Preventing the radicalisation of young people in digital media

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Introduction

The prevention of radicalisation of young people is an issue that has become more and more important with the rise of social media in everyday life. Social media reaches every facet of daily life from schooling to socialisation to work. Young people are constantly connected to each other and strangers online. This opens them to attempts at indoctrination from online users. Extremists can use private messages and the ability to share content to advertise their harmful beliefs. The lack of education and knowledge surrounding the topic of internet safety for adults in important roles like teachers and parents means that resources should be available to support them through teaching the children around them. This ensures that the next generation have the best chance of a safe online life. It can be difficult to monitor a young person's internet usage. Therefore, the best option is to arm them with the knowledge of how to deal with unwanted attention and teach them how to treat others online. It is vital for young people to have trusted adults who they can speak to and look to for advice if they find themselves having a problem with online attention. Throughout this essay, I aim to ask the questions;

1. How do the role models in a child's life play a part in radicalisation?
2. Do schools have a duty to educate their pupils on internet safety?
3. Is it possible for children to become indoctrinated into extremism without their parents being a part of the problem?
4. How can we use the information gathered to streamline the prevention of indoctrination?

These questions are vital for understanding the topic and creating appropriate measures that can be carried out by even those with little knowledge on internet radicals. With the answers discovered from this research will then be used to develop a website aimed at children aged five to ten with some resources available for their parents to support them when discussing the topic with their children in a way that is age appropriate.

Literature Review

Radicalism is known to be a stepping stone to terrorism. The process in which this occurs is slow, complex and subtle; the rise in popularity of the internet created a safe space for radicalism to take place and reach the masses. After 9/11, most definitions of radicalization refer to the opinions, views and ideas that have led to a terrorist act (Konijn et al., 2010) although violence is not a requirement for radicalism. The majority of radical or extremist

individuals never commit violent acts but still negatively affect those around them with their beliefs through micro-aggressions and spreading their hateful beliefs to indoctrinate others. Geeraerts states that “radicalization is seen as a process whereby an individual comes to embrace values and opinions about a certain topic (e.g. animal rights, Nazism or religion) that gradually become more extreme and hence start to deviate more from the normative opinions, while at the same time finding it more difficult to accept opposite opinions” (Geeraerts, 2012). This is what may then develop into acts of terrorism. The internet provides echo chambers for individuals to communicate with likeminded people; “Within these echo rooms, individuals face both normative and informative influences. When it comes to informative pressure, participants are more likely to accept each other’s arguments as valid statements about reality” (Geeraerts, 2012). This lack of opposing views influences users to avoid questioning what they are told and to take information at face value.

The creation of today's technology had a natural evolution from the development of various tools that targeted business. It was unexpected that terrorists and extremists would use these new creations to do harm and indoctrinate and therefore there were no rules in place to prevent their actions. “Individuals and extremists will interact through the dominant communication vehicle of that era: forums, radio, print-based media, television, etc” (Sullivan and Montassari, 2022). Today the most prominent form of communication is the Internet. The internet is a more harmful medium than those before it due to its widespread and all-encompassing demographic. This development in communication “is the result of technological evolution as opposed to a strategic and deliberate choice made by violent extremists" (Sullivan and Montassari, 2022). During the technological evolution “extremist discourse and narratives shifted to social media and alt-tech platforms” (Sullivan and Montassari, 2022) allowing for easy indoctrination and communication. When these conversations made the move to social media, their exposure rose, and radical ideologies became common knowledge for most of society. “Not only is online-radicalization a relatively new phenomenon, it is difficult to detect and analyze individuals radicalizing in the virtual world before they acted upon their violent ideology or became otherwise known to law enforcement personnel” (Baaken and Schlegel, 2017). These individuals had been subjected to the “increased availability and the opportunity to debate and negotiate ideological messages, rather than only reading about them, increases both exposure and perceived individual ownership of the ideas by those engaged in the discussion” (Baaken and Schlegel, 2017) which helped to cement extremist beliefs are their own. The development of

the smartphone in the 2010's created new opportunities for extremist groups, who now had their content visible 24/7 and carried around by people which made disconnecting away from these groups incredibly difficult because smartphones quickly became essential for most in daily life.

While radicalism is not exclusive to the digital space, the internet does provide easy access to push extremist content into user's feeds. This essay aims to highlight the ways in which radicalism takes place online and explore avenues of prevention for some of the most vulnerable internet users; children. "The technical skills and proficiency displayed by groups such as ISIS have been causing concern for governments, law enforcement, industry, schools, religious leaders, and parents around the world" (Morris, 2016). The radicalisation of young people is not extremely common and is a nuanced process. This can be seen through the case of the three teenaged girls who fled England to join ISIS and in the content of Andrew Tate. The importance placed on technology by young people has created a new fear for many parents; their children being indoctrinated by extremists online because it is almost impossible to protect young people from viewing inappropriate content, even accidently. These worries are amplified by the technical skills exhibited by radical groups such as ISIS. These groups target young vulnerable people via social media, glorifying their views and radical states as utopias away from everyday issues which can be enticing to struggling youth. These groups take advantage of the curious nature of young people, brainwashing them and using them as pawns in their 'wars' both online and offline.

Role of the internet in radicalisation

There is a lack of studies on the topic of social media and the internet in relation to radicalisation because they have only become available worldwide in the last twenty years. This has limited time to investigate and analyse the harm it can do than other forms of communication which have been around for much longer. However, the amount of studies completed has been slowly increasing. The number of available studies did not stop academics from theorising and commenting on the subject. "we know little about the motivations with which users visit extremist websites; we know little about the types of users, their characteristics, orientations, values, experiences, etc" (Mølmen and Ravndal, 2023). This lack of knowledge makes it difficult to understand which types of young people need the

most support. Mølmen found that the internet's role was in making "extreme ideology and information accessible, as well as amplifying group polarisation and legitimising extreme ideology and political violence through echoing" (Mølmen and Ravndal, 2023). This is amplified by 'offline' aspects like isolation and vulnerability which sparks a need to belong that is targeted online by alternative communities with radical beliefs. Isolation makes any communication even online feel invaluable and many would cater to radical beliefs to avoid a return to complete isolation again. Aly argues that the internet is a space where terrorists can indoctrinate, recruit and influence potential members; "From the perspective of the terrorists' audience, there is value in looking at the role of the audience as active agents in the communicative process with a view to understanding the particular appeal of the internet". Aly proposed a model to dissect internet radicalisation. The model has four elements; "the user or audience context; the use or audience needs that motivate internet use; the internet content and functions that meet these needs; and the terrorist groups' goals for which they generate internet content" (Aly, 2010). Each of these components require a different counter action. This level of analysis can shorten the prevention process because unsuitable actions will be avoided.

The internet has the power to turn radical beliefs into terrorist behaviours and recruit others to their cause; "21-year-old British student Roshonara Choudhry sentenced to life imprisonment in 2010 for stabbing her local MP for his support of the Iraq War after watching online sermons in her bedroom by U.S.-born extremist Anwar Al-Awlaki on YouTube" (Kenyon et al, 2022). Choudhry is an example of how seemingly innocent religious sermons can have extremist views within them and can indoctrinate others into fighting for a cause they don't fully understand. The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased the occurrence of online indoctrination due to the lockdowns that were put in place to protect the public; society may have been safe from the virus while isolating but other harms lay online. The "pandemic may have reduced in-person exposure to potentially radicalizing peer groups, increased Internet use may have heightened exposure to radicalizing influences online and provided more opportunity for engagement with online spaces supportive of terrorism" (Kenyon et al, 2022). The ample time at home without activities that people were used to led to many hours being spent on the internet to fill the time. 'Doom scrolling' enabled radical content to be viewed in higher numbers, as users were scrolling to pass time and interacting with more posts. "lone actors are not really "lone" as they are usually part of, often virtual, subcultures and networks, which contradicts the assumption that they do not communicate with others "(Kenyon et al 2023). An

account that pushes a radical agenda may be owned and run by multiple people rather than one singular person which would allow content to be created and posted faster than if it was one person on their own. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed for the increased "visibility of conspiracy theories online and it has been suggested that extremist groups have used such conspiracies to further their own ideological aims" (Kenyon et al, 2022). This can be seen in the January 6th Insurrection which had started as an online conspiracy theory and developed into a real event by those who saw the posted and shared anger about the election. While conspiracy theories like that are usually targeted at older teens and adults rather than children; some like the theory that some celebrities are lizard people are targeting kids. This can seem innocent, but it is preparing young people to believe what they read online without thinking critically or questioning the information. Those who would usually be able to bounce ideals and beliefs off friends and family for opinions, now were confined in an internet echo chamber which. This led to a fast indoctrination and many of those who got into radical ideologies and conspiracy theories during Covid lost friends and family due to their harmful opinions which only furthers the idea that their radical group are victims.

Parents role in deradicalisation

Parental response to radicalisation plays a large part in whether this extremism develops into terrorism. Sikkens found that most parents attempt to ignore the radical ideas of their children which can then lead to radicalisation due to lack of parental guidance. This could be because they feel unequipped for the situation, or the parents might "change their reactions because they feel that the situations need different approaches to their normal child-rearing style" (Sikkens et al, 2018). Parental guidance is essential for young people as they develop their own values, for the parents to step back in this critical time in their lives, it sends the message that their parents are disinterested. Which makes confiding in them difficult for the child. Their study found that parents' reactions can deviate from what is expected from their parenting styles; "It also shows that parents sometimes change their reactions during the radicalization process. This is due to a feeling of helplessness, when a parent feels their approach to targeting their child's harmful beliefs is counterproductive, they will change their parenting style in the hopes that the change will make a difference in the child's indoctrination. It is important to consider these dynamics within families if we want to learn more about how parenting and radicalization possibly intertwine" (Sikkens, 2018). At first

many parents may be proud to see their child take an interest in politics or religion, when this interest becomes fanaticism, the parents begin to ignore it because they feel unprepared to tackle the issue. It is important to highlight that during this process and the aftermath of parenting a child with radical beliefs, there are few support systems and little information available to coach parents through this hard time. Many parents feel at a loose end when their attempts to talk their children out of their harmful beliefs fail. There is a fear that in pushing the issue of radicalisation with children who are in the process damage may occur to the parental relationship and encourage further indoctrination. “Most parents in our research struggled to cope with radicalization and were unsure of how to respond: they were unaware that some ideals need a parental reaction, instead of simply assuming this is a phase in adolescence” (Sikkens et al, 2018). For many parents they lack knowledge on the groups and religions that their children are joining; “parents often had no knowledge about the religious or political views that their child is developing; therefore, it was hard for them to discuss these ideals or set boundaries when needed” (Sikkens et al, 2018). Their inability to learn about their children’s views to combat the effects of extremism limits their ability to combat the harm being done to their children.

Sikken et al argues that parents don’t play a role in deradicalisation; “Any importance of a family member in this process was hesitantly mentioned and most of the time in combination with more influential factors outside the family such as agency (self-initiation), detention (isolation), and study (education)”. They raise the opinion that factors outside the home have more emphasis on radicalisation and a child’s beliefs and development. Aspects such as education and self-agency have a much larger effect. While parents found it hard to provide support during the indoctrination into extremism, they had an easier time supporting the deradicalisation process; “family members were available to support the change that came from the individuals themselves” (Sikken et al, 2018). When discussing extremism with young people, certain approaches might be more successful such as “Family-based interventions may be effective if they focus on family related risk and protective factors associated with radicalization” (Zych and Nasaescu, 2022). This makes the consequences of terrorism more impactful because it will affect those the victim cares for. It also aims to combat anti-social behaviour in the child. The consequences to direct family and friends is often not something adolescents think about when venturing into extremism and for some this is what snaps them out of harmful beliefs. It is easy to disagree with an opinion of a hypothetical person but hard when that person is a family member and the situation is no

longer hypothetical. "Interventions could improve family's capacity to promote self-control, which is especially important because low self-control is related to antisocial behavior" (Zych and Nasaescu, 2022). Putting an emphasis on self-control and emotional regulation has the ability to help a young person dissect their thoughts and beliefs, separating what they truly believe from what they have been told by others. It also instils a sense of self and pride in one's opinions. This can prevent them being taken advantage of in the future.

Parents role in radicalisation

Parents who impart their fanatical beliefs to their children are a less common avenue for youth radicalisation. This is because rebellion and questioning what you grew up believing in is a universal stage of adolescence. "In these cases, they have been confronted with their parents' viewpoints on social issues and out-groups from a very young age and have accepted their perspectives and points of view" (Schils and Verhage, 2017). Parents are supposed to be a child's first role model and often children are unaware of their guardian's ability to make mistakes until adolescence. This sense of blind faith makes it difficult to deter them from any harmful ideologies that may be spread in the home before they come to realisation that parents are not perfect and they too make mistakes; "Parents who were former extremists are actively developing radical ideology by providing support, approval, motivations, and encouragement to their children to do radical actions" (Sikkens et al, 2018). To reject these family ideals can be dangerous for young people who depend on their parents to meet their emotional and physical needs because the support that normally receives could be rescinded. Their survival can depend on their shared beliefs and when a parent makes that clear, it encourages the child not to question them. Della Porta found that most of those indoctrinated into extremist groups "had at least one relative, usually husband or wife, brother or sister" already involved in the movement. This close connection makes joining a radical group more enticing especially when many groups encourage members to cut off non-believers. The hope of reuniting with family members can make young people susceptible to agreeing with ideals they normally would consider too extreme for their tastes. Hearing the ideals of an extremist group for a trusted relative can blind a child to the reality of the group due to the level of trust given to the adult to be truthful and have the child's best interest in mind. Having a family member in the group can make others more welcoming due to the connection and can even

affect the newcomer's status in the group's hierarchy which can entice youth by making them feel important and useful.

Some scholars argue that parents play no part in the radicalisation of young people and that any sway comes from outside influences. Silke found no connection between family backgrounds and the recruitment of young people into the Jihaad. "This implies that their parents would have hardly played a role in "transferring their political orientations through socialization to their children" (Silke, 2008). They highlighted the indifference that many teenagers have for their families and how they view their parents as 'uncool', during this developmental period young people may strive to be as different from their parents as they can. It is part due to the need for individualism and to feel grown up. This can then translate into young people delving into radicalism because it's unlike their parent's beliefs making them independent. Silke argues that "many individuals were recruited at a time when they were living away from their family home and old friends". Without their trusted circle to guide and support them, they found themselves making decisions that they otherwise wouldn't. Botha found that parents didn't have much of an effect on the political and religious views of their children because the "family's influence wanes at 13 or 14 years of age, considering the age respondents were radicalized. This is also the period when the individual begins to take a more active interest and participation in specifically political affairs" (Silke, 2008). Through her research Botha came to the conclusion "that although the initial building blocks were established during childhood, other socialization agents guided respondents to al-Shabaab". This supports the idea proposed that parents don't play a part in radicalisation because while childhood can bring upon experiences that make youth susceptible to indoctrination, it was later in adolescence and without the support of parents that many were found to indulge in radicalism.

Countering radicalisation

"Countering online extremism has increased dramatically over the past years due to technology evolving and enabling moderators to remove content and protect the wider public" (Zeiger and Gyte, 2020). The internet while playing a part in radicalisation also has a hand in its prevention. The development of AI programs which filter content and remove any posts that may be harmful has made prevention a quick and easy process, removing the need

for a team continuously reviewing posts manually. But the prevention of radical content being posted online cannot be achieved by AI alone, laws and regulations are required to support this goal. The interest of the government, companies and private regulators is essential because they make the rules for how we can interact with the world and its products. "It is important that social media and technology companies continue taking responsibility to counter online radicalization by working together, blocking dissemination of extremist content on their platforms and protecting users from harmful content" (Zeiger and Gyte, 2020). Many providers have already implemented such policies; Facebook developed a policy against Dangerous Individuals and Organizations and Twitter followed with their Violent Organizations policy. These policies outline inappropriate content and the consequences for posting dangerous materials on their platforms. This discourages users from making posts that violate the rules of the platform to avoid being suspended or blocked. To ensure no harmful content is overlooked, users are encouraged to take action and report anything posts they think might be dangerous; "YouTube, for example, enables community members to flag offensive and/or illegal content, which is then reviewed and removed if found to breach internal policies, license agreements, or national or international law" (Kenyon et al, 2022). Allowing users to report content, fast tracks the take down process and helps to create a community experience online in which users feel they are a vital part of. Many platforms have banded together to fight radicalisation by forming the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). "The GIFCT was established in 2017 as a joint enterprise between Facebook, Twitter, Google/YouTube and Microsoft, with membership having since expanded" (Kenyon et al, 2022). This allows companies to trade information relating to the content they block to support the fight against radicalisation. The trading of information regarding radicals is invaluable when slowing the spread of harmful content, when sites can share the email address and private information relating to these accounts, they can prevent the users from ever making an account on their platform and blacklist any activity from their email and phone number. It also provides a space for companies to compare their regulations regarding safety and ensure they're protecting the users of their platforms to the best of their capabilities.

The Family Online Safety unit has found that to successfully combat radicalisation, it is necessary to "look at the risk that is posed, then we look to see if there are actual harms, rather than solely theoretical hazards, and finally FOSI tries to balance the actual harms with the rewards that being online presents to children" (Morris, 2016). This allows the FOSI to

assess the potential risks which helps them to provide support to victims and their family members. It is important to act as soon as possible because “a child can be coerced to leave their home and their family to join a violent and highly dangerous group, potentially overseas” (Morris, 2016). When discussing the topic of radicalisation with young people it is vital not to demonise all internet activity; "the benefits of online exploration, discovery and friendship in addition to the educational experiences that growing up online provides to children should not be entirely forgotten” (Morris, 2016). The internet like most things can be used in harmful ways and positive ways. It is naive to assume that banning young people from the internet would protect them from harm because the internet is vital in modern life. Young people will see the internet via friend's devices or go against their parents' wishes, leaving them vulnerable without parental support and supervision. It is essential that rather than outlawing the internet that parents instead monitor their children's usage and teach them how to be safe online. This teaches them important life skills while preparing them for adulthood where they will be expected to make good choices online without support from others. Associations such as The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and The Micro:bit Educational Foundation which “provided information regarding the necessary tech components and skills for realising children’s desired uses of the Mirco:bit, as well as known uses of the tool by children to date” helped to develop Use Scenarios which were “categorised into four Risk Zones: 1) Authority and Discipline; 2) Malevolence and Accidental Harm; 3) Emotionality and Socialization; and 4) Governance and Accounting”. The Use Scenarios were crucial in the creation of a risk migration checklist; a “tool to be used by developers and policymakers to anticipate and proactively attend to risks of IoT technologies. The use scenarios have provided a checklist that makes assessing young people's internet usage much easier and quicker but it is important that this is not the only support document used when testing. They provide an overall analysis but specific tools will be needed for a more in detail view.

It is vital that governments globally take action and do their part to prevent radicalisation through the passing of laws as the government is often lacking when it comes to regulating online actions. “Governments can convene experts, conduct research on the subject, inform the public and advise law enforcement efforts” (Morris, 2016). The USA has made strides in prevention by hosting numerous meetings in the Congress and in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the use of social media by terrorists. They highlight the importance of tackling the issue from both a domestic and

international stance, this is vital because it is just as possible that those abroad are targeting young people as it is domestic citizens. Britain began to fight back against indoctrination in 2008 when the DCFS published "a document called *Learning to Be Safe Together*. This document presents risk factors for professionals to be aware of in relation to radicalisation" (Spalek, 2016). This document highlighted three important factors that put young people at risk; "identity crisis, personal crisis and personal circumstances" (Spalek, 2016). Adolescence is a developmental for all young people gaining a sense of individuality which automatically makes them vulnerable to radicals who may take advantage of their time of personal growth and change. This program was continued in 2011 when the UK 2011 PREVENT strategy made clear that "that families may not notice any behaviours or opinions that have changed within people who are undergoing a process of radicalisation, and that moreover, children may be at particular risk of radicalisation as a result of spending long periods online" (Spalek, 2016). The way many young people, especially teenagers, communicate with their parents can be hostile and distant due to the changes occurring in their life. The distant relationship makes it different for adults to recognise changes in behaviour and actions because beliefs, radical or otherwise might not be something teens share with them. This was topical because at the time the UK feared young people being radicalised in Northern Ireland due to the unrest occurring. Following the PREVENT Strategy, the vulnerability assessment framework was introduced to provide professionals with the ability to assess a person's vulnerability to engaging with a group, cause or ideology. This alongside the framework that Spalek provided professionals with a way to support and assess at-risk youth; "alongside factors like feelings of grievance, a need for an identity, and a need to dominate others, the involvement of family or friends in extremism is also considered to comprise a risk".

The role of social media in radicalisation

While most social media websites claim to have strict rules and regulations regarding extremist content, they often fail to enforce these rules. Often harmful content slips through the cracks when posts are reviewed by the platform they are posted on. "Jihadist websites exploit the lack of Internet censorship for a free dissemination of jihadist speech" (Odag et al 2019). This is seen on YouTube where the phrase 'kill the infidels' "yields thousands of videos on YouTube (4.350in 2018)" (Odag et al 2019). This is furthered through the

recommendations provided based on the user's search and watch history. This ensure that if a young person stumbled upon a harmful video or post, they will be recommended similar content, solely because they viewed a single post relating to radical beliefs; "Significant progress could be made if YouTube worked closely with researchers to determine the recommender system's role in facilitating pathways to problematic content" (Yesilada and Lewandowsky, 2022). These profiles will promote harmful content but because "profiles remain high in anonymity, those who claim they will act on extremist ideology may be hiding behind a keyboard and never act upon it" (Bamsey and Montasari, 2023). Many radicals promote their beliefs without ever acting upon them, their goal is to indoctrinate others who will act on their behalf. This means that for many extremist groups, they believe that there are more terrorist events occurring than in reality, giving the groups a false sense of success. Profiles on social media can be exploited by anti-radical activists because "novice users may provide insight to counter terrorism due to their lack of knowledge within these platforms" (Bamsey and Montasari, 2023). Professionals can then use this information to source terrorists and combat their harmful ideals

"Social media have witnessed an influx of emotionally pervasive propaganda utilising graphic images and videos to spread ideologies" (Sullivan and Montasari, 2022). The use of images rather than text increased the reach of their harmful content because there were no barriers to communication. "Online platforms permit extremist groups to control and manipulate their own 'victimhood' narrative. Thus, propaganda is created with the intention to shock and disturb which can have a profound impact upon audiences" (Sullivan and Montasari, 2022). The ability for radical groups to portray themselves as victims is incredibly dangerous, it creates sympathy in the viewer which makes them more susceptible to radicalisation. Stopping this from happening is essential to slow the rise of radicalism; "Twitter suspended more than 200,000 extremist accounts in 2016, leading to the rise of extremist content appearing on end-to-end encrypted messaging platforms" (Bamsey and Montasari, 2023). While the removal of extremist accounts is a step in the right direction for preventing indoctrination, the move to messaging applications such as 'WhatsApp' and 'Viber' is still extremely dangerous. Many children who are too young or unallowed to join social media have accounts on these messaging apps to contact family and friends without having to pay for text messages. This puts them at risk for accepting 'spam' or dangerous messages due to a lack of media literacy as it is not unusual to be added to random groups on these apps. These apps are picked because "restricts visibility for researchers and public authorities, the relative

anonymity afforded by the use of only telephone numbers as identifiers by groups administrators, and the limited number of members in a group" (Nuraniyah, N., 2017). The anonymity provided facilitates sharing and open-ness. This end-to-end encrypted nature of these groups makes "online surveillance more challenging, and comprehensive efforts to counter radicalisation will still need to include an offline component" (Nuraniyah, N., 2017).

The role of educators in the prevention of radicalisation

As schools focus more on technological studies, they have more pressure to properly educate students on internet safety. "This means that the principal role of schools is to promote resilience against extremist beliefs by helping students develop political and social orientations that support human rights and peace" (Sjøen and Mattsson, 2020). Victoroff stated that there is no natural predisposition to radical, terrorist behaviours and that makes tasking teachers to identify any radical behaviour difficult due to the ethical implications. Analysing the actions of their students is not the job of an educator and asking this of them takes the teachers attention away from educating. "There are signs that many educators are wary of, and even resistant towards, this securitisation paradigm, as it may result in the use of harder preventive measures, including profiling strategies, surveillance and controlling of presumed vulnerable students" (Sjøen and Mattsson, 2020). The possibility of incorrectly assessing a vulnerable student as at risk for radicalism is incredibly dangerous and could have severe consequences for the educator. State that "establishing and enforcing limits should be part of the response, but it is more important to teach young people that there are non-violent ways to change society and get one's voice heard" (Drummond-Mundal, L. and Cave, G., 2007). This is a realistic approach for educators, teaching their students how to safely and respectfully express their opinions both online and offline. This fits in with the everyday expectations for educators without expecting them to do work they aren't qualified to do and that takes away from teaching such as analysing their students for indoctrinated beliefs.

"The common portrayal of perpetrators of extreme violence as vulnerable and deprived young individuals" (Sjøen and Jore, 2019) has put an emphasis on reaching young people through education to enact preventative measures. "In 2015 the UK introduced the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act which requires educators to have the "due regard to the need to prevent people from being draw into terrorism" (Dresser, 2018). This has greatly

increased the number of children referred for risk assessments. It is vital to teach media literacy to young people as many “young people miss the interpretive framing of news completely, and simply pick out facts and issues that seem of most interest” (Jerome, and Elwick, 2019). Jerome and Elwick found that political literacy was equally as important as media literacy because “increased political literacy provides students with a baseline of knowledge and understanding which enables them to become more critical of the media and social media they encounter”. When attempting to counter terrorism in schools, it is essential for educators “to critically consider differing life experiences and perspectives so that young people can hear different voices on current political issues, and experience critiques of their own perspective” (Thomas, P., 2016). Any preconceived notions about specific groups or religions can isolate students and affect the success of the process, this is a difficult ask from teachers because it hard to be completely impartial in a setting where the educator has a relationship with each student. Many suggest “that it is better to enable young people to voice their feelings, even supposedly extremist or racist ones, so that they can be interrogated and considered” (Thomas, 2019) , this requires safe spaces where students don’t feel judged by their thoughts and opinions. This is made difficult when teachers are expected to judge students opinions and report them if deemed necessary; “On the one hand, they are encouraged to engage young people in debates about controversial issues, but on the other hand they are required to monitor the young people’s opinions for signs that they may dissent from the FBVs, which is seen as a risk factor for developing extremist ideas” (Jerome, and Elwick, 2019). Success has been found in teaching civic values in schools, this promotes the idea “that giving young people cross-curricular skills, knowledge and competency can enable them to participate as informed, responsible and well-functioning members of society” (Thomas, 2019).

Sjøen and Jore highlighted that “Early interventions are not aimed at the entire mass of students; rather, they are directed at individuals deemed at risk of radicalisation”. The lack of focus on those intervening on will affect the success of prevention, it is naive to assume that the same tactics will work on each child. It is more effective to “build on the educational approaches of inclusive and humanistic educational environments, alongside the supportive educator-student relationship” (Sjøen and Jore, 2019). This allows the student to feel safe and cared for by the teacher while not feeling preached about concepts that they may not fully understand. “The use of ‘harder’ preventive measures, such as profiling, surveillance and zero-tolerance, most likely caused by the politicised nature of the counter-radicalisation

discourse, appears to compromise educators' ability to build trust and inclusivity and to safeguard students in schools and universities" (Sjøen and Jore, 2019). This puts students in a place where they might begin to view the educators as antagonistic and feel if something happened to them that they could not turn to these adults that they should be able to trust. It is essential to remove educators from a role where they are demanded to study their students for any behaviour that might seem to put them at risk for radicalisation. For a successful student-educator relationship, a level of confidentiality is required for the student to feel safe expressing themselves.

The children of Palestine show the ways that young people can be politically aware while not engaging in violence; "awareness-raising activities about the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, boycotting Israeli goods, helping families in need, writing slogans on walls and participating in peaceful demonstrations. Continuing their education, maintaining cultural traditions and surviving to the best of their abilities". These actions have more impact than violence because they are ensuring that despite the Israeli forces attempts, they are protecting their humanity and pushing themselves to use their education to speak out. "we must do what we can to protect young people, but this involves a second assumption: that protection requires disassociation". When taking this stance on the involvement of young people in the prevention of radicalisation "we neglect to acknowledge the reality of their everyday encounters with structural violence - with roadblocks, with check points, with curfews and other restrictions to movement which make it impossible to attend school, to get to work, to visit relatives – we will lose them". Radicalism can affect their everyday lives like seen during the Northern Ireland troubles, ignoring this will only make young people feel unheard, dismissed and then they will lose trust in those in places of power and authority. Programmes that give these young people a voice and outlet for their opinions, experiences and emotions are essential to prevent them turning to more extreme groups.

Digital Artefact - Web4Kidz

As a digital artefact to encourage internet safety in children, a website was created under the name 'Web4Kids'. This site is aimed at young people under the age of ten years old and attempts to foster a healthy interest in the online world while educating them in how they should act and expect to be treated. The treatment of others online is important so that

children understand what unacceptable behaviour is and then they can speak to a trusted adult. This is a vital basis for any young person who is using the internet, and it acts as a good tool to prepare children for the future use of social media and current use of any internet applications or websites. The site also contains resources for parents because the target audience is young enough that the content would need to be sourced by a guardian and the parents need support to accurately provide the knowledge to the children around them. Around the age of thirteen as children reach adolescence and social media becomes a part of daily life and is an important element of integration with their peers. This website can come of use for parents then because many worry about their young children and how they can protect them in the digital age when technology and the internet is a part of every aspect of life. The resources available for the parents can help them approach difficult conversations with their children regarding the internet. The worry and frustration that many parents feel due to a lack of understanding creates an opportunity for tools such as ‘Web4Kidz’ to serve a useful purpose.

The website is developed in a variety of interactive activities and resources such as activity sheets, fun facts, quizzes and more. There is an emphasis on the learning of the various terms that often appear online because one cannot protect themselves if they don’t understand what is being said. The ‘Web4Kidz’ website is completely hard coded through a range of languages such as PHP, CSS, HTML and JavaScript. HTML was picked to create the bones of the website due to its simple nature and its ability to define each part of the website to create structure within the browser. CSS was used to develop the front-end of the website and enhance the user experience. Without CSS, the webpage would have been a white background with black text. No variation in font size, colours or text placement would have been possible. This would not draw the users attention and would make usage difficult.

```
header {
  background-color: lightgreen;
  color: #fff;
  padding: 1em;
  text-align: center;
}

h1 {
  margin: 0;
}

.questions {
  background-color: #f5f5f5;
  padding: 1em;
  margin-bottom: 1em;
  font-size: 20px ;
}

.results {
  display: none;
  padding: 2em;
  font-size: 20px;
}

button {
  background-color: lightgreen;
  color: #fff;
  padding: 2em 2em;
  border: none;
  border-radius: 10px;
  cursor: pointer;
}

button:hover {
  background-color: green;
}
</style>
```

PHP was chosen for its form validation capabilities which would work successfully alongside HTML. It ensured that when a user provided an email or comment in the form provided, that only letters and specific symbols were usable. JavaScript was used to create a responsive quiz, this provided users with a more dynamic experience.

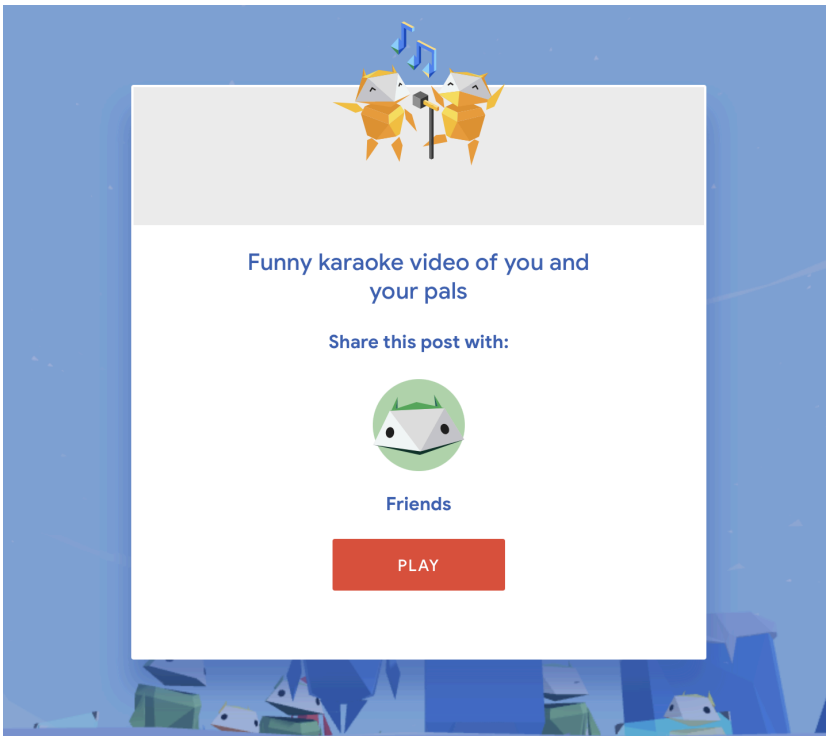
The quiz page is developed through HTML, CSS and JavaScript, which I learned for this project, allowing for the user to test their knowledge on the basics on internet safety such as what information they should and shouldn't share and more. This is developed with multiple choice answers which when answered are marked correct or incorrect when clicked. This is shown by having the selected answer light up green when correct and red when incorrect. Upon completion of the quiz, all the questions are shown again this time with their correct answers.

```
function checkAnswer(e) {
    const selectedButton = e.target;
    const isCorrect = quizData[currentQuestionIndex].answers.find(answer => answer.text === selectedButton.textContent).correct;
    if (isCorrect) {
        numCorrect++;
    }
    currentQuestionIndex++;
    if (currentQuestionIndex === quizData.length) {
        showResults();
    } else {
        showQuestion();
    }
}
```

The activity pages are categorised into two age groups; five to seven and seven to ten. These groupings are differentiated by the difficulty of the puzzles provided. The puzzles, crosswords and wordsearches aim to introduce children to the terminologies that are often seen online which has a goal of developing their understanding of what is said to them online which in turn will arm them to protect themselves from online danger. The ‘about us’ page has been coded with HTML, Java, PHP and CSS. The HTML created a form that allows users to contact support with any questions they may have. The PHP ensures that the email provided has a valid address and characters while also requiring the user to type something in the comment box. To comply with GDPR and keep any underage users safe, a checkbox is required to be ticked before submission. The box confirms that the user is either above sixteen or else has parental permission to contact the organisation. A captcha is also in place using JavaScript which ensures no bots are taking advantage of the site and overloading the server which ensures the user can be replied to in a timely manner. The ‘fun fact’ page was developed to encourage young people to be interested in the Internet and its history. Fostering their intrigue helps when trying to teach them safety rules which may not always be as interesting. The ‘videos’ page was created to provide resources for both parents and teachers to take advantage of, using cute and bright cartoons with fun storylines to impart stories and morals that would transfer to the responsible usage of the internet. These videos are suitable for a variety of ages and aim to teach online safety in a way that is fun for children without feeling like they're being lectured. The design of the site was created to grab and keep the attention of children with bright colours and a cartoonish banner. Links to each page were added to the footer of all the pages outside of the homepage, to allow users to easily move between pages along with a copyright mark. A ‘for parents’ page was added to act as a resource for parents who wanted to support and educate their kids. It provided information on kid friendly versions of applications commonly used by kids such as ‘YouTube’. It included links to websites for parents to reference for support. Guides to enable child safety features for computers and tablets were included because many parents don’t know these exist due to the lack of advertising and can’t set them up. Images were used to further illustrate the information presented to the kids because some children may recognise the logo of some websites but not the names. This ensures complete comprehension from all children who interact with the website no matter their age and reading capabilities.

Similar tools and services

‘Be internet awesome’ partnered with Google to create a game for kids called ‘Interland’. The user plays as a robot, called an ‘internaut’, traversing a world with different planets. Each planet has a game and is based on a different rule of internet safety such as; secure your secrets, respect each other, check if it's real and think before you share. Each minigame is started with a fact like ‘addresses should be shared with’ followed by an image of an internaut with the relevant group of people who should have this information. This targets children in a different way to ‘Web4Kidz’ as they develop a 3D virtual world with interactive games rather than focusing on a more text based website. The two websites share a similar age range with ‘Interland’ targeting kids aged 3-11 and ‘Web4Kidz’ targeting kids aged 5-10.



‘Childnet’ has multiple pages of resources that are aimed at children of all ages. These can be filtered for specific age groups and topics which would be beneficial for parents and educators who want to facilitate open conversations with young people but struggle to know where to start. While ‘Childnet’ has a variety of lesson plans, activities and stories, it lacks online activities like games or interactive stories. ‘Web4Kidz’ tries to balance interactive digital activities with links to other resources and activities that require a pen and paper. This allows children with various needs to be able to take part in tasks and feel included.

‘Safe Search Kids’ is a website aimed at parents and educators arming them with the necessary knowledge to protect children. There are articles on applications such as ‘Roblox’ and ‘Discord’ that some older people may not be familiar with. They outline what the application is before displaying the pros and cons of its use in easy to understand language and bullet points. It has short walkthroughs illustrated with images explaining how to enable parental controls and other similar child safety features. Similarly ‘Web4Kidz’ provides walkthroughs to parents via links to other websites and provides an overview of the popular apps for kidz. This is to encourage parents to discuss and make informed decisions on whether or not their children should be using these services.

Conclusion

The results of this study highlights the need for a comprehensive strategy to address online radicalization among young people. This should encompass education, communication, and proactive intervention from parents and teachers. Education on online etiquette in the digital age is imperative for supporting parents and teachers when setting examples for the young people in their lives. Through this research it was argued that while parents can play a part in indoctrination to extremism, their participation is not a requirement. Both parents and teachers have vital roles in preventing indoctrination because they are the people a child will spend the most time with. Unfortunately, this can be difficult because as children age, they begin to rebel against the beliefs and opinions of guardians and other adult figures. Children can be indoctrinated without parental participation through the online space because online activity can be difficult to monitor. A child can be consuming radical content or speaking with dangerous individuals without their guardian's knowledge, this can often appear as a child becoming moodier or having a renewed and extreme interest in religion which can be easily ignored or in the case of religious behaviour encouraged. Some adults who are already living within extremism encourage these beliefs in their children, making speaking out harmful for them. When children are at risk for abandonment and not have their basic needs met if they don’t follow their parents' lead, it creates an environment that will further indoctrination. Resources to support these adults and the children in their life are few and far between, with many catering to only one or the other.

With the information discovered from the questions initially posed from analysing the roles of parents and teachers and the ways of indoctrination, the knowledge sourced can be

developed into prevention techniques that target young people and educate them in ways that are proved to succeed. These techniques need to then be distributed to the parents, guardians and educators so that they can be implemented. It was found that having teachers watching their students for radical behaviours was counter intuitive to the prevention of radicalisation. It took time away from educating and targeted more religious students. It is impossible to expect educators to be completely unbiased when examining their students' behaviours. Teachers are not trained to spot the signs of a child who may be taking part in extremist beliefs, and it is unfair to expect them to be able to watch thirty students in such detail that they could spot these opinions. This can alienate students who may feel ‘under a microscope’ and judged by an adult who is meant to protect them. If a student is experiencing indoctrinating behaviours, they deserve to be able to trust their teachers enough to confide, this is hard when they feel constantly judged. More successful options were group discussions, acting out scenarios and interactive games which happened to focus on the topic of radicalism. To combat radicalisation of young people, a website was created called Web4Kids with the intention of providing learning resources such as videos and activity pages along with interactive content that encourages learning for young people in a way that feels natural and enjoyable. The website contains a quiz which tests the user’s knowledge and ensures interaction with the content displayed on the site. It tries to foster intrigue within children and provide them with terms that they will come across online, arming them with the information they need to fully understand what might be said to them so they can make informed decisions on how and when to take action.

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