

**PREVENTATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH:
UNIVERSITIES AS HUBS FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT
EXTREMISM THROUGH SOCIO-RELIGIO-ACADEMIC
MENTORING AND COMMUNITY-LED MODELS:
A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL
APPROACHES TO COUNTER RADICALISATION**

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Abstract

This article explores the importance of early and proactive interaction with youth in countering violent extremism (CVE) and highlights the strategic value of universities as places of early intervention and prevention. The study examines the socio-religious academic mentoring (SRAM) approach and community-led models to prevent radicalisation in educational institutions. The study has been conducted on 500 youth in eight universities of Pakistan, and it has shown that despite their high awareness about the causes of extremism, there is a lack of conceptual understanding of CVE approaches. The study has shown that mentoring education models can yield significantly better results than the conventional lecture-based model. Prevention interventions are most effective for younger age groups, and decrease among young adults, highlighting the need to engage young people early in education. The research suggests that Pakistan's universities must introduce compulsory CVE modules and train faculty members on mentoring skills, build collaborative ties with community groups, and provide the necessary learning atmosphere for mitigating vulnerabilities faced by young people, such as identity crisis, exposure to online content, and social isolation.

Keywords: Violent Extremism, Community, Radicalisation, Youth, Mentoring, Social, Religious.

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1. Introduction

Youth, especially in educational institutions, are the most vulnerable groups targeted by extremist recruiters and are at the same time the most promising groups for action on prevention. Universities, as places of youth development, ideological formation and social transformation, have a special opportunity to be a hub for countering violent extremism (CVE). But realising this potential will necessitate a radical shift in the way educational institutions are dealing with CVE, shifting from awareness-raising campaigns to mentoring-based engagement, which will seek to tackle the many vulnerabilities that make young people vulnerable to extremist narratives. As a nation, Pakistan has come closer to losing its visionary ideals that were laid down by its founding fathers Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his colleagues. (Paracha, 2015). It, therefore, becomes very imperative that the establishment, bureaucracy, judiciary, media and particularly the political leadership should be very active in reviving and strengthening the Two-Nation Theory in their respective fields. The Two-Nation theory, which Jinnah put forward, suggested that the religion, different social conventions, literary traditions and civilisations of the Hindus and Muslims were incompatible, and a separate homeland should be created for the Muslims (BBC, 2017).

Besides, there is a need to make the ideals and boundaries of Pakistan an integral part of the curriculum in educational institutions. This will make it certain that the next generation will clearly know the direction the country should go. There are several converging realities that create urgency for engaging in prevention work with youth. First, extremist organizations exploit the political softness, vitality, and technological savvy of youth. The findings show that, on average, the age at which people join a group becomes younger over the last 20 years, with recruitment taking place in adolescence or early adulthood, not later in life (Davies, 2016). Secondly, the digital revolution has given extremist groups access to large groups of young people through online radicalisation, a channel that is now one of their main recruitment tools, and bypasses what are considered the 'traditional' social channels (families, communities and education institutions) (Neumann, 2013).

Third, youth are unique and vulnerable to various challenges in identity formation, peer pressure, social isolation, academic pressure, family dynamics and economic insecurity that extremist ideologies deftly exploit. Such vulnerabilities are amplified in the university years, when students are faced with the transitions of independence, identity formation, exposure to diverse viewpoints and pivotal life choices. This method is adhered to this way helps to ensure that the best practices in qualitative studies are catered to, thus making it a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of religious mentoring in the prevention of violent extremism (Creswell, 2013). Without positive and constructive engagement with these vulnerabilities, there are opportunities for extremists to take advantage of them. In this article, the authors analyze the possibility of using universities as efficient hubs for CVE with the implementation of the Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) approach and community led. models. The analysis is based on extensive research with qualitative evaluation of the programs in the UK and quantitative research involving the survey of 500 university students from 8 universities in Punjab Province. The results provide valuable information for youth vulnerability, effectiveness of the educational approach, and institutional capacity for preventive engagement (Qureshi). T 2022).

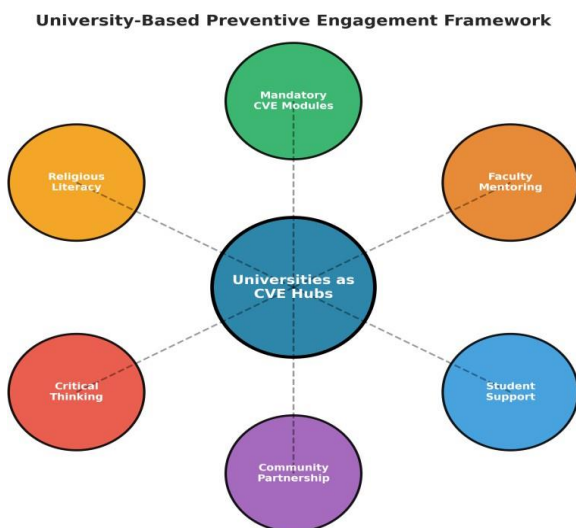


Figure 1: University-Based Preventive Engagement Framework

2. Understanding Youth Vulnerabilities to Radicalisation

2.1 The Vulnerability Landscape

To prevent youth recruitment for extremist groups, one must understand the vulnerabilities that render them more susceptible to recruitment. Qureshi (2025) found eight major vulnerability factors of Pakistani university students: exposure to extremist content online (88%), identity crisis (85%), social exclusion (82%), political grievances (79%), peer pressure (79%), lack of self-worth (76%), peer victimization (73%), and religious extremism (72%). pressure (78%), family issues (76%), economic strain (74%), and academic failure (71%).

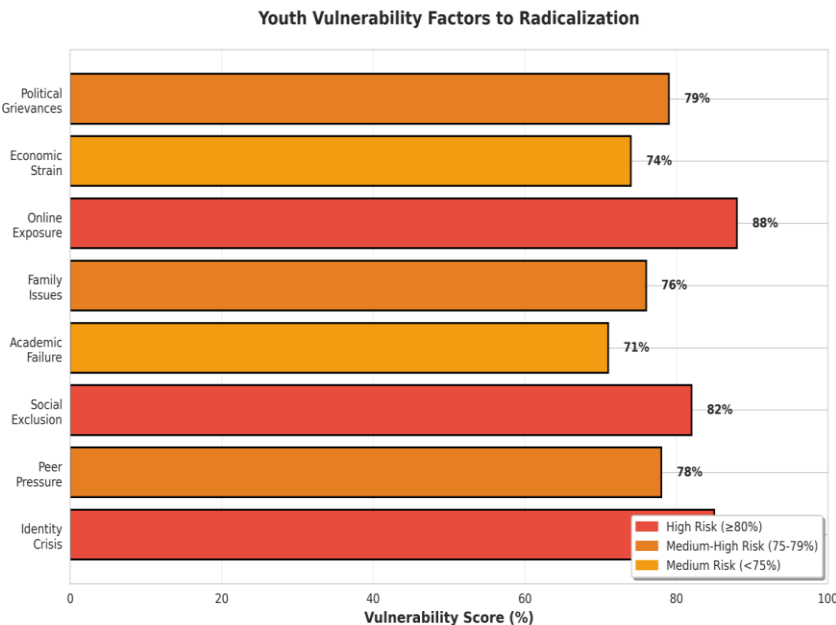


Figure 2: Youth Vulnerability Factors to Radicalisation

Online exposure (88%) becomes the most salient vulnerability factor as it is the digitalization of the radicalisation processes. Extremist groups have learned to use social media, encrypted messaging apps and online forums to broadcast their propaganda, recruit supporters and plan activities. Youth are the Internet's native speakers, spending significant time online, and encountering content that is more extreme than ever before.

There is a need to look at some of the finer aspects of online radicalisation. Extremist recruiters use targeted algorithms, message customisation and the incremental escalation of extremist ideologies, which are gradually normalised. They use legitimate grievances, culture and religious feeling to mask their true intent until people get emotionally and ideologically attached to the extreme community (Neumann, 2013).

2.2 Identity Crisis and Cultural Dislocation

The second most common vulnerability factor is identity crisis (85%), which is especially prevalent among students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, diaspora communities, or students facing traditional/modern cultural tensions. University years are times of strong identity formation for young people as they challenge their inherited identities, consider other possibilities and develop their own sense of identity. Clearly defined identities, absolutes, and purposeful communities with meaning systems transcend ambiguity, leading individuals to embrace and adhere to extremist ideologies as seductively simple solutions. These extreme identity frameworks offer attractive choices to students who have issues with identity, especially to those who are culturally dislocated, facing discrimination or being marginalized within the dominant identity structures (Davies, 2016).

Learning activities that aim to resolve identity problems need to equip students with coherent positive identities which are suitable for pluralistic societies. This means providing opportunities for discussions about identity, space for talking across differences, space to acknowledge multiple cultural and religious identities, and to show

how the complexities of hybrid identities are strengths, not weaknesses. The religious mentoring element of the SRAM UK model focuses directly on this vulnerability, working to support pupils to build their own religious identities, free from the distortions of extremism and mainstream. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the community-led deradicalisation measures in Europe and looks at the role of grassroots actors as more effective counterparts than government actors when it comes to building trust with vulnerable people. It offers empirical data that is essential for understanding the social and psychological factors behind the processes of radicalisation through bottom-up initiatives (Renstrom, E. et al, 2020).

2.3 Social Exclusion and Marginalisation

Social exclusion (82%) leaves people extremely vulnerable, as it can leave them feeling alienated, resentful and with a sense of grievance that is exploited by extremist narratives. Those belonging to a socially marginalised group at the university can feel a sense of belonging, validation and purpose from extremist groups based on ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status or another marginalised identity. which they are denied in mainstream society, (Qureshi & Ali, 2025). This research shows that social exclusion manifests itself in various ways. First, direct discrimination and prejudice lead to immediate experiences of rejection and humiliation. Secondly, inequalities in the structure of opportunities and resources, and restricted social mobility, lead to frustration and sense of unfairness. Third, students feel that their identities, values and communities are demeaned or invisible in the dominant institutional cultures, due to their cultural marginalisation (Halafoff et al, 2017).

Social exclusion demands institutional commitment to building inclusive institutions in which all students feel like they are part of the school community. This includes but is not limited to diversification of faculty and curricula, celebration of cultural diversity, targeted support for marginalised students, proactive approach to addressing the issue of discrimination, and spaces for intercultural dialogue and collaboration. A key element of SRAM is community

engagement which directly targets social exclusion by building networks and encouraging a sense of belonging.

3. Table 1: Youth Vulnerability factors comprehensive analysis

Vulnerability Factor	Score (%)	Primary Impact	Intervention Strategy
Online Exposure	88	Digital radicalisation pathways	Digital literacy & counter-narratives
Identity Crisis	85	Seeking absolutist identities	Identity exploration & validation
Social Exclusion	82	Alienation & resentment	Inclusive environments & belonging
Political Grievances	79	Perceived injustice	Civic engagement & dialogue
Peer Pressure	78	Group conformity dynamics	Positive peer networks

Family Issues	76	Weakened support systems	Family counselling & strengthening
Economic Strain	74	Material deprivation	Financial support & opportunities
Academic Failure	71	Frustration & low self-worth	Academic support & mentoring

Source: Qureshi (2025)

4. The Critical Window: Age and Prevention Effectiveness

4.1 The Prevention Effectiveness Gradient

Studies have shown that the effects of preventive interventions are negatively related to age, meaning that earlier interventions are far more effective than later ones. The effectiveness gradient is 92 percent in early teens (ages 12-15) and only 52 percent in young adults (ages 26-30), a troubling 40-percentage point drop over a relatively short period of time.

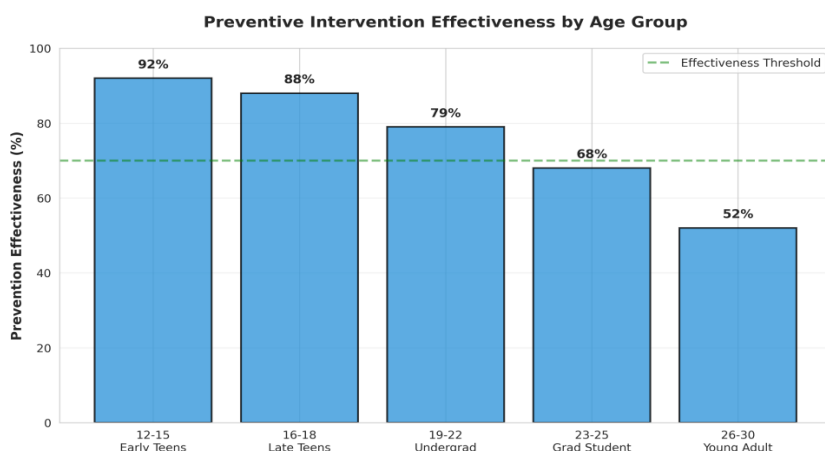


Figure 3: Preventive Intervention Effectiveness by Age Group

This gradient will represent the conditions of basic development. Early adolescents (12-15) are still more likely to be ideologically fluid, accepting adult advice, be close to family and schools, and not have developed extremist ideologies and attitudes or joined extremist networks. Ideological development, resilience and protective factors can be developed at this stage through preventive interventions before exposure to extremism (Davies, 2016). The effectiveness of prevention efforts is very high during the late teens (16-18) (88%). But as people become more invested in their ideologies and freer from institutional influence, and possibly exposed to

extremist articles or recruiters, effectiveness starts to wane. This age period is a time of critical intervention, especially about the move to university settings where there are new opportunities (access to a wider range of perspectives, opportunities to learn, supportive communities) as well as new vulnerabilities (independence, identity exploration, social dislocation).

The prevention effectiveness for undergraduate students (19-22) is 79% and has significantly decreased from younger age groups. This downward trend demonstrates that some people have already been exposed to extremist ideology, have already had a certain sympathy with it and have joined online extremist groups. Preventive interventions at this stage will require more complex means, which go beyond the simple formation of initial ideology, and will intervene in the already formed beliefs.

The effectiveness of graduated students (23-25) and young adults (26-30) drops to worrying levels: 68% and 52%, respectively. The reduction in these figures indicates that people have developed ideological structures, life patterns and perhaps extremist life courses. In the case of prevention, there is a continuum from simple prevention to intervention to de-radicalisation, with the more difficult it becomes, the more resources will be required (Rhodes, 2016).

4.2 Implications for Educational Strategy

The prevention of effectiveness gradient has important implications for the strategy of education. First, universities need to focus on the early undergraduate years; instead of waiting until a later year, universities should implement CVE programs when students first enter the university. Mandatory the effectiveness for prevention is high, and the exposure of all students is ensured by year CVE modules.

Second, universities need to be involved in the process of making links with secondary schools to reach age groups for which prevention is most effective. Coordinated initiatives that begin in middle and high school, on a large scale, and integrate CVE, critical thinking, and religious literacy can create protective factors prior to entering college. These collaborations capitalise on universities'

expertise and on the opportunity to target students at their most receptive moments (Davies, 2016).

Third, the need to use different approaches to older students should be reflected in program design. Whilst younger children can benefit from being supported with general resilience-building exercises, older children might need to be supported with specific interventions on ideological issues, countering ideologies they have heard and offering exit routes for those who may be receptive to them. The model used by SRAM UK is useful for older students who need more than a standard prevention message, and for whom mentoring was helpful.

5. Educational Approaches: Mentoring vs Traditional Methods

5.1 The Superiority of Mentoring-Based Approaches

Research shows clear evidence of the superior effectiveness of mentoring-based education approaches over lecture-based approaches in all aspects of outcome dimensions. This translates to 43, 50 and 54 percentage points' advantage for mentoring approaches over traditional lectures in terms of student engagement, knowledge retention, and behavioral change, respectively, as well as 79% student behavioral change versus 25% of the traditional lecture approach.

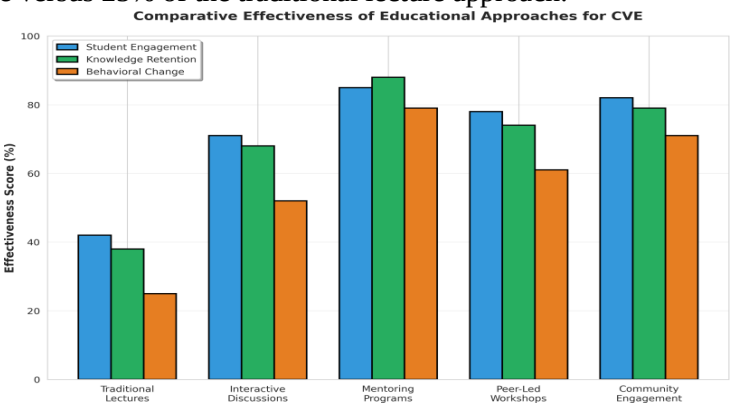


Figure 4: Comparative Effectiveness of Educational Approaches

These dramatic effectiveness differences are because of the basic differences between mentoring and traditional education. Traditional lectures involve students as passive receivers of the expert's knowledge, focus on the transmission of information rather than on their personal change and development, are lecturing-researcher-oriented and offer not much room for personal involvement to respond to personal questions, problems or circumstances (Davies, 2016). Mentoring approaches, on the other hand, develop active learning environments where students are engaged in a dialogical discourse with ideas, discover personally relevant content, become critical thinkers through guided inquiry, and are provided with individualised support to address their vulnerabilities, questions and developmental needs. Mentors develop a relationship that allows for trust, openness and real exploration of ideology, not compliance or superficial engagement.

The SRAM model demonstrates effective mentoring including social mentoring on life skills and employability, religious mentoring to challenge the misinformation and distortion of religion, academic mentoring to foster critical thinking, and community mentoring to create nurturing networks. This holistic strategy acknowledges that radicalisation can only be prevented if vulnerabilities are tackled as a whole, instead of addressing parts of these vulnerabilities.

5.2 The Engagement Journey: From Awareness to Resilience

Effective preventative engagement is a series of steps that can be divided into the following stages: awareness building (100% baseline participation), critical thinking (85% retention), mentoring support (72%), skill learning (68%), community integration (61%), and long-term resilience (58%). Knowing what happens at this transition allows universities to plan for students at every stage and to plan for attrition.

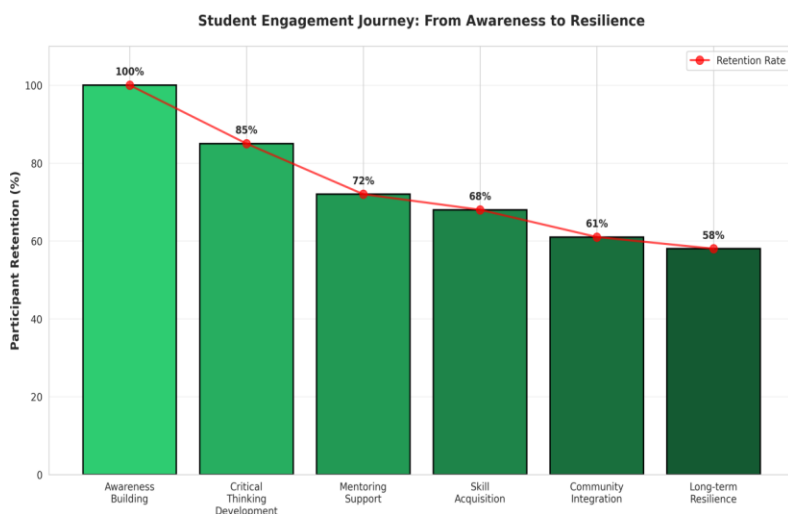


Figure 5: Student Engagement Journey - From Awareness to Resilience

The awareness building stage provides a basic understanding about extremism, radicalisation processes and concepts of CVE. This introduction is provided to all students through compulsory modules, orientation programs or campus-wide programs. But awareness does not guarantee a change in behavior; students need to be taken to higher levels of engagement (Davies, 2016). This groundbreaking research examines how former offenders stop committing crime by constructing "redemption scripts" for them to reimagine their identities and to discover and find a pro-social purpose. It underscores the importance of the individual being able to reconstruct his/her own story and then having his/her new version accepted by the community (Maruna, S. 2001).

Critical thinking development (85% retention) goes beyond awareness to develop analytical skills and the capacity to critically assess extremist narratives, logical fallacies and manipulative techniques, credible and unreliable information sources, and the ability to develop sophisticated understandings of complex political and social issues. This phase is significant because critical thinking is the main

cognitive shield against propaganda of the extremists. Mentoring support (72% retention) is one-on-one, individualized support to address vulnerabilities, questions and developmental needs. The mentors assist the students in issues of identity, constructive handling of political complaints, knowledge of religion and getting information about socio-economic or academic problems. This form of personalisation is not something that can be achieved through mass schemes but needs investment in trained mentors with manageable ratios of students to mentors.

Skill acquisition (68% retention) provides students with hands-on skills such as conflict resolution, intercultural communication, civic engagement, digital literacy, and leadership skills. These skills help students as they seek to be productive members of pluralistic societies, to engage effectively across differences, and to seek to resolve grievances through legitimate channels and not extremist ones (Rhodes, 2016). Community integration (61% retention) involves weaving the student into networks of belonging, purpose and positive social identities. These networks act as protective factors as they provide an alternative to extremist communities, peer support when they face challenges, and accountability relationships that discourage extremist sympathies. This aspect is tackled by community engagement as of the SRAM UK model.

Long-term resilience (58% retention) is the aspiration – individuals who remain resilient to extremist ideology after the program end are still able to develop critical thinking skills, maintain ties with a community and become peer educators or mentors. Whilst achieving 58% long-term resilience among initial participants represents substantial success, continued effort should be made to pursue higher retention through each stage.

**Table 2: Mentoring vs Traditional
Education - Detailed Comparison**

Outcome Dimension	Mentoring	Traditional	Advantage
Student Engagement	85%	42%	+43%
Knowledge Retention	88%	38%	+50%
Behavioural Change	79%	25%	+54%
Critical Thinking	88%	52%	+36%
Religious Literacy	85%	48%	+37%
Social Integration	82%	41%	+41%
Confidence Building	92%	38%	+54%
Problem Solving	86%	54%	+32%
Resilience to Extremism	89%	44%	+45%
Academic Performance	79%	71%	+8%

Source: Qureshi (2025)

6. Pakistani University Students: Current Reality and Urgent Needs

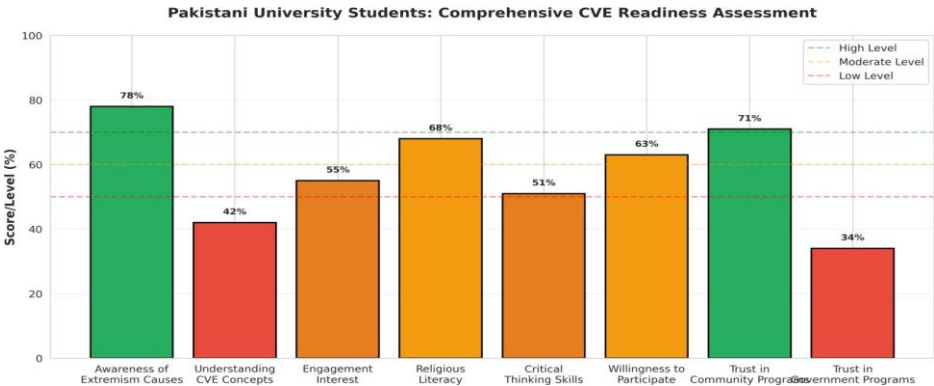
6.1 The Awareness-Understanding Gap

The survey research conducted with 500 students from universities in eight provinces of Punjab, Pakistan, shows an alarming lack of awareness and understanding. Students have high awareness of causes of extremism (78%) and factors that are contributing to it include unemployment, political grievances, religious misinterpretation and social marginalisation. radicalisation. But this

level of awareness is not related to conceptual understanding of CVE approaches (42%) or capability development to resist extremist narratives.

Figure 6: Pakistani University Students - CVE Readiness Assessment

The awareness-understanding gap suggests that existing educational methods are effective in conveying simple facts about



extremism, but not in fostering a real understanding of how extremism can be countered and of developing critical thinking skills to analyze extremist propaganda. Students can recognise issues, but not solutions, nor concepts and models of how to understand radicalisation dynamics, nor the ability to approach the challenges ideologically in a constructive way. This gap is especially alarming since superficial awareness is not matched by understanding and leads to false confidence. The correctness of that basic awareness may lead students to think that they are less vulnerable to more sophisticated extremist recruitment strategies, that they do not need to learn more about CVE or that they will not recognise extremist narratives when they come across them in subtle or disguised ways (Davies, 2016).

**6.2 Moderate Engagement Interest:
Opportunity and Challenge**

The student engagement interest score was 55% which is a moderate level of interest, neither too high nor too low. This moderate

stance is an opportunity and challenge to Pakistani universities. The key is to prove that a “critical mass” of students has some initial interest in CVE programs; that universities are not facing outright denial or lack of interest, but rather a middling level of interest that needs to be nurtured and expanded. The challenge is to get them from moderate interest into active engagement and continued participation. Moderate interest students can be engaged in initial programs but will drop out if the programs are not interesting, the delivery methods are boring, or the programs aren't really addressing the concerns and questions that students have. Maintaining involvement depends on offering quality programming that is relevant, interactive, beneficial, and fosters a sense of community. Based on research, engagement interest can be significantly boosted by using the right type of program design. Willingness to become involved in well-designed programs (63%) is greater than baseline engagement interest (55%), suggesting that students are discriminating between engagement interest and that of programs which have obvious value. Trust in community-led programs (71%) is much higher than trust in government programs (34%) showing that program sponsorship and program delivery mechanisms greatly influence student receptivity.

6.3 Critical Deficits: Religious Literacy and Critical Thinking

From the Pakistani student data two important lacunae can be seen: lack of religious knowledge (68%) and lack of critical thinking (51%). These deficits are especially troubling as they are the most basic cognitive protections from extremist ideologies. Religious literacy can empower students to identify the ways in which extremists manipulate religious teachings, to gain access to the authentic interpretations of religious teachings from mainstream scholars, and to build religious identities that will not be manipulated by extremists. Critical thinking enables evaluation of extremist arguments, recognition of logical fallacies and propaganda techniques, and construction of a sophisticated understanding of complex issues.

The religious literacy deficit (68%, although better than some other indicators, is still not enough) is an outcome of the failure of the

educational system of Pakistan to provide complete and scholarly religious education. Many pupils have little or no religious education or are being taught religious education from sources that are not theologically sophisticated. This leaves them open to the exploitation of extremist scholars who pose as religious leaders and spread false interpretation. Particularly, the religious mentoring aspect of the SRAM UK model aims to fill this gap by connecting with credible mainstream scholars (Qureshi & Ali, 2025). The critical thinking deficit (51%) means that just over half of students have sufficient analytical skills to assess complex arguments, know how to spot manipulation, or develop a nuanced understanding. This is alarming because critical thinking is the basic tool which empowers resistance against extremist propaganda. However, students who lack critical thinking skills will be left susceptible to the rich arsenal of manipulative narratives, simplified explanations of complex issues and conspiracy theories that are used as part of the standard extremist recruitment toolkit (Davies, 2016).

To remedy these gaps, university curricula need to be integrated in a systematic manner, encompassing the development of religious literacy and critical thinking. All students must have the opportunity to develop these skills, which cannot be achieved with stand-alone workshops or voluntary programs. The study suggests that compulsory CVE education should be conducted with both religious education from reliable scholars and critical thinking skills development through interactive teaching methodology (Qureshi & Ali, 2025).

**Table 3: Pakistani University Students -
Detailed CVE Assessment**

Assessment Dimension	Score (%)	Level	Priority Action
Awareness of Causes	78	High	Build on existing awareness
CVE Understanding	42	Low	CRITICAL - Conceptual

			education
Engagement Interest	55	Moderate	Enhance through quality programs
Religious Literacy	68	Moderate	Systematic religious education
Critical Thinking	51	Low-Moderate	CRITICAL – Skill development
Participation Willingness	63	Moderate-High	Design compelling programs
Trust - Community	71	High	Leverage community partnerships
Trust - Government	34	Low	Minimise government branding

7. Universities as CVE Hubs: Strategic Implementation

7.1 The University Advantage

Universities The unique strengths of universities for CVE implementations cannot be reproduced elsewhere. First, they're in contact with youth for longer wiring them in for more than one year of contact, as opposed to episodic contact that is brief and temporary. Second, they are a blend of education missions and student support functions, allowing for integration of CVE in curricular and co-curricular programming. Third, they have faculty who have subject matter expertise, pedagogical skills and student relationships that facilitate effective CVE education. Fourth, universities develop diversity of communities that expose students to multiple perspectives, provide space for intercultural dialogue and foster appreciation for pluralism. This diversity proves highly useful for CVE, as it is a natural refutation of extremist messages that highlight cultural homogeneity,

religious absolutes and inter-group conflict. Fifth, universities can build community partnerships and draw on the outside expertise, resources, and credibility to augment their institutional CVE capacity (Davies, 2016). But to harness these benefits, it is important to have a plan in place. The way for universities to do this is to shift from ad hoc to voluntary CVE activities to systematic, required CVE programs throughout the student experience. This requires institutional commitment, allocation of resources, faculty development, and accountability mechanisms to ensure quality and consistency in implementation.

7.2 Mandatory CVE Modules: The Foundation

The study is a strong proponent for mandatory CVE modules as the basic building block of university-based prevention. Voluntary programs only target students who are already interested and are missing out on those at greatest risk of being radicalised who might be those not involved in voluntary programs. Mandatory modules can offer universal coverage and demonstrate institutional commitment and standardise the learning of CVE as a regular part of the university experience (Qureshi & Ali, 2025). The results of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the Stockwell Project illustrate the effectiveness of local investment to reduce social alienation. This report shows how the strategic use of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has been vital to strengthening community infrastructure in urban London. The project illustrated how grassroots-led work can target the drivers of radicalisation at neighbourhood level by tackling social inclusion and offering positive social avenues for marginalised residents. Evidence also indicates that by providing them with adequate resources, local communities can build protective environments that can provide a sense of belonging and civic engagement to citizens, thereby deterring their recruitment by extremists (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2008).

The PROSEED (Providing Real Opportunities for Support for Employability Enhancement and Development) project was evaluated by this structural approach, supplemented by a process evaluation that involved interviews with project staff, managers, and beneficiaries.

Middlesex University, UK offers a critical perspective on the importance of personalised engagement in creating youth resilience. This academic research examined how academic mentoring and community-based social support systems can work together to reach hard to reach and high-risk youth populations. The results showed that a combination of educational development and robust social scaffolding has a major positive impact on long-term social inclusion and civic engagement. A holistic approach which tackles both the practical academic issues and the psychological vulnerabilities that make youth vulnerable to exclusionary ideologies is key to youth social reintegration (Middlesex University, 2008). Capitalizing on the high rates of prevention effectiveness with younger students and building protective factors before a great deal of exposure to extremists, is the rationale behind implementing mandatory modules during the first year. Modules should also be credit bearing as this will encourage serious engagement but alternatively where it proves institutionally difficult, universities could have non-credit compulsory requirements.

Content of the module should combine several elements: extremism and radicalisation conceptual frameworks, critical thinking skill development, religious knowledge from trusted scholars, intercultural understanding and dialogue skills, civic engagement and democratic participation, digital literacy and online safety, personal resilience and coping strategies. This extensive content provides students with the full spectrum of skills that are needed to challenge extreme narratives (Davies, 2016). The focus is on interactive and not passive 'lecture' delivery. Small group discussions, case study analysis, role play exercises, community engagement projects, reflective writing assignments and other approaches are more effective at developing critical thinking, changing attitudes and building behavioral commitments as compared to traditional lectures. The mentoring component of the SRAM UK model needs to be considered when designing the pedagogy, to enable opportunities for individual engagement as well as collective activities.

7.3 Faculty Development: From Teachers to Mentors

To effectively implement CVE in the university, it is important to change the faculty from a teaching model to a mentoring model to offer personalised support for students' vulnerabilities. This change requires a structured programme for faculty development on several aspects: knowledge of the dynamics of radicalisation and the nature of extremism; knowledge of indicators of vulnerability and the warning signs of radicalisation; awareness about mentoring pedagogies and approaches to strengthen relationships; awareness about how to discuss sensitive issues and engage in difficult dialogues; and awareness of support systems and resources in place to assist students. Faculty development programs should be a mixture of initial training workshops and continued PD, peer learning communities and individual coaching. Training needs to be practical and experiential, allowing faculty to practice mentoring skills, feedback on their skills and confidence in addressing CVE topics. Promotion criteria, teaching awards, and resources allocation should be considered as a means of rewarding CVE engagement in Universities (Rhodes, 2016). An important factor in faculty development is overcoming resistance or discomfort. Some faculty may feel that CVE is not in their discipline, that they are uncomfortable discussing sensitive political or religious issues, or may be afraid students will complain or administrative review will arise. These concerns need to be recognized during faculty development, where support, resources, and institutional backing are given so that CVE can be done confidently.

7.4 Community Partnerships: Leveraging External Expertise

Community partnerships are important aspects of successful university CVE programming, as they offer expertise, resources, credibility, and connections that universities cannot offer. The research shows that community organisations are trusted twice as much as government organisations (71% vs 34%) and community partnerships are especially important in improving the legitimacy of a program and receptivity of students. Effective partnerships include religious

institutions and scholars to provide authentic religious education, civil society organisations to teach youth development programmes and provide support services, mental health providers to talk to psychological vulnerabilities, employment services that can link youth to job opportunities and former extremists/reformed individuals who provide powerful counter-narratives based on personal experience. These partnerships can form support systems which will address the whole spectrum of vulnerability; students can be vulnerable to radicalisation (Davies, 2016). Building and sustaining partnerships is a process which must be managed carefully. The need for universities to invest the time, to have clear memorandum of understanding that set out roles and responsibilities, to offer training that ensures quality and consistency, and to ensure regular communication and coordination. Successful partnerships involve a mix of university control to ensure the quality of program content and community control to deliver culturally appropriate programs.

Table 4: University CVE Implementation Framework (Source: Qureshi (2025))

Component	Implementation Strategy	Key Partners	Success Metrics
Mandatory Modules	First-year credit requirement	Faculty, Academic Affairs	100% student participation
Faculty Training	Workshops + ongoing support	Faculty Development	80% faculty are trained
Mentoring Programs	Student-mentor matching	Community organizations	60% student engagement
Religious Education	Credible scholar sessions	Religious institutions	75% religious literacy

Critical Thinking	Interactive pedagogy	Faculty, CSOs	70% skill development
Community Integration	Service-learning projects	Local community groups	65% participation
Student Support	Counselling & resources	Mental health services	Support is available to all
Monitoring & Evaluation	Regular assessment	Research centres	Annual reporting

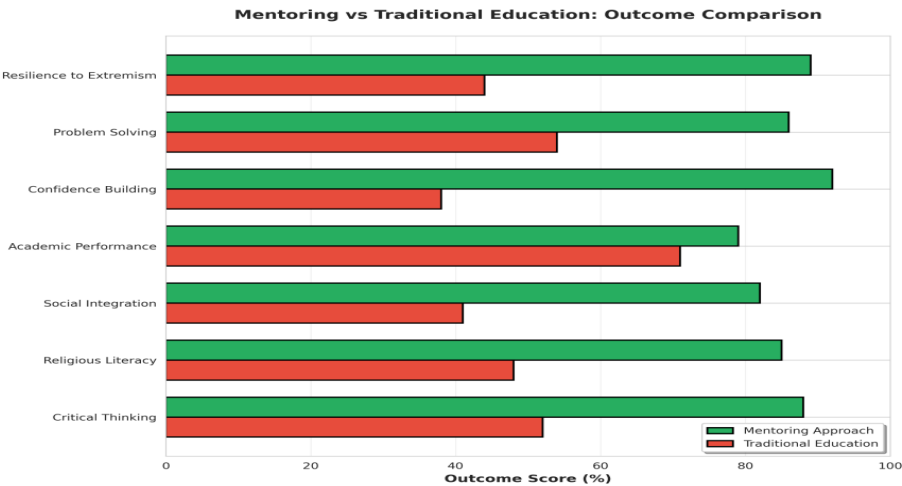
1. Expected Outcomes and Impact Assessment

1.1 Comprehensive Outcome Framework

The implementation of CVE programming in the university based on the SRAM approach brings forth results in many levels. Academic outcomes encompass better critical thinking capacities, analytical abilities, knowledge of radicalisation processes and CVE strategies, as well as better overall academic performance. Social outcomes include: improved intercultural understanding and dialogue skills; more civic engagement and democratic participation; better conflict management skills; and wider and more diverse social networks. Personal Development Outcomes include enhanced self-awareness and emotional intelligence, more coherent and consolidated identity formation, greater confidence, self-efficacy, and coping with stress and adversity. Religious outcomes are higher levels of religious literacy and theological understanding, formation of mainstream, moderate religious identities, and resistance to extremist religious distortions (Davies, 2016). Most importantly, CVE specific outcomes indicate: an increase in resistance to extremist narratives, a decrease in vulnerability to recruitment, an improvement in ability to recognise and reject propaganda and the emergence of protective factors such as critical thinking, religious literacy, social belonging, and purpose. In terms of long-term outcomes, these can be manifested at the

institutional and societal levels, in the form of increased university capacities related to prevention, increased community resilience, and contribution to the national CVE effort.

Figure 7: Mentoring vs Traditional Education - Outcome Comparison



1.2 Measuring Impact and Ensuring Accountability

A robust impact assessment is key to establishing program effectiveness, finding out where to make improvements, and holding stakeholders accountable. Assessment should use more than one approach and measure the changes in attitude and knowledge of the students through pre-and-post surveys, track outcomes of the students over multiple years, provide comparison groups for causal inference of program effects, and include qualitative interviews that capture student experiences and perceptions, as well as behavioural indicators such as academic achievement, disciplinary referrals, and community service.

Key performance indicators should cover participation in compulsory and voluntary programming, students' satisfaction and perception of the value of programming, knowledge gained in

standardized CVE assessment, attitude changes towards extremism, diversity and newness, skill development in the field of CVE, and the number of children impacted by programming growth in critical thinking and religious literacy, and behavior, such as community involvement and civic engagement. These indicators should be monitored in a systematic way and reported transparently to the University leadership, government funding agencies and community partners (Rhodes 2016). A key point in assessment is that preventing radicalisation is a non-event in the sense that the success of this will be demonstrated by students who do not radicalise and dramatic rescues of individuals from extremist groups. This makes measurement problematic as CVE impact can only be measured through intermediate outcomes (knowledge, attitudes, skills) and not actual behavior changes. Some scope to estimate the effects of prevention through comparison with baseline radicalisation rates and with control groups, but perfect causal inference is not possible.

2. Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

2.1 Resource Constraints

Large resources are needed to support comprehensive CVE programming, such as faculty time, training programs, student support services, community partnership development, program materials, and assessment infrastructure. In Pakistan, universities are facing challenges in terms of limited resources, and ensuring adequate financial support for effective implementation of quality CVE might be challenging. Such a challenge requires innovative approaches, such as starting with a core set of components and gradually extending to additional areas, finding ways to draw on external resources from government departments or international donors, using resources more effectively (e.g. integrating with current programmes) and engaging in community partnership with a service provider (which can reduce the cost of institutional delivery).

2.2 Faculty Resistance and Capacity

Faculty may have reasons not to do CVE, including that CVE does not fit within their competencies or job description, that they are afraid that they will receive complaints or administrative attention when doing CVE, that they don't feel confident in their ability to engage on controversial political or social issues, and that they feel they would be overwhelmed by the volume of information about CVE. Issues of religion or just too much to do. There are four key elements of overcoming resistance: administrative support and expectations; building confidence and capability through comprehensive training; recognition and rewards for CVE engagement; and making CVE compatible and not seen as a burden on existing educational missions (Davies, 2016).

2.3 Student Resistance and Stigmatisation

Students may resist CVE programming if they perceive it as surveillance, assume it targets specific communities, view it as propaganda or indoctrination, or simply find content irrelevant or uninteresting. Mitigation requires framing CVE positively as student development rather than security intervention, ensuring cultural sensitivity and inclusive design, avoiding stigmatisation, employing engaging pedagogies, maintaining student interest, and demonstrating tangible benefits, including critical thinking skills, employability enhancement, and community connections valuable beyond CVE specifically.

2.4 Political Sensitivities

CVE will always touch upon politically sensitive issues, such as religion, governance, foreign policy, and social justice. The universities need to carefully deal with these sensitivities, ensuring they enjoy academic freedom without taking any institutional stance on contentious political issues. This means clear guidelines about the protection of open enquiry and debate, training of faculty to facilitate rather than dominate discussion, respectful hearing of diverse perspectives, and emphasizing critical thinking development over pre-determined conclusions.

Table 5: Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Challenge	Impact	Mitigation Strategy	Priority
Resource constraints	Limited implementation	Phased rollout, external funding	High
Faculty resistance	Weak delivery quality	Training, support, recognition	Critical
Student resistance	Low engagement	Positive framing, relevance	High
Political sensitivity	Controversy, backlash	Academic freedom protection	Medium
Community scepticism	Partnership difficulties	Relationship building, transparency	Medium
Government interference	Autonomy threats	Clear boundaries, independence	High
Assessment complexity	Impact uncertainty	Multiple methods, comparison groups	Medium
Sustainability concerns	Program discontinuation	Institutionalisation, diverse funding	High

Source: Qureshi (2025)

3. Policy Recommendations for Pakistan

3.1 National Policy Framework

In the light of the experience of the UK CVE approach, Pakistan should create a comprehensive national policy framework that places universities as CVE hubs, working closely with credible Civic

Society Organisations (CSOs), with support and resources from the government and coordination. This framework should create clear expectations for engagement between the university and the community in CVE, dedicated funding streams, and support effective implementation. It should also establish national coordination mechanisms that will enable the sharing of best practice. The development, monitoring and evaluation systems should be examined and monitoring program quality and impact should be evaluated on regular intervals; and share best practices throughout the country. To prevent mistakes or gaps, constructive critique should be encouraged to the policy framework, which has been wrongly characterised as excessive militarisation of counterterrorism, government-led programming instead of community-led programming, reactive rather than preventive approach, and lack of attention to root causes of terrorism. The policy framework should make it clear how much soft approaches, community partnerships, educational interventions and long-term prevention are prioritised over security-focused, short-term threat responses (Davies, 2016).

3.2 Institutional Requirements

Implement mandatory CVE modules in all Pakistani Universities and appoint Faculty Training for CVE Mentoring Techniques through Safeguarding/Prevent leads appointed at universities. A detailed programme for student support services needs to be designed and implemented, which would consider vulnerabilities and set up monitoring and evaluation systems. Universities should be encouraged/empowered to develop links with community organizations and religious institutions. The requirements should be enforced via accreditation requirements, funding conditions and regular compliance checks.

3.3 Curriculum Development

The HEC Pakistan should define national guidelines for Curriculum of CVE and ensure quality and consistency while affording flexibility to institutions to make local adaptations in the curriculum. Guidelines should define the content areas to focus on such as

radicalisation conceptual frameworks, critical thinking development, religious literacy, intercultural dialogue, civic engagement, and digital literacy, and pedagogical methods should be recommended that are interactive and involve mentoring relationships and community engagement. Model curriculum, model teaching materials and assessment tools should be developed and shared across sectors involved (Rhodes 2016).

3.4 Community Partnership Infrastructure

The government should invest in developing the capacity of community CVE by funding civil society organisations, training and technical assistance, formation of university community partnership platforms and platforms for coordination and sharing. This investment understands that universities will not be able to effectively implement CVE alone, and that community partnerships with complementary expertise, resources, and credibility are essential.

Table 6: Comprehensive Policy Recommendations

Recommendation Area	Specific Actions	Responsible Entity	Timeline
National Framework	Develop CVE policy, allocate funding	Federal Government, HEC	Year 1
Mandatory Modules	Implement first-year requirements	All universities	Year 1-2
Faculty Development	Training programs nationwide	HEC, Universities	Year 1-3
Community Partnerships	Fund CSO capacity building	Government, Universities	Ongoing
Curriculum Standards	Develop national guidelines	HEC	Year 1
Resource Allocation	Dedicated CVE budget lines	Finance Ministry, HEC	Year 1

Monitoring Systems	Establish evaluation frameworks	HEC, Research Centres	Year 2
Best Practice Sharing	Create coordination platforms	HEC, University Networks	Year 2

Source: Qureshi (2025)

1. Conclusion

This detailed study of preventative approaches to youth shows that universities are underused yet potentially important resources in combating violent extremism. Universities' combination of ongoing engagement with the youth, an educational mission, faculty specializations, heterodox communities, and community partnership capacity equips them to develop effective prevention initiatives that tackle radicalization before it becomes entrenched as an extremist commitment. Research findings lead to important conclusions that are supported by the evidence overwhelmingly:

First, early intervention is exponentially more effective than intervention at a later time, with a prevention effectiveness rate of 92% for early teens compared to only 52% for young adults, meaning it is important to engage students as soon as they enter the University and make prevention efforts a reality in secondary schools where they are most effective.

Secondly, mentoring-based methods are an order of magnitude more effective than the traditional lecture-based education in all relevant aspects. 85% engagement rate, 88% retention rate and 79% behavioral change rate show the superiority of mentoring. This evidence presents a challenge for the universities to change their approach to CVE from passive knowledge transfer to active, individualised, and personalised engagement, as is central to the SRAM UK model via an integrated approach (Davies, 2016).

Third, there are troubling gaps between awareness and understanding of Pakistani university students, who have surface knowledge about the causes of extremism (78%) but lack

understanding of concepts of CVE (42%) and critical thinking capabilities (51%). Students' belief is undermined by these deficiencies, which render them susceptible to more advanced extremist recruitment.

that they are aware of the problems. To make up for these gaps, a mandatory comprehensive CVE education is needed and not voluntary programmes that would only reach already interested students (Qureshi & Ali, 2025).

Fourth, the vulnerabilities of young people are complex and demand multifaceted interventions, such as exposure to risk online (88%), identity crisis (85%) and social exclusion (82%). The SRAM UK model combines social, religious and academic mentoring with community engagement, addressing all aspects of youth vulnerability to radicalisation.

Fifth: community-based interventions are significantly more effective than government-based ones and students have a high level of trust in community organisations (71%) compared to government (34%). This trust differential has a direct effect on program effectiveness, with this difference resulting in greater student participation, openness to vulnerabilities, and greater sustainable engagement with trusted community partners. There is a need for institutions to have strong community partnerships that offer expertise, resources, and credibility that institutions cannot provide (Rhodes, 2016).

The difficulties of implementation, inadequacies of resources, faculty resistance, student scepticism and political sensitivities are significant but not overwhelming. Phased implementation, comprehensive faculty development, positive program framing, and protection of academic freedom are examples of such mitigation strategies that enable universities to tackle challenges without compromising program quality or integrity.

There is a need for national commitment in formulating policies, providing resources, building institutional requirements, and creating community partnership infrastructure to establish universities

as CVE hubs in Pakistan. This must include the recognition that prevention is the most effective, cost-efficient and ethically appropriate counter-extremist strategy, one that will prevent the need for intensive intervention, that will prevent extremist networks from forming, and that will help build societal resilience to reduce the long-term appeal of extremism.

It is young people who are most vulnerable to extremism and most open to prevention. Universities can effectively change the trajectory of radicalisation by introducing youth to positive alternative narratives in critical development stages, through evidence-based, mentoring-based, community-based approaches. This is more than a counter-terrorism program; it is a bet on the future of Pakistan where citizens are informed, critical, and engaged; where they can deal with complexity, embrace difference, and participate positively in the country's development.

The need is even more pressing. The time for disavowal and passive non-responsiveness in the face of escalating incidents of terrorism, increasing pace of online radicalisation and growing vulnerabilities among youth are over. For universities to keep their students from falling victim to the lure of extremist groups, they need to institute comprehensive programmes to take cognisance of the vulnerabilities they face. What is needed now is political will, institutional commitment and a recognition by society that prevention of radicalisation is the best investment that Pakistan can make in its security, stability and future prosperity – the research has provided clear roadmaps for effective implementation.

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