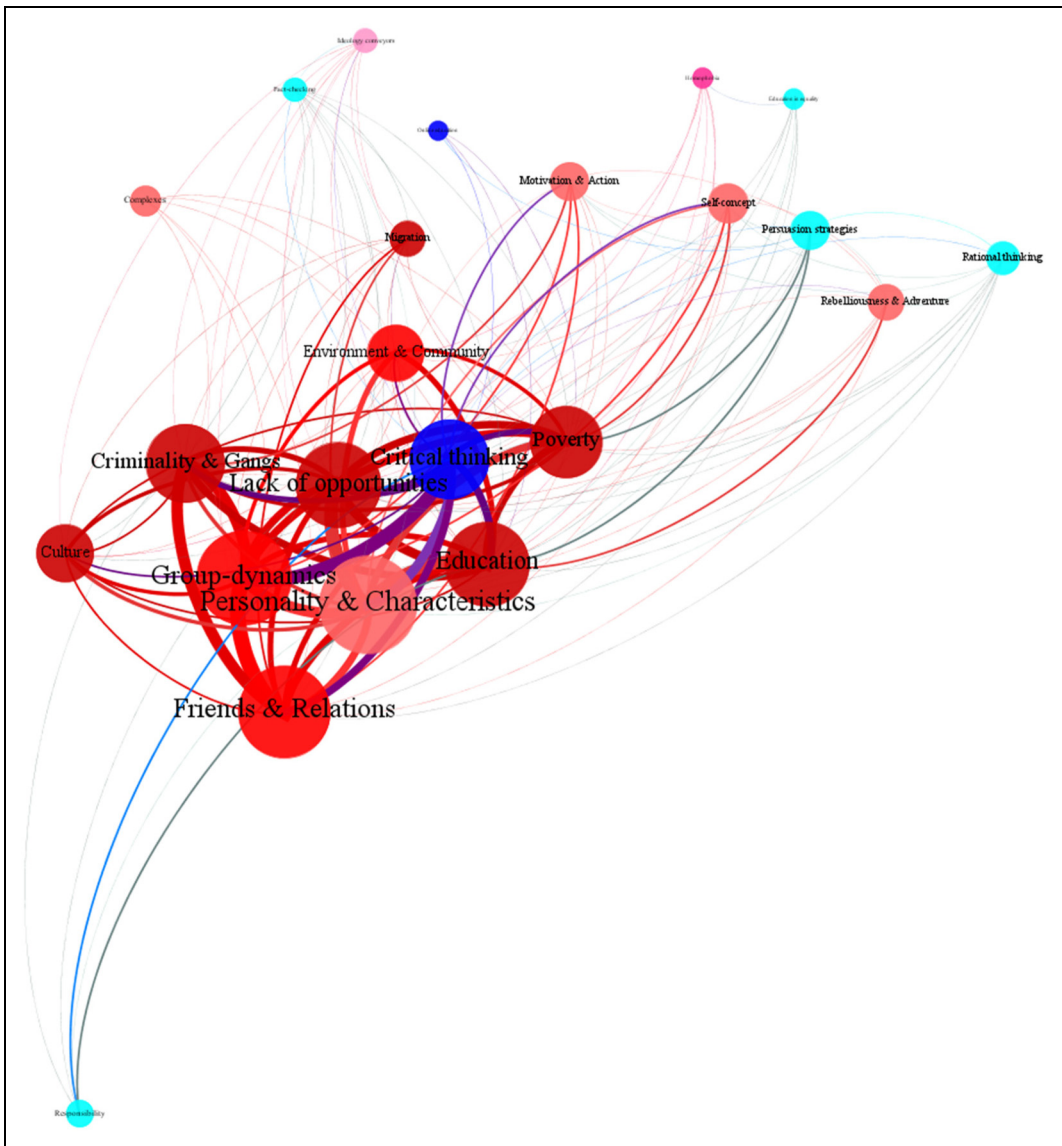


Figure 4. Graph of the radicalisation and protection factors inside the ‘dismantling the manipulation strategies’ strategy.

speech. On the other hand, teaching specific persuasion strategies (e.g., Rodríguez-Carballeira et al., 2009) would make adolescents more aware of third people’s intentions. At this point, it is necessary to highlight that online recruitment, through radical online intermediaries (Kleinmann, 2012), has increased and specialised in recent years. Therefore, critical thinking skills should also be applied to online contexts. This means that the youth should also learn fact-checking strategies, so they are more resilient to fake news and disinformation propaganda. At the same time, practitioners should follow a critical method (i.e., a Socratic method through which individuals question different arguments).

Believing in higher values. The fourth strategy is named ‘believing in higher values’. It is formed by 10.43% of the categories, and it is presented in Figure 5 using the same colours as in the previous case.

Individuals who lack the necessary abilities to be part of a society characterised by globalisation would perceive discrimination easily; this refers, in other words, to individuals who are not able to adapt. These feelings would cause emotions such as frustration or fear, which are related to the perceptions of threats. Furthermore, the lack of empathy or mental illnesses could reinforce these feelings. In this subjective situation, the use of violence is probably the only solution they perceive as effective. This process, unlike the previous ones, resembles more of a lone offender process of radicalisation. According to McCauley and Moskaleiko (2014, 2016), lone-wolf attackers perceive more personal and group grievances, as well as high-intensity emotions. In fact, lone offenders present a higher rate of mental illness (Corner & Gill, 2015), that is, depression, and they may have a sense of ‘nothing to lose’ (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to the categories of Neumann (2016), this process of radicalisation fits with the defenders, those who perceive an existential threat that they have to fight.

In this case, the preventive strategy is related to the establishment of values. Values that fit in the categories of self-transcendence and openness to change are required to prevent violent reactions to

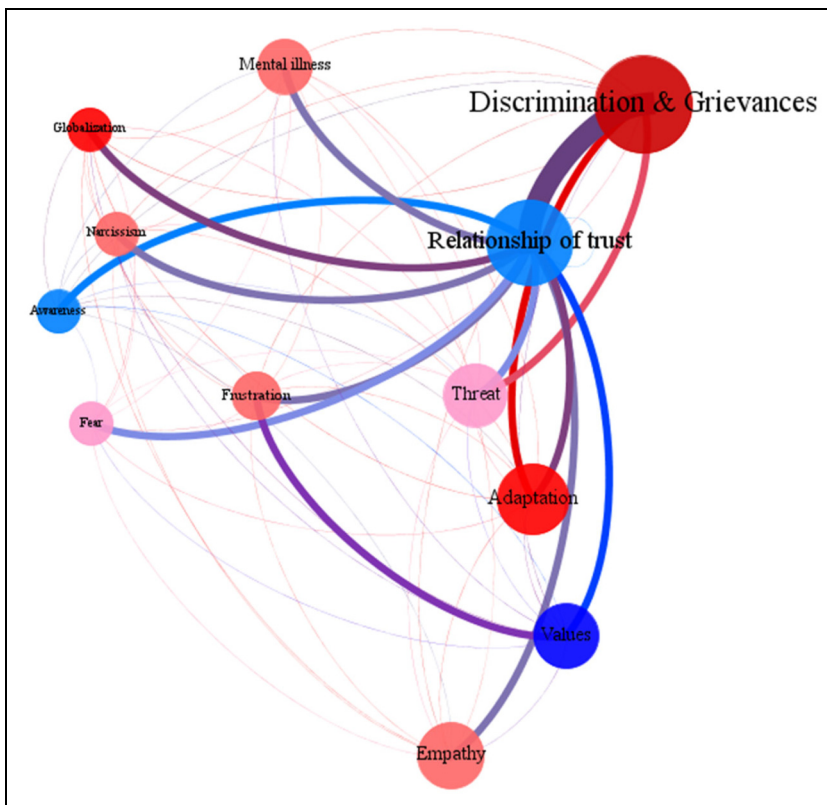


Figure 5. Graph of the radicalisation and protection factors inside the ‘believing in higher values’ strategy.

grievances. In this vein, values like social justice, equality, benevolence, freedom, creativity, and self-direction could lead adolescents to value other means rather than the violent ones. We have also found

Values that fit in the categories of self-transcendence and openness to change are required to prevent violent reactions to grievances

from the ‘bad’ and be able to morally judge reality and acts. In conclusion, practitioners should instill values in participants after establishing with them a close relationship based on trust.

that practitioners, in order to teach these values, need to establish a relationship of trust with youth. A close relationship would make it easier to transmit these values. Furthermore, practitioners need to have these values and put them into practice, together with the ability to distinguish the ‘good’

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to identify strategies in order to prevent radicalisation through the development of resilience. To accomplish this objective, we carried out different interviews, aiming at extracting risk and protective factors for youth. After categorising interviewees’ responses into risk and protective factors, based on the co-occurrence of these categories, we present four different strategies to prevent radicalisation and tackle different mechanisms or pathways to violent extremism.

Once we categorised the interviewees’ answers, we found two main topics: risk and protective factors. Inside the risk factors, we found precursors of radicalisation at different levels (individual needs, group relations, and environment) and extremist narratives (ideologies, polarisation, and indoctrination). Inside the protective factors we distinguish between those that applied to practitioners and to youth. The subcategories inside these categories were used to calculate their co-occurrence.

According to Sarma (2017), synthesising the information in a structured way is of value and is in line with good practice in the broader field of violence risk assessment. In addition, the perspective of peacebuilding is concerned with the broad detection of the causes of violent extremism that takes into account human causes and moves away from generic factors (Abu-Nimer, 2018). By following these recommendations, we found four different strategies. The first strategy, ‘empowering community identities’, was based on the construction of strong and healthy identities, which allow adolescents to fulfil their needs in a nonviolent way. The second strategy is ‘breaking down the brick wall’, through which the individuals face conformism by searching alternative means to solve problems and affront grievances. The third prevention strategy, which is named ‘dismantling the manipulation strategies’, is focused on the detection of manipulation, bringing awareness to youth. Through the fourth and last strategy, ‘believing in higher values’, adolescents learn the necessary values to face the different grievances and threats that youth could perceive.

The different risk factors of each strategy coincide with motivations, mechanisms, and models of the literature, which try to explain the processes of radicalisation and rely on empirical evidence. Moreover, many of the practitioners’ skills presented in the present research are the same as those proposed by the RAN report (2017). Hence, we assume

These four strategies are different ways to prevent radicalisation by promoting certain skills that could be implemented in the school curriculum.

to have external validation for our findings. Furthermore, we collected primary data from practitioners instead of relying on secondary sources. Both strategies tackle some of the problems highlighted in the study on radicalisation: the lack of understanding in the processes of radicalisation and the lack of empirical evidence (McGilloway et al., 2015). Overall, these four strategies are different ways to prevent radicalisation by promoting certain skills that could be implemented in the school curriculum. Therefore, practitioners should

to have external validation for our findings. Furthermore, we collected primary data from practitioners instead of relying on secondary sources. Both strategies tackle some of the problems highlighted in the study on radicalisation: the lack of

start from a contextual analysis of the risk factors in their area of intervention in order to find the strategies that are best suited to subsequently select strategies that can promote the protective factors included in these strategies. In this way, the most important risk factors would be counteracted by promoting resilience.

We tried to follow a robust procedure, nevertheless, some limitations were found in the present research. First, the number of interviews is far from being considered representative of practitioners' knowledge; nonetheless, theoretical generalisations can be made based on this research, which could lead to new preventive strategies for more specific contexts. Second, since the present research focuses on semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, the only type of triangulation that could be carried out was researcher triangulation. In this vein, an observational method in the fieldwork of the practitioners would allow us to compare and triangulate results. Third, by conducting interviews in different languages, the interviewers were able to constitute sources of bias. The possibility of comparing research results across countries was dismissed due to the different number of interviewees and roles, which leads us to think that some interviews could have more influence on the final results than others. Therefore, these limitations indicate that new studies should be done in order to validate the strategies found.

In conclusion, the present research provides a compendium of practitioners' knowledge on radicalisation and its prevention. It proposes different strategies based on the development of resilience, in order to counter radicalisation before it leads to the use of violence. Based on this knowledge, empirical studies should investigate the effectiveness of these strategies, practitioners should implement them, and decision-makers should value the benefits of a prevention strategy to reduce social radicalisation. Thus, this research is a first step in the fight against violent extremism. A second step would consist of identifying what works for whom and in what circumstances (Gielen, 2019), which highlights the importance of conducting experiments and testing its results.

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Ethics Approval Statement

The study had the ethical consent of the European Commission in the framework of the project under reference 823683. All participants signed an informed consent form prior to participation and the data was stored in agreement with the precepts of the GDPR.

Data Availability

All materials are available at <https://osf.io/2bqdp>

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