



MITIGATING YOUTH RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE CASE OF TÜRKİYE

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Abstract: Today, the problems of violent extremism and radicalization in Türkiye and its neighbouring geography need to be addressed in the context of rapid political and social changes and transformations. On the other hand, Türkiye, which has been the target of radicalism-induced violence and terrorism for many years and has lost many of its citizens and paid a high price for it, needs evidence-based and reliable information that will serve as the basis for developing policies and strategies to combat violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism. This study, which aims to contribute to the limited national literature on violent extremism and radicalization, focuses on radicalization trends among young people and examines the preventive measures taken by public institutions against violent extremism and radicalization and other related studies. Within the scope of the research, focus group interviews were conducted with experts working in public institutions in Turkey that directly work with young people. The interviews were used to explore awareness, knowledge, experience and institutional memory of radicalization in public institutions. The results of the interviews and data from the literature review were analysed and evaluated. It is expected that the findings

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and recommendations of the study will contribute to policy and strategy development studies of relevant institutions and organizations.

Keywords: Radicalization, Violent Extremism and Radicalization, Hooliganism, Extremism, Terrorism.

GENÇLERİN RADİKALLEŞMESİNİN VE ŞİDDETE VARAN AŞIRICILIĞININ AZALTILMASI: TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ

Öz: Günümüzde Türkiye ve yakın coğrafyasında şiddete varan aşırıcılık ve radikalleşme sorunlarının hızlı siyasi ve toplumsal değişim ve dönüşümler bağlamında ele alınması gerekmektedir. Öte yandan, uzun yıllardır radikalizm kaynaklı şiddet ve terörün hedefi olan ve bu uğurda çok sayıda vatandaşını kaybeden ve ağır bedeller ödeyen Türkiye'nin şiddete varan aşırıcılık, radikalleşme ve terörizmle mücadelede politika ve stratejilerinin geliştirilmesine temel teşkil edecek kanıta dayalı ve güvenilir bilgiye ihtiyacı vardır. Şiddete varan aşırıcılık ve radikalleşme konusundaki sınırlı ulusal literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, gençler arasındaki radikalleşme eğilimlerine odaklanmakta ve kamu kurumlarının şiddete varan aşırıcılık ve radikalleşmeye karşı aldığı önleyici tedbirleri ve ilgili diğer çalışmaları incelemektedir. Araştırma kapsamında Türkiye’de doğrudan gençlere yönelik çalışmalar yürüten kamu kurumlarında çalışan uzmanlarla odak grup görüşmeleri yapılmıştır. Bu mülakatlar, kamu kurumlarında radikalleşme konusundaki farkındalığı, bilgiyi, deneyimi ve kurumsal hafızayı araştırmak için kullanılmıştır. Görüşmelerin sonuçları ve literatür taramasından elde edilen veriler analiz edilmiş ve değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulgu ve önerilerinin ilgili kurum ve kuruluşların politika ve strateji geliştirme çalışmalarına katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Radikalleşme, Şiddet İçeren Aşırıcılık ve Radikalleşme, Holiganizm, Aşırıcılık, Terörizm.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, violent extremist groups have increasingly expanded their activities beyond national borders on a global scale. According to the *Global Terrorism Index 2016* by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and far-right organizations leverage modern communication

technologies and social media to reach large audiences, randomly select targets, attack civilians, and gain access to powerful weapons. The United Nations Security Council, in its 7361st meeting on “Maintenance of International Peace and Security” (19 January 2015), highlighted that these groups share common traits, including targeting civilians based on identity, intolerance toward differing views, disregard for law and human rights, references to religious or nationalistic symbols, and systematic discrimination and violence against women. Additionally, they mask ambitions for power and territorial control with nihilistic or apocalyptic rhetoric, seeking to dismantle societal order. This violence has forced millions into displacement, creating a severe humanitarian crisis and rendering traditional peacebuilding and democratic governance methods inadequate, as noted in the *Human Development Report* (2009), which discusses the impacts of violent conflicts on human mobility and development.

Today, violent extremism and radicalization, which emerge especially among young people as a result of the interaction of various factors, pose serious problems for societies. Events and academic studies show that young people are at high risk of radicalization (Global Terrorism Index, 2023; Mattsson et al., 2016). In Türkiye, which has a relatively young population, various studies have been carried out to prevent violent extremism and radicalization of young people. In Türkiye, where 15,3% of the population consists of young people between the ages of 15-24, the studies carried out by public institutions in order to prevent violent extremism and radicalization among young people and to fight against the phenomena that cause this situation aim to integrate young people into society more effectively and to develop resistance against violent ideologies.

This study, which also aims to contribute to the limited national literature on violent extremism and radicalization, focuses on radicalization tendencies among young people and examines the preventive measures taken by public institutions against violent extremism and radicalization and other related studies through open sources. Within the scope of the study, semi-structured forms were used to conduct interviews with experts working on the subject from 5 different institutions. The findings obtained from the interviews, open sources and national/international literature were examined and analysed in a comparative manner.

In light of the pressing challenges posed by violent extremism and radicalization, especially among the youth, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach. The findings from this study reveal significant gaps in awareness, knowledge, and inter-institutional collaboration, underscoring the urgent need for targeted strategies that prioritize prevention and support for at-risk young individuals. By fostering cooperation among public institutions and integrating

community-based initiatives, Türkiye can develop a more effective response to the threats of radicalization, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and cohesive society. The recommendations outlined in this study aim to guide policymakers and practitioners in their efforts to combat violent extremism and promote social harmony.

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Violent extremism and radicalization constitute a complex man-made phenomenon with repercussions on all aspects of society. Over time, they have become a serious problem threatening societies. Concerns are growing about widespread ideological polarization among young people. Like the prototypes of radicalized youth, the factors contributing to this problem are diverse. The most commonly cited factor is that youth radicalization involves an increase or strengthening of extremism in the thoughts, feelings or behavior of individuals or groups (Gereluk, 2023: 45-46).

Radicalization is a prominent topic in discussions of terrorism and has been extensively studied in recent literature of youth and politics (Mandel, 2010: 123-124). The concepts of radicalization and terrorism are often confused. Radicalization refers to the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs. Indicators of radical thinking and action include the ideological defense of racial or religious superiority and opposition to the egalitarian principles of democracy. These processes are closely linked to modes of participation or action, such as involvement in terrorism or violent extremism. Participation in violent extremism is linked to push and pull factors identified as central to the recruitment of young people into internal conflicts.

Most researchers who have studied violent extremism and radicalization are unanimous in explaining that ideology or religion is not the best starting point for understanding an individual's propensity for violence. The traditional model explains the sequence as follows: A vulnerable young person is often brainwashed by a foreign extremist, radicalized and then turns to violence. However, this model raises many questions, especially regarding the crucial position occupied by the concept of “radicalization” in the model. Firstly, despite numerous efforts in academia, police and policy circles, no valid metric for measuring radicalization has been found to date. Most analyses of the growth or scale of radicalization miss conceptual clarity and scientific underpinnings and therefore lack empirical validity. On the other hand, being radicalized does not contravene the law or the generally accepted rules of social life. Without radical people and views organizing rebellion against a foreign yoke or an autocratic regime, many of today's states would not exist. Many rights are the result of civil society campaigns and radical movements. The course of history shows that societies have indeed progressed thanks to radicals (Özerdem and Sukanya, 2017:

78-79). Accepting that radicalized youth and extremists commit acts of violence in all situations can be a barrier to creativity, problem solving and progress.

In recent years, radicalization and de-radicalization have become important concepts in making sense of violent incidents. Signs or symptoms of radicalization are often described as various expressions of an individual's ideas, behaviours and religious symbols (Vidino, 2010: 34-35). Trying to explain radicalization by bringing these different signs together is not seen as a correct approach. It is therefore necessary to focus on making a clear distinction between religiosity and political radicalization, which are very different concepts (Sedgwick, 2010: 22-23). Religious orthodoxy starts from a search for identity, which is particularly challenging in uncertain times. Political radicalization starts from opposition towards injustice. The former can become a challenge to social cohesion if it leads individuals and groups into a cultural ghetto. It can ultimately become a security threat when certain individuals - for an even smaller number - eventually follow the path towards extremism using violence as their preferred means of political action. Terrorism is primarily the result of individual or small group dynamics that encourage political radicalization into violent action (Sageman, 2004: 45-46). At a certain stage in the process of radicalization towards violence, when killing innocent people becomes a goal, an individual needs an ideological justification to drive political extremism towards violence (Horgan, 2005: 88-89). In other words, these individuals develop a cut-and-paste ideology/religion to overcome moral hesitations and legitimize their slide into indiscriminate violence. According to certain scholars, ideology is the primary cause of the radicalization of young people. Environmental and relational factors play a secondary role in the development of extremism (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2011: 123-124). Other scholars emphasize the strengthening of extremist ideologies and attribute this rise to the increase in hate propaganda on online platforms. The prevalence of social media and ideology-based microtargeting may contribute to the rise of extremist ideologies (Amit et al., 2021: 321-333). It is possible to identify common trends and characteristics, although researchers have identified a range of factors that may lead to increased radicalization (Conway, 2017: 201-202).

Many studies and practices have focused on identifying common features in the radicalization process. One commonality is that personal trauma is often seen as the primary factor in an individual's turn towards extremism (Post, 2007: 58-59). Adolescents are particularly susceptible to extremism due to a lack of identity, community and purpose (Moghaddam, 2005: 102-103). Without connections to a wider community, young people often experience feelings of displacement and meaninglessness. Disempowered youth may turn to extremism as a result of trauma, seeking respect, importance and value. Participation in an extremist group can provide the camaraderie and circle of friends that disenfranchised young people crave. Breen

and Meer (2019: 77-78) state that the culture of extremism is often presented to new recruits as warm, welcoming and empowering.

Extremists often perceive themselves as victims of unfairness, repression or social and economic exclusion. They form bonds around common feelings of resentment and anger, which can fuel and spread radicalization. Group dynamics play a crucial role in this process, as individuals engaging in extremism often do so within a social environment in which groups are an important component (Hogg & Adelman, 2013: 50-51). Therefore, group dynamics can serve to legitimize extremist mindsets. In certain instances, this can indicate a lack of confidence in one's own abilities and may also involve discrediting other perspectives while supporting extreme ones. Teenagers are particularly susceptible to groupthink in extremist situations, as their critical thinking skills are not yet fully developed.

The process of radicalization involves extremist groups targeting vulnerable young people who feel disenfranchised, disillusioned, isolated or angry, and offering them a feeling of bravery, a sense of heroism and a collective identity. Breen and Meer (2019: 83-84) argue that group bonding, attraction and maintenance processes depend on the intersection of secrecy and trust, group charisma and stigmatisation, and the best and worst minorities. Using a centralized ideological perspective to provide solidarity to an individual, enabling them to be part of a larger movement and feel included and recognised, is one such method.

With terrorism being considered one of the greatest threats to human security, it is not surprising that preventing radicalization and violent extremism is high on the political agenda. Government efforts to combat the radicalization of young people have seen security strategies incorporated into education systems in much of the Western World. This is problematic in practice because the intertwining of counterterrorism and education means that security-laden ideas and goals are introduced into the educational world of learning, development and socialization. This approach is a controversial issue with many ethical dilemmas. Indeed, integrating such a securitization paradigm into education has been shown to compromise democratic ideals of freedom of opinion, freedom of expression and educational inclusivity. Despite this combination of education and security, the implementation of counter-radicalization efforts in schools is underdeveloped (Horgan et. al., 2024).

A range of approaches have been developed to address the increasing radicalization of young people and to counter its negative impact on schools and communities. Counter-radicalization education programmes have been devised by a number of organisations. However, the ethical and pedagogical implications of schooling are often at odds with these programmes. Although well-intentioned, it is

unclear whether they are effective. The implementation of a comprehensive curriculum with a whole-school approach can better address many indicators of youth radicalization, such as isolation, rejection, mental health and identity. It aims to break down narrow ideologies and address the disenfranchisement and isolation often experienced by radicalized youth. Schools are increasingly required to identify and monitor young people who may be at risk of joining radicalized groups. A whole school approach is needed to create safe and inclusive schools and to promote a sense of belonging and connection among young people, rather than directly asking teachers to identify risk behavior among their own pupils. School approaches should focus on the classroom environment, school organisation, and the wider school environment. As radicalization is often a response to feelings of exclusion and oppression, a strong school culture can play a role in reducing radicalization among students (Mayer et. al., 2024; Aly & Karnovsky, 2014: 67-68).

The proposed holistic approach to preventing violent extremism and radicalization in schools aims to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among vulnerable young people, thereby reducing the likelihood of their being drawn into radical movements. This approach considers education holistically as a means of reducing extremism, rather than relying on interventionist solutions. Addressing youth radicalization is challenging due to the complexity of the factors that contribute to it. According to Gereluk and Titus (2018: 123-124), there is no clear behavioral model or motivational basis that can explain the increase in youth radicalization.

There has been considerable work on the view that university education provides an environment that encourages or discourages radicalization (Borum, 2011: 15-16). It is true that there are inherent dangers in bringing young people together at a time in their lives when they are idealistic and vulnerable to influence, but if this can sometimes lead to extremists being influenced and even recruiting, this should be largely a matter of the environment and discipline at university. In certain instances, university education creates an environment that encourages radicalization and vice versa. Since young people of university age are at a sensitive and impressionable time, this can pose a risk when they are brought together with the crowd that is the university environment.

The UN also supports activities to prevent violence among young people through its work. UNDP also expresses its vision of engaging with young people as a positive force for youth empowerment and change. The new UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security recognizes the rise of radicalization and violent extremism and stresses the importance of addressing the conditions and factors that lead to their impact on young people (UNDP, 2016).

Violent extremism and radicalization represent multifaceted challenges that significantly impact societies worldwide, particularly among youth. As ideological polarization intensifies, young individuals become susceptible to various influencing factors that can lead to radicalization. The complexity of this phenomenon is underscored by the interplay of personal experiences, social dynamics, and environmental influences. While ideological beliefs often serve as a backdrop for radicalization, it is crucial to recognize that not all radicalized individuals resort to violence, and many radical movements have historically contributed to societal progress. The current discourse on radicalization necessitates a clear differentiation between religious orthodoxy and political radicalization, as conflating the two can obscure the underlying issues. Moving beyond traditional models that oversimplify the radicalization process is essential for developing effective prevention strategies. Emphasizing the importance of community, belonging, and identity can create protective factors against the allure of extremist ideologies. As governments and institutions grapple with the realities of radicalization, integrating counter-radicalization efforts within educational frameworks poses ethical dilemmas and challenges. A holistic approach that fosters inclusive school environments can better address the root causes of youth radicalization, promoting resilience and social cohesion. Ultimately, the collaborative efforts of public institutions, educational systems, and civil society are vital in mitigating the risks of radicalization. By focusing on empowerment, respect for diversity, and social responsibility, societies can cultivate a more resilient generation capable of resisting extremist influences.

2. METHODOLOGY

According to the research conducted within the scope of this study, although not directly focusing on the prevention of violent radicalization in Türkiye, public institutions and organisations are engaged in various activities for the prevention of violence, as can be seen below:

- The Ministry of Family and Social Services provides support to individuals affected by violence through Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (ŞÖNİM)¹, offers a helpline service with the “ALO 183” Social Support Line, and conducts awareness programs within the scope of the National Action Plan for Combating Violence Against Women.

- The Ministry of Interior monitors perpetrators through the electronic bracelet system, enables emergency assistance requests through the Women Support Application

¹ In Turkish, ŞÖNİM stands for “Şiddet Önleme ve İzleme Merkezi”.

(KADES)², and intervenes in violence cases through Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women Bureaus.

- The Ministry of National Education raises awareness of social violence through training programs and provides student support through Psychological Counseling and Guidance (PDR)³ services in schools.

- The Ministry of Justice handles violence cases and provides protective measures through family courts, while also enhancing support processes for victims through alternative resolution mechanisms.

- The Ministry of Health offers medical and psychological support to victims of violence through psychosocial support centers and provides emergency response to violence cases via health services.

- The Directorate of Religious Affairs conducts awareness campaigns to promote anti-violence values within the community.

Even though no institution in Türkiye has directly focused on the prevention of violent radicalization, the activities of many public institutions and organisations and NGOs can be considered as “prevention activities”. In this study, a total of 5 participants from 5 public institutions that are likely to carry out various activities on violent radicalization, even if not directly, were interviewed. This study uses a qualitative research design to examine the activities of public institutions and civil society organisations in Türkiye in relation to violence and radicalization. Aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and views of the participants, this research involves the following methods and processes. The 5 participants are representatives of 5 selected public organisations. The selection of the participants was based on the criteria of specialization and institutional representation. While it is important that the participants have experience and knowledge in the field of violence prevention, it is also necessary to include representatives from different public institutions in order to reflect various perspectives. The selection of the participants was based on their professional experience, institutional connections and participation in violence prevention activities. Participants held positions such as policy advisor, field implementer and programme coordinator in their respective institutions. Table 1 provides a detailed profile of the participants, including their roles, years of experience and organisational affiliations.

² In Turkish, KADES stands for “Kadın Destek Uygulaması”.

³ In Turkish, PDR stands for “Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik”.

Participant ID	Institution	Role	Years of Experience	Specific Activities in Violence Prevention
P1	Ministry of Family and Social Services	Social Worker	12	Organized counselling sessions for at-risk youth and families.
P2	Police academy	Teaching assistant	8	Designed and monitored the implementation of the violence prevention and emergency response programme for disadvantaged groups.
P3	Ministry of National Education	School Counselor	10	Delivered violence awareness programs in schools, developed guidance plans for students at risk of radicalization.
P4	Ministry of Youth and Sports	Specialist	5	Facilitated sports-based violence prevention initiatives, mentored young leaders in community projects.
P5	Credit and dormitories institution	Program coordinator	6	Managed youth engagement programs and organized community dialogues

Table 1: Roles, years of experience and organisational affiliations of the participants

In the research, purposive sampling method was used. The selection of participants was based on expertise in the field of violence prevention, institutional representation and representation of different perspectives. The study was conducted in Ankara, where the central administrations of public institutions and organisations are located. The data collection process was carried out through both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

One of the data collection methods used in the study was semi-structured interviews. These interviews were designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' individual experiences and perceptions on violence prevention and radicalization (Harrell and Bradley, 2009: 1-140). The questions were designed as open-ended and each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. In addition, focus group discussions were conducted in order for the participants to benefit from the group dynamics and provide a broader perspective. Representatives from different organisations participated in these interviews. Focus group discussions provided an interactive discussion environment and made it possible to evaluate the roles and cooperation of different organisations in violence prevention activities. The collected data were analysed by content analysis method. In this process, the data obtained from the interviews were grouped around similar themes and analysed. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual experiences and views of the participants. Focus group discussions are group discussions in which participants with different perspectives come together and interact. This method allowed the participants to exchange ideas and have in-depth discussions on the subject in a dynamic environment. Open-ended questions were asked during the interviews, and the confidentiality of the participants was ensured in order to obtain more sincere and open

answers. The semi-structured interview form was designed to include open-ended questions that could answer the research questions. The questions were designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions on violence prevention and radicalization.

The questions in the form focus on themes such as challenges encountered in violence prevention activities, the role of organisations, risk factors related to young people and the effects of existing policies. Sample questions are given below:

- What is the biggest contribution of your organisation to violence prevention activities?
- What are the most important risk factors for radicalization of young people?
- Do you think current strategies are sufficient in preventing violence? What should be improved?

In addition, the data obtained from different sources were compared by triangulation method in order to increase the validity of the findings. Ethical rules were followed during the research process; informed consent was obtained from the participants, and ethical standards were complied with at every stage of the study. The duration of the research is between 2021-2023 and the data collection, analysis and reporting stages were planned in detail. This methodology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding violence prevention efforts in Türkiye and their potential to prevent radicalization. Within the scope of the study, in addition to interviews, a current situation analysis based on open sources and a literature review were also conducted.

3. RESULTS

As a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews conducted using semi-structured forms, it was seen that there are many completed, ongoing and planned studies on the prevention of radicalization among young people in Türkiye, the main motivation of these studies is mostly “preventive interventions”, there are very few studies carried out directly for “radicalization” or “de-radicalization”, institutions carry out independent, unaware and repetitive studies, and there is a lack of theoretical knowledge on “combating radicalization”.

Representatives from the police academy emphasized the importance of community benefit and social responsibility studies in the context of preventive studies and expressed this as follows:

- *Volunteerism is very important for social change and transformation. We can also use this phenomenon in radicalization prevention and rehabilitation efforts. In developed countries, individuals who engage in volunteer work and care about others are often prioritized in recruitment. The question “Have you participated in accredited volunteering activities?” is frequently asked in job applications.*

- *There are two approaches to combating radicalization: the first is to wait for individuals to seek help, and the second is to go directly into the community for preventive work. Public institutions should carry out preventive measures proactively.*

The representative of a public institution responsible for young people stated that they carry out various projects, activities and studies on subjects such as arts and sports, personal development, time management, development of reading culture, fight against addiction, communication within the family, respect for differences and social cohesion of migrants, especially protective/preventive activities. These representatives explained their activities as follows:

- *We are working on combating hooliganism and violence, focusing more on preventive efforts. There are over 60 sports federations in Türkiye, and we conduct university sports activities, engaging more than three million students in various sports events.*

- *We strive to help our young people utilize their free time effectively. We organize social activities and personal development programs, including book reading groups.*

- *Through our projects, we aim to instill values such as sensitivity and love for the homeland, as well as develop a culture of volunteering among young people.*

- *We organize father-son and mother-daughter camps, realizing that we cannot effect change independently of the family. Therefore, we actively involve families in the process.*

- *We hold youth camps and make national calls for participation, welcoming children from diverse backgrounds from every province.*

- *In cooperation with other organizations, we work on the social cohesion of migrants by organizing culture and art courses that they can attend.*

The representative of a public institution that deals with loans, scholarships and dormitories for young people studying at university stated that activities are carried out for prevention, intervention and de-radicalization. The representative of the institution expressed the activities carried out as follows:

- *We signed a cooperation protocol with the institution in charge of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of National Education. Representatives, known as “spiritual counselors,” visit student dormitories to provide training on “spiritual values,” “ethics,” and “social cohesion.”*

- *We are trying to develop a culture of volunteering by connecting young people who want to volunteer with organizations in need through an online platform. Public institutions can also apply here.*

- *There is a lot of negative content in the digital world that can support radicalization. We are conducting a project called “We are Aware” to promote the correct use of technology.*

- *We have a project called “Doors Don’t Close” for children and young people who have been drawn into crime. This project, carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, had a pilot study in a prison in 2019, yielding successful results, prompting the decision to continue it.*

The representative from the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, who participated in the study, stated that "protective and preventive activities" are carried out and made the following statements within the scope of the studies on de-radicalization:

- *We work on radicalized individuals in cooperation with relevant institutions, focusing on the children of radicalized families to support their social integration and provide psychological assistance.*

Specialists from the Ministry of National Education who participated in the study stated that there were no “activities directly preventing radicalization”, but different activities serving this purpose were carried out. The representative of the institution stated the activities that can be described as preventive activities as follows:

- *We have a neighbouring school project where the school principal and teachers visit surrounding institutions, including the police, to foster collaboration and community engagement.*

- *When developing and updating curricula and teaching materials, especially textbooks, we include topics such as respecting individual, social, religious, and cultural differences, as well as emphasizing human rights and freedoms.*

- *The subject of “human rights” is sufficiently included in the curricula of relevant courses in primary, secondary, and high schools.*

- *There is a Human Rights, Citizenship, and Democracy course in the 4th grade of primary school, aimed at teaching children about basic rights and responsibilities.*

- *“Democracy and Human Rights” is an elective course offered in high school, helping students understand democratic values and human rights in depth.*

- *We carry out various activities in our student hostels, focusing on cultural, sporting, and artistic events to ensure that students utilize their free time productively.*

- *Despite all legislative efforts, we face challenges in practice. School administrations and provincial national education directorates can collaborate with the police force. For instance, when police come to pick up a child from school, the school may learn about the incident only at that moment. Community policing activities can help bring neighborhood police closer to society.*

- *As a suggestion, the topic of “prevention of radicalization” could be included in teachers’ professional development programs, helping them become more aware and better able to guide their students.*

As a result of the interviews, the current situation analysis based on open sources and the literature review, it is seen that the studies conducted to prevent violent extremism and radicalization in Türkiye are generally grouped under 6 themes. These themes are shown in Table 2.

	Theme	Activities Carried Out	Purpose of the Study	Institution/Organisation Conducting the Study
1	Training and Awareness Raising Activities	In Türkiye, education and awareness-raising campaigns are organized to prevent violent extremism and radicalization among young people.	These campaigns aim to combat radicalization by educating young people on issues such as tolerance, diversity, democracy and human rights.	Ministry of National Education Universities Ministry of Interior Local Governments
2	Religion and Moral Education	In Türkiye, studies emphasizing religious and moral values help young people to gain a healthier understanding of religion.	Religious education can contribute to the development of resistance against radical ideologies.	Ministry of National Education Directorate of Religious Affairs
3	Social Programmes and Youth Centers	Youth centers are places where young people can interact socially, develop their skills and spend time in a positive environment.	The aim of such centers is to help young people gain resistance to radicalization.	Ministry of Family and Social Services Ministry of Youth and Sports General Directorate of Credit and Dormitories (for University Students)

4	Family Support Programmes	Training and support programmes including topics such as family communication, effective communication, parenting, and intergenerational communication.	Family support programmes are organized to enable families to communicate more effectively with young people and to encourage young people to adopt family values.	Ministry of Family and Social Services Ministry of Youth and Sports
5	Internet and Media Monitoring	Considering that the Internet and new media can play a triggering role in radicalization, Türkiye has been conducting control mechanisms and awareness-raising campaigns in these areas.	Preventing the Internet and new media from triggering radicalization.	RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council)
6	Social Work and Psychological Support	Social work and psychological support programmes have been developed for those showing signs of violent extremism and radicalization among young people.	These programmes aim to meet the emotional needs of individuals and help them develop resistance to radical ideologies.	Ministry of Family and Social Services Ministry of Youth and Sports

Table 2: Efforts to Reduce Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Türkiye

In Türkiye, a number of interventions aim to tackle violent extremism and radicalization among young people, such as education and awareness raising, religious and moral education, social programmes and youth centers, family support programmes, internet and media monitoring, social work and psychological support.

In addition to this, the following findings were obtained as a result of the research:

- Public institutions do not have the required level of awareness, knowledge, experience and institutional memory on radicalization,
- The lack of clarity on the definition and scope of radicalization in institutions affects the planning and implementation process of preventive activities.
- They think that the activities carried out by the institutions for young people for different purposes can also prevent radicalization,
- Institutions are not sufficiently aware of each other's work and experiences,
- Independent and duplicated work carried out by the institutions,
- There is a gap in knowledge and expertise on radicalization, especially in public institutions that carry out activities focusing on young people and that develop policies and strategies in this field,

-The need for studies such as directives and guidelines in prevention, intervention and compensation/rehabilitation processes related to violent extremism and radicalization,

- Institutions have similar understandings and approaches to the causes, sources and preventive measures of violent extremism and radicalization.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although there are no direct efforts to prevent violent extremism and radicalization among young people in Türkiye, there are various interventions that can be considered in this context. These include educational initiatives, religious and moral education, social programmes, youth centers, family support services, and internet monitoring. However, the findings from this research indicate significant gaps in awareness, knowledge, and coordination among public institutions tasked with these responsibilities. Many institutions lack a clear understanding of the definition and scope of radicalization, which hinders effective planning and implementation of preventive measures. Furthermore, there is insufficient awareness of each other's work, leading to duplicated efforts and missed opportunities for collaboration.

To effectively combat radicalization, it is crucial to enhance inter-institutional cooperation and communication. Developing a common understanding of radicalization, alongside robust training programmes for personnel, will foster a more knowledgeable and coordinated response. Establishing a theoretical grounding for interventions and promoting a culture of volunteerism can engage broader segments of society, enhancing the overall impact of these efforts. Additionally, initiatives aimed at improving digital literacy and monitoring online content are essential to mitigate the risks posed by radicalization in the digital realm.

Moving forward, public institutions must prioritize comprehensive strategies that encompass not only preventive measures but also the socio-economic and cultural contexts contributing to radicalization. By focusing on targeted approaches rather than broad generalizations, and by fostering social cohesion within communities, Türkiye can create a more resilient society against the threats of violent extremism. The recommendations outlined in this study offer a roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness of interventions and ensuring that the fight against radicalization is both informed and inclusive.

This study aims to examine efforts to prevent violent extremism and radicalization among young people in Türkiye. The findings reveal the current situation

in detail. Conclusions and recommendations in the light of these findings are given below:

- *Lack of Theoretical Knowledge*: It has been determined that institutions generally focus on “preventive interventions” in the field of radicalization, but studies conducted directly for “radicalization”, or “de-radicalization” are limited. This situation points to a lack of theoretical knowledge.

- *Lack of Coordination and Communication*: Lack of inter-agency coordination and communication difficulties are evident in the studies conducted by public institutions for the prevention of radicalization among young people. This may reduce the effectiveness of existing efforts and prevent effective use of resources.

- *Knowledge and Expertise Gap*: In public institutions where studies on violent extremism and radicalization are carried out, there is a lack of knowledge and expertise on the subject. At this point, it is important to increase the participation of expert researchers and trainers.

In the light of the data and findings obtained from the study, the following recommendations are presented:

- *Inter-institutional Co-operation and Coordination*: An effective communication network should be established between public institutions and care should be taken to ensure that the studies are complementary to each other. Common strategies should be determined, and information sharing should be increased by organising regular meetings.

- *Increasing Training and Expertise*: Special training programmes and seminars should be organized to increase the level of knowledge of personnel working on radicalization. It is also important to diversify training with the participation of experts with academic and professional experience.

- *Theoretical Grounding*: Establishing a theoretical basis for studies on radicalization will contribute to the development of effective strategies. In this context, a theoretical framework should be established by making use of existing literature and expert opinions.

- *Social Participation and Volunteerism*: A culture of volunteerism should be encouraged in order to involve large segments of society in the fight against radicalization. It should be considered that participation in volunteer work will strengthen individuals' understanding of social responsibility.

- *Digital Literacy and Control:* Digital literacy activities should be supported to prevent spreading through the internet and media, and control mechanisms should be strengthened in these areas.

- *Education and Social Programmes:* Various educational and social programmes should be organized for young people. These programmes should be designed to increase the social interaction of young people, contribute to their understanding of different cultures and support them to be in a positive environment.

Recommendations for public institutions and organisations, decision makers and policy makers:

- National studies should be conducted on violent extremism and radicalization and preventive measures (definition of radicalization, scope, action plans for preventing and combating radicalization, etc.),

- Common language and understanding should be developed.

- Studies should be carried out to prevent confusion of concepts and information.

- A mechanism to ensure inter-institutional coordination should be established,

- Initiatives should be taken to enable inter-institutional co-operation.

- More qualified and relevant academic studies should be conducted in the field of violent extremism and radicalization.

- There is a need for continuously updated and improved strategies to prevent violent extremism and radicalization in Türkiye.

- The practice of early identification of students at risk of radicalization directly by teachers is not the right approach. Such practice, left to the discretion of teachers, can lead to the profiling of students and the perpetuation of systematic prejudices in schools. A holistic school approach should be developed to reduce the radicalization of young people in school settings.

- Schools should promote social cohesion and belonging within the school community in the context of a broader and respectful dialogue between students.

- Public institutions should carry out original work in co-operation with other institutions rather than duplication.

- An institutional structure should be established to ensure inter-institutional co-operation and co-ordination.

- Guidance booklets should be prepared for staff working with students and young people.

- A top policy document and action plan should be prepared to prevent violent radicalization.

- It would be appropriate to clearly state the purpose, scope and basis of the action plan to be prepared. Because the failure to determine the scope and expectations well is an important factor in the failure to implement action plans successfully.

- The theoretical infrastructure of the action plan needs to be based on a solid foundation. For this reason, it will not be sufficient to address the issue only in the context of “combating crime/terrorism” within the framework of “security”. In addition, it would be a correct approach to examine the issue in socio-economic, socio-demographic, geopolitical, geostrategic, international relations and sociology. In addition to the radicalization caused by the recruitment of terrorist organisations, policies and strategies should be developed by taking into account that social structures/groups/societies/associations/associations/foundations and congregations, which start their activities and develop in accordance with social and legal norms, also tend to radicalize over time and within the conditions.

- Considering the proportion of the population at the age of education and especially the young population, the difficulty of realizing “preventive social activities” will be understandable. For this reason, in the policies and implementation steps to be developed, planning should be made by identifying niche groups instead of the entire population.

- Research on the subject shows that the primary difficulty in preventing violent extremism is the identification of risk groups. Biased and erroneous determinations cause the perception of right and justice to be shaken. On the other hand, erroneous determinations will lead to focusing on the wrong groups and this will cause a waste of time and labor.

- The success of the action plan will be possible only if public institutions and organisations work in coordination and coordination with each other. NGOs and social dynamics should be taken into consideration in the action plan. When necessary, opinion leaders should also be included in the process.

- Many activities currently carried out by public institutions and organisations and NGOs should be considered within the scope of preventing violent extremism. These activities should be directed in a conscious, purposeful and non-duplicated manner

- The language and rhetoric to be used in the launch and implementation phases of the action plan are of utmost importance. For example, it would be appropriate to keep the main objective of “combating terrorism, violence, crime and radicalization” in the background; instead, concepts such as social solidarity and cohesion, welfare, peace, national unity and solidarity, ethics, morality, values, respect for differences and tolerance should be prioritized and emphasized.

- In the process of monitoring and evaluating the action plan, closer cooperation with relevant institutions and organisations should be preferred in determining, developing and changing the indicators.

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Author Contribution

All sections of this study were written by a single author.

Conflict of Interest

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