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A CONCEPTUAL OF STUDY ON RADICAL PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION: A RISK FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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Abstract:

Radical organisations frequently target young adults, especially college students, to enlist them as cadres for their movements all over the world. They are recruited in a variety of ways, with the use of cyberspace being particularly prevalent. These extremists no longer use face-to-face interactions in the physical world to promote extremism in the age of the internet. Instead, they use the internet and information technology. These radical groups frequently take advantage of the widespread use of the internet, social media, and social networking tools to spread their beliefs, advance their doctrines, identify and recruit potential cadres, and even to call for jihad against the West. The present study aims to explore the reasons for radical organisations in targeting young adults in delivering their propaganda. Meta-Analysis was conducted through a narrative review of findings from multiple primary research studies on various studies to derive more robust conclusions and identify patterns and consistencies across different studies. Factors contributed are idealism and passion, vulnerability, active and energy, access to education and resources as well as due to long-term commitment. Radical organisations exploit this idealism to recruit young adults who may be more willing to engage in radical activities to achieve their goals and also to provide the manpower needed to carry out their agendas. Additionally, college students may have access to resources, such as meeting spaces, funding, and a network of like-minded individuals, which can further the goals of radical organisations and the ability to provide a constant stream of recruits and sustain the organisation's activities over time as most young adults prioritise their education, personal growth, and other non-radical activities. Thus, it is crucial to promote critical thinking, media literacy, digital literacy and open dialogue to empower young adults to make informed decisions and resist the influence of radical organisations.

Keywords:

Radical Communication; Persuasion; Risk; Young Adults

Introduction

A complicated and varied problem, youth involvement in radical ideologies can have enormous effects on both individuals and society as a whole. Due to a variety of reasons, young individuals, especially those in their late teens and early twenties, can be more susceptible to radicalisation. Feelings of alienation, social exclusion, and identity crises are some of these that might result in social problems. The age range of young adults involved in radical ideologies varies depending on demographic factors, but they generally have a chance to gain influence because young adults in developing nations like the US have up to 95% online access (Sintas, Belbeze & Lamberti, 2023). MCMC reported that 88.7% of the total population in Malaysia are internet users and 70% of them are young adults. Through systematic literature review, researchers found that the radical organisations use a variety of online venues to spread their views, find members, and rally support primarily because of the longer time spent on internet platforms (Larysz, 2023; Keshtiban, Callahan, & Harris, 2023). These platforms include websites, blogs, forums, social media platforms, and messaging apps. Additionally, these online platforms are actively used for radical communication because they frequently permit people to do so anonymously or using aliases, which gives them a sense of security and lessens their fear of being identified or facing repercussions (Keshtiban, Callahan, & Harris, 2023).

The danger of radical ideologies is that they promote violence, including terrorism, as a way of achieving their aims. Individuals may be harmed, property may be destroyed, and lives may be lost as a result. Acts of violence motivated by radical ideologies can have serious and long-term effects on both the immediate victims and society as a whole (Walden & Zhukov, 2020). This is also related to polarization, which frequently promotes an "us versus them" mentality, resulting in societal divisions (Bliuc, Bouguettaya, & Felise, 2021). This can involve limitations on freedom of speech, association, and expression (Kuran, 2023). Individual rights and liberties are undermining democratic norms and can lead to totalitarianism. Furthermore, extreme ideologies have resulted in discrimination, stigma, and denial of basic rights and opportunities for people who do not fit the ideology's ideals. Marginalization can worsen social inequality and societal conflicts (Sumner, Burrow, & Hill, 2018). Individuals may be exposed to manipulation, coercion, or exploitation once they become involved, putting their well-being and lives in danger (Gendron, 2016). As a result, radical ideologies may spread more easily and without fear of imminent repercussions. The disadvantages of ideologies are concerning; failing to manage the dissemination of compelling radical communication will put audiences at risk, both present and future. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the broad influences on young adults as the intended audience under the efforts of radical persuasive communication and what risks they may encounter as a result of believing in and supporting radical beliefs.

Literature Review***Radical Organisation***

A radical organisation, also known as an extremist organisation, is a group or movement that advocates for and engages in significant, often extreme, changes to the established social,

political, or economic order (Adnan & Amaliyah, 2021; Champion, 2019). These organisations typically reject the existing systems and ideologies and seek to promote their radical agenda through various means, which can include protests, acts of violence, or other forms of direct action. Radical organisations frequently function outside of society's norms and may have unconventional or contentious ideas and objectives. They question the status quo and may attempt to topple or significantly alter the existing institutions, power structures, or social standards. It is significant to remember that radical organisations can be located worldwide and can represent a variety of beliefs. Extremist political parties, religious fundamentalist movements, separatist movements, anarchist collectives, and terrorist organisations are a few examples of radical organisations (Carter, Ahmed, Albayrak, & Van Nuys, 2022). Some radical organisations campaign for their purpose through nonviolent methods, while others may turn to violence or other criminal measures.

Radical Communication Platforms

There are numerous ways and outlets via which radical communication can be delivered. Using internet platforms is one of the radical organisation's typical outreach methods. Social media and the internet have developed into effective tools for radical communication. Websites, forums, social networking sites, and encrypted messaging applications are all used by extremist groups and individuals to spread ideas, gather followers, and plan attacks (Taneski, Petrovski, & Karovska 2019). These platforms have a broad audience and permit anonymous or fictitious contact, making it simpler to meet like-minded people and spread radical ideas. Additionally, propagandist materials frequently produce and disseminate propaganda to advance their beliefs and gain adherents. Pamphlets, posters, flyers, stickers, and even professionally made videos are examples of these items (Payton, 2020). This proven on the frequently platform used that needs to be cautious by society when receiving one information.

Radical organisations use targeted outreach and recruitment strategies to draw in new members. This can involve planning public gatherings, marches, or protests to spread their message and gather supporters for their cause (Jämte & Ellefsen, 2020). Additionally, they might contact susceptible people through their personal networks, internet communities, or niche interest groups. One of the platforms utilised to deliver speeches or lectures at events or gatherings are influential speakers or ideologues. These speakers can be compelling personalities with a talent for clearly communicating and persuading conveying radical beliefs (Majluf, & Abarca, 2021). Placing the appealing to their emotions, complaints, or desires for change, the goal is to engage and persuade the audience leading to psychological victory.

In addition, visual symbols, flags, slogans, and other types of iconographies are employed to foster a sense of identity, belonging, and recognition among supporters (Sutton & Vacarezza, 2020). These symbols can be displayed in public places, worn as clothing or accessories, or shared online platforms, reinforcing group identity, and signalling allegiance to a specific radical ideology. Additionally, radical communication can use music, painting, and other cultural manifestations as platforms (Hracs & Webster, 2021). Radical musicians and artists produce works that reflect and advance their ideologies. Through songs, poetry, artwork, graffiti, and other forms of artistic expression, these materials are effective vehicles for spreading radical ideas, stirring up feelings, and galvanising support (Trudell, 2019). Therefore, promoting Critical thinking, media literacy, and the ability to engage in balanced and informed dialogue are essential for individuals to evaluate and navigate radical messages effectively.

Radical Ideologies and Young Adults

Radical organisations are targeting young adults for many reasons. Partially it is due to the idealism and passion portrayed by the younger generation nowadays. The desire to make a difference in the world is one of the key factors used by radical organisations. The exploitation of this idealism is to recruit young adults than willing to engage in radical activities to achieve their goals. According to Baldwin & Mitchell (2020), young adults are a vulnerable group, and they are at a stage of life where they are still forming their identities and beliefs. They may be more susceptible to the influence of others, including radical organisations that offer a strong sense of purpose and belonging.

In addition, many examples of the radical organisation were targeting university students in particular, as they are often more active, energetic, and willing to participate in various activities, including protests, demonstrations, and other forms of activism as they were able to use students as their manpower in executing the agendas (Linz, Müller-Stewens, & Zimmermann, 2020). Moreover, University campuses provide fertile ground for radical organisations to recruit young adults. Campuses are often hubs of intellectual discourse, where different ideologies are explored. Additionally, university students may have access to resources, such as meeting spaces, funding, and a network of like-minded individuals, which can further the goals of radical organisations (Gupta, 2023; Busch & Barkema, 2021). Thus, it is important to have an open dialogue session, especially for university students to empower young adults to make informed decisions and resist the influence of radical organisations.

Radical Symbolism Way of Communicating

The acceptance of radical symbolism by young adults can vary depending on factors such as cultural context, individual beliefs, and personal experiences. Young adults embrace radical symbolism, and the level of acceptance can vary widely among individuals. However, certain symbols have been associated with radical movements and ideologies that may resonate with some young adults. Examples of Symbolism Communication used are as follows: -

1. Che Guevara's Image: The iconic image of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, an Argentine Marxist revolutionary, has become a symbol of rebellion and anti-establishment sentiment. His image is often associated with socialist and communist movements and is widely recognized as a symbol of revolution (Maya, 2020).
2. Anarchy Symbol: The circle-A symbol, commonly associated with anarchism, represents the desire for a society without hierarchical authority. It is often used by those who reject centralised power and advocate for self-governance and direct action (Spierings, 2020)
3. Raised Fist: The raised fist symbolism resistance, solidarity, and unity in various social justice movements. It has been used by different groups advocating for civil rights, labour rights, and other forms of social and political change.
4. LGBTQ+ Symbols: Various symbols, such as the rainbow flag or the pink triangle, represent LGBTQ+ pride and equality. These symbols have been embraced by young adults and serve as a way to show support for LGBTQ+ rights and visibility (Lewin & Jenzen, 2023)
5. Antifa Symbol: The antifascist (Antifa) movement uses symbols such as a black flag or the three arrows to represent their opposition to fascism and right-wing extremism. These symbols are often seen in protests and demonstrations against hate groups (Vysotsky, 2020).
6. Environmental Symbols: Symbols related to environmental activism, such as the Earth symbol or the extinction rebellion symbol, represent concerns about climate change,

sustainability, and the protection of the natural world (Fagerholm, Göransson, Thompson & Hedvall, 2023).

The symbolism used to represent ideologies can be complicated, and its significance may change over time. Furthermore, not all young adults adopt radical symbolism; this is dependent on a variety of demographic characteristics, including personal values, education, peer pressure, and personal experiences.

Persuasive Symbol Use as a Medium of Communication

The use of colours in their flags and logos also represents meanings and symbols. As per the example shown in Figure 1 - figure 3. The use of black flags is synonymous with radical organisation such as jihadist and mujahideen groups as well as other militant groups that started the usage of the colour in 1880. Figure 3 is also used with the specific targeted group by adding the symbol of sword/Scimitar at the bottom of the *kalimah* to show independent imamate: Saif al-Haqq, meaning "Sword of Truth". Saif al-Islam "Sword of submission to Allah" or "Sword of Islam". The jihadist flag (figure 2) is a flag commonly used by various Islamist and fundamentalist movements as a symbol of jihad. It usually consists of the Black Standard with a white text of the Shahada (Islamic declaration of faith) emblazoned across it in calligraphy-style writing. Its usage was widely adopted by Islamist groups and jihadists during the 1990s and early 2000s (Hamid & Dar, 2016).

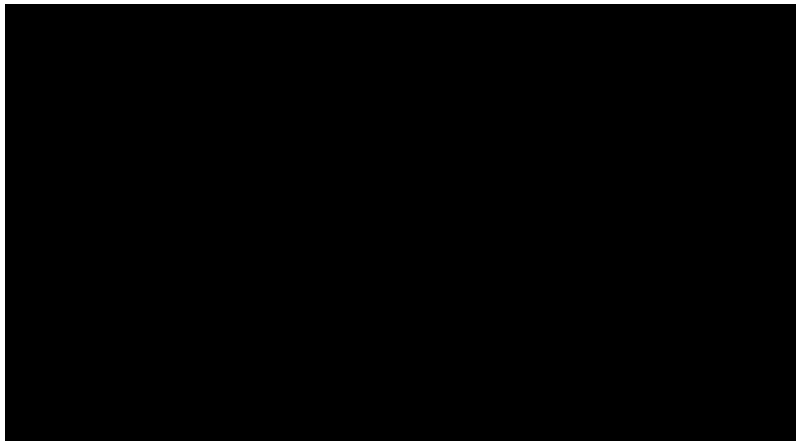


Figure 1: Solid Black Flag; Flag of The Emirate of Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901.



Figure 2: The "Black Flag of Jihad" Used by Jihadist Militants in late 1990s



Figure 3: Flag of Mujahideen Youth Movement

In comparison the radical Islamic organisation symbol uses the basic black flag, meanwhile, a persuasive symbol is also widely used in politics. For instance, red is the colour that is actively used by the political party presently. The use of flags as symbols by different groups can convey contrasting messages and evoke diverse sentiments. The black flag, commonly associated with radical Islamic organisations, embodies a simplistic yet potent emblem of their beliefs, often signifying a call to action or unity within their cause. In the realm of politics, the red flag stands as a compelling symbol, notably linked to a spectrum of ideologies such as socialism, communism, Marxism, trade unions, left-wing politics, and anarchism.

The red flag also predominantly presents a symbol of socialism, communism, Marxism, trade unions, left-wing politics, and anarchism. The originally empty or plain red flag has been associated with left-wing politics since the French Revolution (1789–1799) as in Figure 4 below (Ten Brink, 1899). Symbols hold significant power in shaping ideologies and movements. Its historical roots trace back to the French Revolution, where the initially plain red flag became emblematic of the revolutionary left-wing movements striving for social equality and justice. Understanding the context and historical evolution of these symbols illuminates their significance in contemporary discourse. The black flag's starkness juxtaposes with the rich historical connotations and varied interpretations of the red flag, demonstrating how symbols can encapsulate complex ideologies and movements within their simple yet profound designs.



Figure 4: Plain Red Flag- Left-Wing Politics Since the French Revolution (1789–1799)

The Risk Faced Accepting Radical Ideologies

For young individuals, accepting radical beliefs carries many risks. Young adults who join extremist groups or do radical actions run the possibility of being charged with crimes, imprisoned, or subject to other legal repercussions that could have a long-term detrimental impact on their personal and professional lives. Additionally, this may result in social isolation as people will remove themselves from those who are associated with extremist movements because of their radical ideas and acts, which will leave them feeling lonely and alienated (Lobato et al., 2023; Hollewell & Longpré, 2022; Galland & Muxel, 2020). The youth will begin to experience emotional and psychological effects after the alienation procedure is complete. Adopting extreme ideas frequently fosters an "us versus them" mentality, which can increase violence, rage, and antagonism toward others who have different opinions (Kang, 2023; Dixon et al., 2020). This can lead to increased stress, conflict, and a negative impact on mental well-being.

Participation in radical groups or ideas might drastically reduce one's possibilities for future employment. Due to worries about their dedication to violence, potential disruptions, or a bad public image, employers may be reluctant to hire people who are affiliated with extremist movements (Fishman, 2019). This may obstruct career advancement and reduce chances. Radical ideologies frequently demand unwavering commitment and stifle critical thought. Young adults who subscribe to radical beliefs risk developing a groupthink mentality, lose the capacity to think critically, question presumptions, and act independently (Pfundmair & Mahr, 2022). Some extreme ideologies encourage or condone the use of violence as a means of achieving their objectives.

Critical Theory & Ideology

Critical theory entails a critical analysis of society, power dynamics, and the cultural influences on interpersonal interactions and experiences (Chesebro & Bertelsen, 1998). To advance social change and freedom, critical theory attempts to expose and confront repressive systems, disparities, and injustices. Power and domination, which is known as a key component of critical theory is the analysis of social power structures and other kinds of domination (Miller, 2019). It aims to understand who wields power, how it is used, and how it affects social inequality and hierarchy. To achieve this, the right audiences are critically and carefully chosen. The dominant ideas that are employed to preserve power structures and shape social reality are critically analysed in cultural hegemony (Giroux, 2018). It investigates how institutions, the media, and customary behaviours spread, internalise, and reproduce ideologies. Thus, in the present study, the use of radical organisation persuasive communication that communicates visually through the preferred platform will lead the users to perceive the radical ideologies as a norm that can lead them to practice it due to the frequency of the amount of data shared on the platform.

Methodologies

In order to find the answers to a certain topic, a narrative review makes an effort to compile all empirical research that is currently available (Synder, 2019). A meta-analysis, which uses statistics to analyse and combine data from numerous related studies, was performed to determine why radical organisations spread their beliefs through internet platforms, with a focus on young adults. Therefore, the inclusion criteria included in the present study are "Radical communication", "Radical Ideologies and young adults", "Radical Symbolisation", and "Radical Ideologies and Risk" which are among the keywords utilised in the evaluation process. The review was restricted and limited to current studies published in the Google Scholar database published from 2019 to 2023 since the researcher could readily obtain free

access to secondary data. The current study, however, is limited to a generic search and is unable to be generalised to a particular country's output, as well as no measurement of the correlation between radical communication and youth at risk quantitatively. The present study was conducted to get an overview of the context. Following the screening process using relevant keywords, the researchers then moved on to identifying the platforms used by radical organisations, followed by the well-known symbol used in these organisations, before identifying the targeted group and, finally, shortlisting the risk associated with attachment to particular radical ideologies.

Conclusions and Discussions

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the broad influences on young adults as the intended audience under the efforts of radical persuasive communication and what risks they may encounter believing in and supporting radical beliefs. Based on Figure 5, there are two platforms used by radical organisations; online media and other mediums. For online media, platforms such as encrypted messages, social media, websites, and forums were identified as venues for radical persuasive communication by radical organisations. Meanwhile, other mediums, authors reported four types of mediums on young adults were used by radical organisations, such as posters, pamphlets, flyers, and videos. Both platforms refer to radical persuasive communication. It uses a variety of strategies to promote radical ideologies, set them apart from the past, improve the impact of messages, and influence people to act. Research by Bhui & Ibrahim (2013), identified that Jihadist websites use persuasive techniques to market their radical ideologies through multimedia formats, combining established forms of rhetoric and propaganda with new ways to reach audiences through both popular culture and religious ideologies. In politics, populist radical right politicians utilise political blogs for political communication and persuasion (Pettersson, 2020). This has proven the effectiveness of online platforms in disseminating ideologies towards society whether in extremism, politics, and any other persuasive agendas in dominating the public views.

Some young adults may be lured to radical ideas because they recognise societal injustices or inequality and seek radical remedies for them. The search results suggest that there is limited research on specific radical ideologies among young adults. However, some studies have identified certain factors that can contribute to radicalization among young people. These factors include active and energetic, idealism and passion, and vulnerability to social change. It is because adolescence is a turbulent time for young people, and they may experience psychological suffering and identity issues that make them vulnerable to radicalization (Bronsard & Vermeulen, 2022; Oppetit et. al, 2019). Besides, young people, especially students, are not just passive audiences that consume radical content but often also actively participate in producing radical content to be recirculated to other groups (Sugihartati, Suyanto & Sirry, 2020).

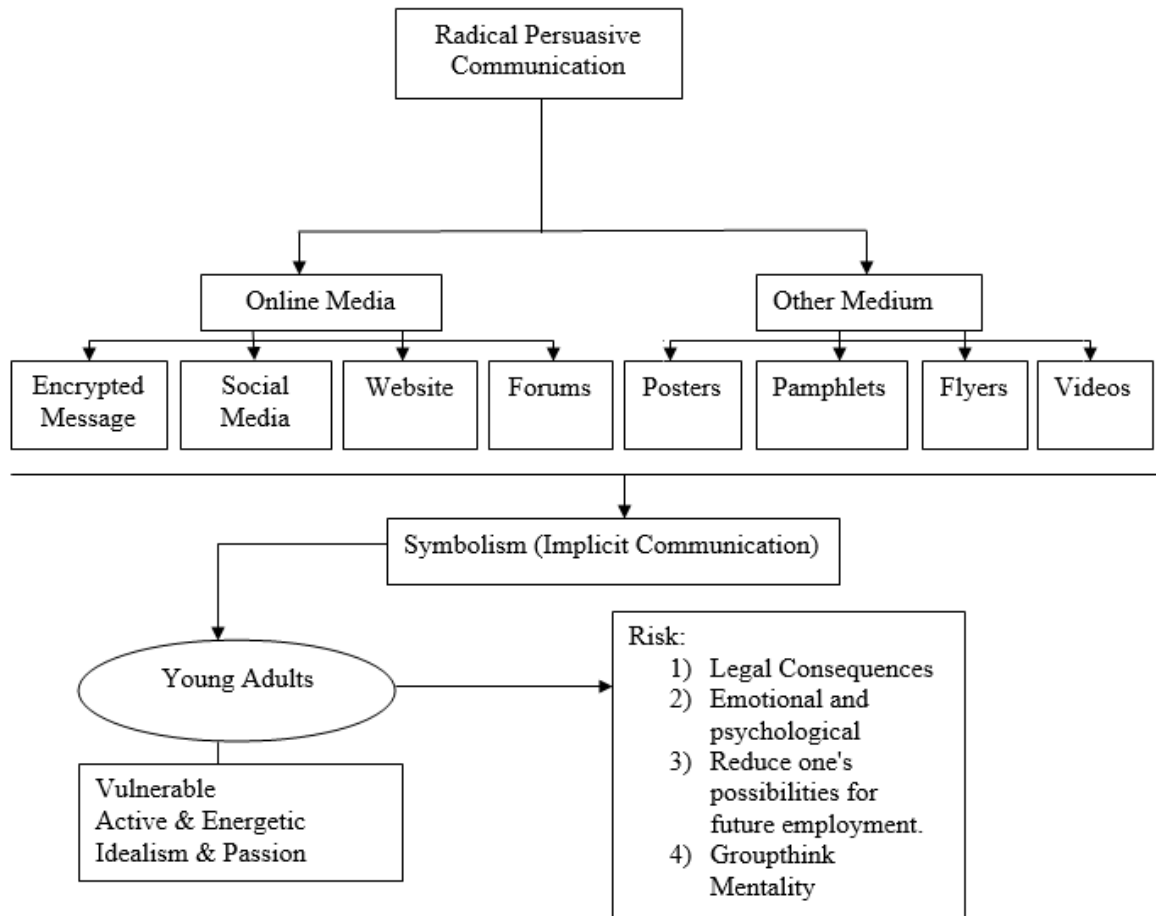


Figure 5: The Narration of Radical Persuasive Communication and Young Adults' Risk

The search results suggest that young adults accepting radical ideologies face various risks, including legal consequences, emotional and psychological, reduced one's possibilities for future employment, and a groupthink mentality. Radicalisation can lead to violent extremism, which is characterised by a complete rejection of pluralism, a strong emphasis on ideology, and an acceptance of violence (Bak et al., 2019; Schils & Verhage, 2017). Besides, accepting radical ideologies can also reduce one's possibilities for future employment due to criminal records or social stigma (Uba & Bosi, 2022; Reiter et al., 2021). Additionally, accepting radical ideologies can also have emotional and psychological implications, such as anxiety, sadness, and trauma.

Adopting extreme beliefs among young adults can have far-reaching effects on the legal, psychological, emotional, and social spheres. These decisions can have immediate negative effects and lead people down a dangerous path. Legal repercussions are significant because radicalisation can lead to extreme actions, which can result in criminal accusations and legal complications (Wahyuni, 2019).

The psychological toll that radicalisation takes includes a range of upsetting feelings that can seem as trauma, depression, and worry. These emotional storms damage mental health and create an unstable psychological environment for people who are struggling with extreme ideologies (Vissing, 2022; Muhlbauer, 2002). The effects also affect how society views radical

beliefs since they can lead to social exclusion and shame. This combination of social, psychological, legal, and emotional fallout is a sobering warning about the high prices and complex hazards that young people who adopt radical beliefs must bear.

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