

Strengthening Evidence-based Practice in P/CVE with the INDEED Repository of Studies on Risk and Protective Factors

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Abstract

The field of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) has witnessed significant growth in empirical research over the past decade, particularly in the identification of risk and protective factors associated with violent extremism. However, the rapid expansion of the literature across disciplines such as psychology, criminology, and public health, coupled with access barriers like paywalls, has created challenges for integrating evidence into P/CVE practice. To address these issues, the Horizon 2020 project INDEED launched an online repository in 2022, providing a freely accessible, regularly updated database of studies on risk and protective factors related to violent extremism. This article examines how the INDEED repository supports evidence-based practices in P/CVE by offering an accessible tool for researchers and practitioners to consult and integrate relevant studies. It specifically explores the repository's potential to strengthen P/CVE programme development, and to facilitate evidence-based policing in P/CVE through advanced trainings and professional support. Finally, the article discusses the strengths and limitations of the repository, and reflects on future directions for advancing the repository's contributions to evidence-based practice in P/CVE.

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, empirical research in the field of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) has advanced considerably (Silke and Schmidt-Petersen, 2017; Schuurman, 2020). Notably, there has been a significant increase in empirical studies on the role and relevance of putative risk and protective factors (Wolfowicz et al., 2020). Growing knowledge in this research area has raised the prospect of a more evidence-based approach to P/CVE, which is informed by empirical knowledge of (de)radicalization dynamics (Freese, 2014; Lum and Kennedy, 2012). However, the efficient integration of research findings into

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P/CVE practice remains a challenging task. Most empirical research in P/CVE is locked behind paywalls and remains inaccessible to practitioners in the field. The rapid expansion and multidisciplinary nature of research in P/CVE, which spans the fields of psychology, criminology, sociology, and public health, moreover, make it difficult for researchers and practitioners alike to maintain an overview of the evolving evidence base.

To address these challenges and facilitate evidence-based practice in P/CVE, the Horizon 2020 project INDEED² has created an online repository designed to provide a regularly updated overview of studies on risk and protective factors associated with violent extremism (INDEED, 2025)³. The repository, launched in 2022, provides a freely accessible database, which P/CVE researchers and practitioners can consult to review studies and their key findings on putative risk and protective factors. The repository also includes a range of search filters which enable users to identify research focused on specific societal groups (e.g. adolescents, detainees, veterans) and ideological strands (e.g., right-wing extremism). By offering an accessible and updated overview of studies on risk and protective factors, the database promises to complement additional efforts in the field to strengthen evidence-based practice, such as the creation of systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

The article suggests that the repository is well-positioned to support the preparation, design, and (re)evaluation of P/CVE programmes. More concretely, it argues that the repository can help practitioners to efficiently review knowledge about the role and significance of individual risk and protective factors, and to support the creation, verification, (re)assessment, and refinement of theories of change. The repository, in this regard, responds to the long-established problem in P/CVE that programmes and staff “are oftentimes not guided by sound theories of change or evidence bases due to a widespread dearth of practitioner-academic knowledge transfers” (Koehler, 2025: 969). The article further suggests

² INDEED is a Horizon 2020 project which was funded by the European Commission for the period of 2020-2024. The key objective of the project has been to strengthen evidence-based practice and evaluation in the field of P/CVE. The project included 19 partner institutions from 16 EU member states which included research institutions, government agencies and non-governmental organizations: Polish Platform for Homeland Security (coordinator), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Sheffield Hallam University (CENTRIC), University of Helsinki, Forum Européen Pour La Sécurité Urbaine (EFUS), Peace Action, Training & Research Institute of Romania (Patrir), Vienna Centre for Societal Security (Vicesse), Deep Blue, Transform, ITTI, Police Zone Rupel, Provincial Police Headquarters Gdansk, Hellenic Police, Rigas Pasvaldibas Police, Bremen Senate of Justice and Constitution, Centre for Security Studies (KEMEA), Qualify Just IT Solutions and Consulting LDA (IPS), General Directorate Execution of Sentences (GDES), Madrid Municipal Police.

³ The repository can be accessed via the INDEED project website:

<https://www.toolkit.indeedproject.eu/RepositoryMainView>

that the repository can support evidence-based learning across different P/CVE domains and sectors by facilitating the creation of professional training, guidelines, and advice.

The article proceeds as follows. First, it will review existing efforts to advance, as well as persisting challenges for, evidence-based practice in P/CVE. In its second part, the article will introduce the INDEED repository and outline its key functions. As a third step, the article will illustrate the repository's potential to facilitate evidence-based programme development in P/CVE, and discuss its strengths and limitations. The fourth part will present a practitioner's perspective on the repository's ability to support evidence-based P/CVE work in law enforcement agencies. Finally, the article will reflect on how the repository and its usage can be advanced further to strengthen evidence-based practice in P/CVE.

Evidence-based Practice in P/CVE

Originating in the field of medicine, calls for evidence-based practice have gained considerable traction in a variety of policy areas, including P/CVE (Lum and Kennedy, 2012; Freese, 2014). While definitions of evidence-based practice vary (see, for instance, Klose, 2024), most proponents agree that it is best understood as a process of decision-making, in which decisions – such as on medical treatments, policy interventions, or social and educational programmes – are informed by 1) a thorough review of scientific evidence, 2) sound professional judgement and 3) the careful consideration of the preferences, values and circumstances of those (individuals or communities) affected by the decision (Guyatt and Busse, 2006; Spencer, Detrich and Slocum, 2012).

Efforts to strengthen and realize evidence-based practice have notably revolved around calls and measures to advance and disseminate scientific knowledge to support practical decision-making. In P/CVE, early proponents of evidence-based practice called on researchers to focus their efforts more clearly on “pursuing methodologically rigorous evaluations of interventions; systematically reviewing research; disseminating, translating, and using research to inform practice; engaging in partnerships that foster evaluation (i.e., between practitioners and researchers); and expanding the collection of high-quality data” (Lum and Kennedy, 2012: 4; see also Freese, 2014: 48-9).

Since then, the evidence base in P/CVE has advanced considerably in three key respects. First, growing investment and interest in P/CVE over the past two decades has led to an “explosion of research”, and strengthened the quantity and quality of primary and evaluative studies (Busher et al., 2023: 1). As highlighted by Schuurman (2020: 1022) “scholars have begun to adapt a wider variety of data-gathering techniques, greatly diminishing the overreliance on literature reviews” which characterized the field until the early 2000s. In a similar vein, Silke and Schmidt-Petersen (2017: 702) concluded that the field has entered “a golden age [in which] high-impact articles are appearing at a rate never seen before”.

Two areas of P/CVE primary research have seen especially high growth rates. On the one hand, primary research has focused on the evaluation of P/CVE programmes. According to Madriaza et al. (2023: 8), evaluative research has increased substantially since 2016, from an average of six evaluations per year prior to 2016 to an average of thirty evaluations per year between 2016 and 2021. These studies have also seen the more frequent adoption of sophisticated research methods, including experimental and quasi-experimental designs (e.g., Parker and Lindekilde, 2020; Webber et al., 2018). As a result, evaluative research, long seen as a key to strengthening programmes and practices (Koehler, 2016; 2017a, 2017b; Williams, 2020), has increasingly come to fruition, offering insights into the effectiveness and mechanisms of P/CVE primary, secondary and tertiary programmes (Khalil et al., 2023; Silke et al., 2021).

On the other hand, primary research in P/CVE has focused on investigating the relative salience of putative risk and protective factors which may influence pathways towards - and away from – radicalization and violent extremism. Such research includes the examination of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors which can drive the disengagement of individuals from violent extremism (Altier et al., 2014; Marsden, 2016; Hansen and Lid, 2020). According to Wolfowicz et al. (2020), empirical research on risk and protective factors has increased significantly between 2003 and 2020, with 50% of all high-quality studies (63 out of 127) published between 2018 and 2020. The field’s understanding of how different factors influence violent extremist attitudes, intentions, or behaviour has consequently advanced considerably within a very short time.

Second, and relatedly, efforts to create a more robust evidence base in P/CVE have revolved around the creation of systematic reviews and other forms of research synthesis. This development has been notably strengthened by a multilateral partnership between the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which led to the creation of the Countering Violent Extremism Network (CVEN) in 2015. The network has since partnered with the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Coordinating group to commission a series of systematic reviews “with the aim to raise the bar on standards of evidence and practice” (Neyroud et al., 2024: 1). Between 2020 and 2025, the Campbell CVE programme alone has published twelve systematic reviews covering a range of topics, including the effectiveness of counternarratives, case management interventions and multiagency programmes (Carthy et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2024; Mazerolle et al., 2021), as well as the link between media and radicalisation (Wolfowicz et al., 2022; Madriaza et al., 2025). Next to this initiative, systematic reviews, which synthesize the evidence base in P/CVE have also been published across several other academic outlets, including in the fields of public health, psychology and criminology (see, for instance, Franc and Pavlovic, 2023; McGilloway et al., 2015; Mughal et al., 2023; Silke et al., 2021; Williams and Tzani, 2024).

Third, efforts to strengthen the evidence base in P/CVE have emphasized the creation of tools, guidelines, and frameworks designed to facilitate and strengthen the quality of evaluation processes. Baruch et al. (2018), for instance, developed the Violent Extremism Evaluation Measurement Framework (VEEM), which maps suitable indicators for measuring change in violent extremist behaviour and attitudes. Other efforts have focused on the review and dissemination of evaluation methods. Hofman and Sutherland (2018), for example, created a comprehensive overview of data collection methods and research designs suitable for the evaluation of P/CVE initiatives. In some countries, the expansion of evidence-based practice has moreover been supported by national initiatives. In Germany, for instance, the State Prevention Council of Lower Saxony has sought to advance evidence-based practice by issuing the “Beccaria Standards” – a set of guidelines for effective P/CVE project management – and the “Green List of Prevention”, a database which offers recommendations based on evaluated P/CVE programmes (Nehlsen et al., 2020: 6).

Limitations

While several advances have been made in the promotion of evidence-based practice in P/CVE, significant challenges, however, remain. Notably, while the evidence base in P/CVE has quickly advanced, the efficient dissemination of evidence to practitioner communities remains a difficult task, which hampers the uptake of evidence-based practice. The quick expansion of the evidence base has made it especially challenging for P/CVE communities to track and stay informed about the “best available evidence” in the field. This problem is further compounded by the scattered nature of P/CVE research, which reaches across multiple disciplines, including medicine, public health, education, criminology, and social work (Morrison, 2022). Most studies, moreover, cannot be publicly accessed, which makes it difficult for P/CVE practitioners to review relevant research that can inform the design and implementation of initiatives in the field. While systematic reviews, particularly those published in open-access outlets (e.g., the Campbell Collaboration), somewhat mitigate this challenge, their ability to effectively communicate the state of the current evidence base is limited in two important respects.

On the one hand, systematic reviews are typically limited to providing an assessment of the evidence base at one specific moment in time, which, in view of current growth rates in some areas of P/CVE research, may lead to their findings being quickly outdated. On the other hand, systematic reviews, while offering important syntheses of available research, offer only limited insights into the results of individual studies and their findings for specific programmes or localities, which can be of high value for practitioners operating in comparable settings. Given these limitations, we argue that systematic reviews should be complemented by other tools to ensure an effective and continuous dissemination of P/CVE research to different fields of practice. Against this backdrop, the following section will introduce the INDEED repository of studies on risk and protective factors, which has been designed as an instrument to strengthen evidence-based practice in P/CVE by accelerating the communication of research to professionals in the field.

The INDEED repository of studies of risk and protective factors

Research on risk and protective factors ranks among the most rapidly advancing fields of study in P/CVE (Wolfowicz et al., 2020). This research promises to aid the design and

implementation of more targeted and efficient P/CVE initiatives. As stressed by Hassan et al. (2023: 204), the careful consideration of available evidence on risk and protective factors can help to ensure that P/CVE programmes effectively target relevant characteristics of violent extremism and adequately address often-overlooked factors such as mental health issues. However, while research on risk and protective factors promises to strengthen the targeting and effectiveness of P/CVE programmes, the size, growth rate, and scattered nature of this research area create considerable challenges for its dissemination, and by extension, its practical use in programme design and development.

Attempts to capture and communicate the evidence base for risk and protective factors has thus far largely revolved around the publication of systematic reviews, which either offer a synthesis of available evidence for risk and protective factors as a whole or in specific areas such as mental health (Emmelkamp et al., 2020; Ohls et al., 2023; Lösel et al., 2018; Lösel et al., 2020; McGilloway et al., 2015; Misiak et al., 2019; Mughal et al. 2023; Wolfowicz et al., 2020; Wolfowicz et al, 2021; Zych and Nasaescu, 2022). While these reviews are valuable, they are also characterized by several limitations. On the one hand, as indicated above, they only offer a snapshot, rather than a consistently updated overview of the evidence base. On the other hand, they are restricted in their capacity to effectively communicate the results of individual studies, which are valuable for practitioners operating in specific localities. To address these limitations, the EU-funded Horizon 2020 project INDEED has developed an online repository which presents a comprehensive overview of individual studies on risk and protective factors and their key findings.

The online repository represents a key outcome of the INDEED project, which was implemented between 2020 and 2024 by a consortium of 19 European partners, including universities, government ministries, non-governmental organizations, and law enforcement agencies. The objectives of the repository, which was first published in 2022, are threefold. First, the INDEED repository aims to create a platform where users can get an overview of and efficiently update themselves about available knowledge on risk and protective factors. To this end, the repository provides a comprehensive database of relevant studies, which is regularly updated to capture the most recent state of the art. Second, the INDEED repository seeks to enable its users to efficiently identify and review particular subsets of the literature on risk and protective factors, such as studies covering particular (groups of) risk and

protective factors, specific populations (e.g., adolescents), or types of violent extremism (e.g., right-wing extremism). To achieve this objective, the repository offers a set of filters which allow users to perform a targeted search of the database. Third, the INDEED repository aims to create a platform where users can review and compare key study findings (e.g., on a particular risk factor) without requiring full (institutional) access to scientific publications. Towards this end, the repository not only provides links to individual studies but also presents key findings in the form of direct quotes from each publication.

The scope of the INDEED repository

The database of the INDEED repository aims to present a comprehensive overview of studies on risk and protective factors, which includes publications from different fields of research, including criminology, psychology, education, social work, and public health. The database is not geographically limited or confined to English-language publications. Instead, it aims to provide an inclusive library of studies which includes both English-language and non-English language publications, the latter of which are presented both in the original and a translated version to be accessible to a wide audience.

The development of the repository's database followed a three-step process, which was created and implemented by two postdoctoral researchers based at the University of Helsinki and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). As a first step, the two researchers identified potentially relevant studies for inclusion into the database. On the one hand, studies were identified via available systematic reviews (e.g., Emmelkamp et al., 2020; Lösel et al., 2018; Wolfowicz et al., 2020; Wolfowicz et al., 2021). On the other hand, studies were located through a systematic search of electronic databases and specialized journals – following the method outlined by Wolfowicz et al. (2021: 15) – as well as a review of the literature using google scholar, based on the following search string: (risk factor OR protective factor) AND (terroris* OR extremis*, OR radicaliz*). Following this initial search, a list of potentially relevant studies was created for further review.

In the second step, the two researchers jointly identified studies for inclusion into the repository. To be included into the repository, a study on risk and/or protective factors had to provide an original empirical analysis based on primary data (qualitative or quantitative) of risk and protective factors, or an original synthesis of empirical analyses which summarizes

studies on risk and protective factors via a systematic review or meta-analysis. Publications which did not meet these criteria, including narrative reviews, opinion pieces, and discussions of theoretical models, as well as publications based on primary sources not directly linked to risk and protective factors, were excluded.

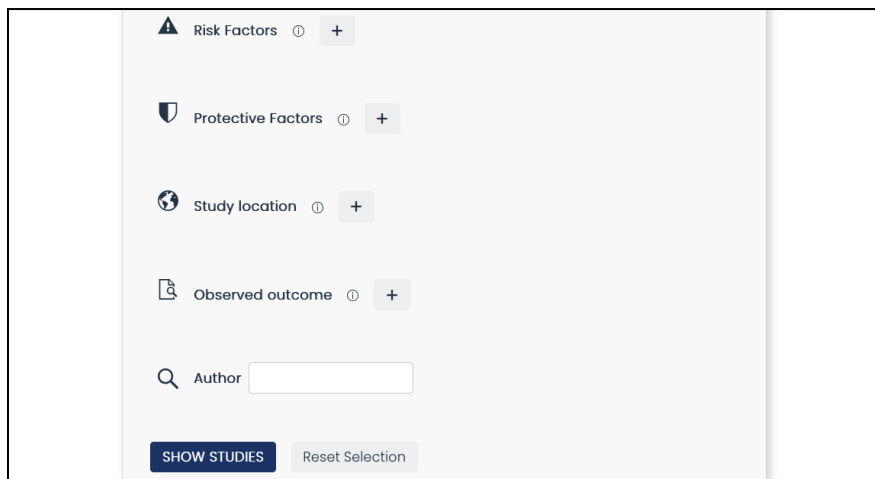
As a third step, the researchers developed a set of initial codebooks for the repository, which list (categories of) risk factors and protective factors, radicalization outcomes, ideologies, and study populations. In a pre-testing phase, the two researchers used the codebooks to code a limited number of identified studies, after which they reviewed and updated the codebook (e.g., to add risk factors not previously captured). Following this phase, the two lead researchers trained other consortium members with research experience in P/CVE in the use of the codebooks in two online workshops and guided a collaborative coding process, including regular controls to strengthen inter-coder reliability. During this process, each study was assigned codes to identify the (groups of) risk and protective factors, as well as ideologies, study populations, and radicalization outcomes, for which it offers empirical results (or syntheses thereof). Additionally, for each study, key quotes were selected to capture key study findings for each coded (group of) risk and protective factor.

Following the collaborative coding exercise, which took place between March and June 2022, the database has been updated on a biannual basis. From July 2022 onwards, updates, using the steps outlined above, have been performed by a postdoctoral researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). In each update, the developed codebook has been carefully applied and amended where needed to reflect advances in the literature (e.g., by adding newly identified ideological strands, study populations, or protective factors). While each update has primarily focused on the inclusion of studies published within the previous six months, additional measures have been taken to fill other potential gaps in the repository. To strengthen the completeness of the repository, for instance, newly published systematic reviews and meta-analyses were carefully reviewed to identify previously overlooked empirical studies. In January 2025, the repository included a total of 274 studies.

Key functions of the repository

The coding process outlined above has enabled the creation of an online repository, which users can navigate by using six search filters⁴. The filters allow users to search for studies addressing specific risk and protective factors, radicalization outcomes, study populations, and ideologies. In addition, the repository enables users to search the database by entering the name of the author (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Display of search filters



For each search entry, the repository generates a list of studies which match the search criteria. This list presents studies in the order in which they were published, and displays the publication title, names of the authors, and the publication outlet. Additionally, the list includes the link to each publication as well as an option to view more detailed information (see figure 2).

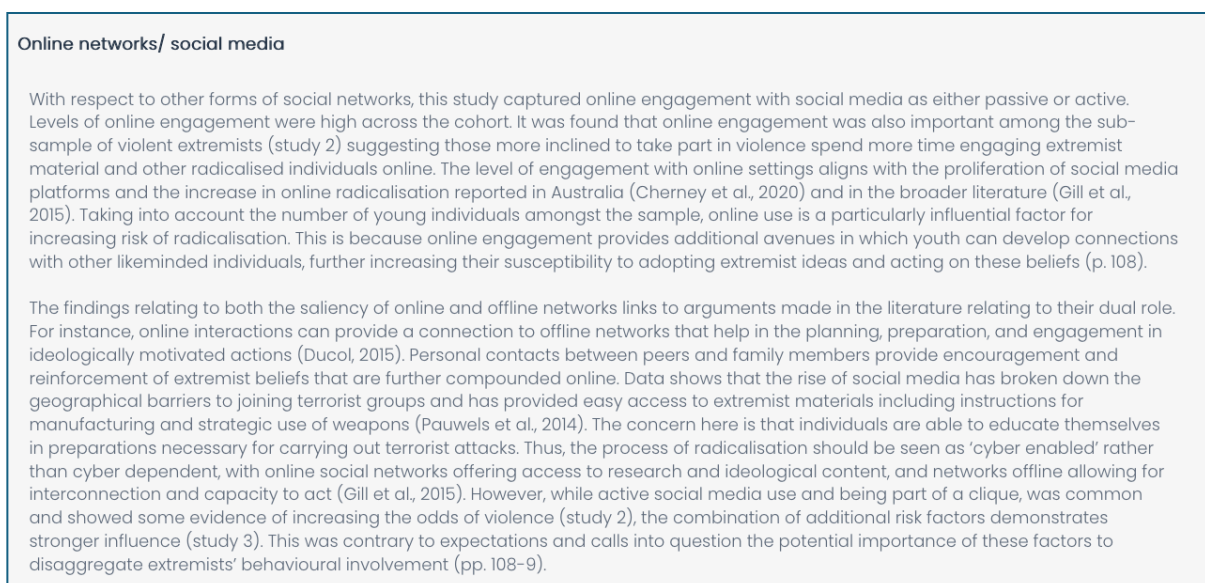
⁴ The software and design of the repository were developed by the INDEED consortium partner ITTI.

Figure 2: Display of search results



The “detailed view” of each study, in turn, presents the study’s abstract and provides information about the study population(s), ideological strand(s), observed outcome(s), and study location(s). Most importantly, it further provides information about the study’s key findings about specific risk and protective factors, which are presented in the form of direct quotes (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Display of empirical findings for risk and protective factors



Uses and limitations

Through the data collection and coding process outlined above, the repository aims to create a comprehensive overview of existing studies on risk and protective factors, as well as opportunities for users to perform targeted searches of the database. By identifying the key findings of each study – and presenting them in the form of direct quotes – it further offers access to research for P/CVE practitioners, which otherwise is not publicly available. In providing these services, the repository aims to facilitate the timely and comprehensive dissemination of knowledge on risk and protective factors. As noted by Hassan et al. (2023: 182), “assumptions that were considered ‘true’ five to ten years ago are not so clear-cut today”. By providing up-to-date information on the (relative) significance of risk and protective factors for practitioners in the field, the repository promises therefore to make a significant contribution to the effective design and development of P/CVE programmes. The following section will highlight how exactly the repository can be employed to advance programme development in P/CVE.

The repository’s scope and functions also have notable limitations. First, while aiming to be as comprehensive as possible, the repository does not provide a complete overview of all existing research in the field of risk and protective factors. This is especially true with respect to non-English language publications, which remain underrepresented. The repository should thus best be viewed as a platform which can provide a useful starting point for reviews of the evidence base for risk and protective factors, rather than as a platform which, on its own, can provide full information. Second, the repository does not provide full texts for publications which are not publicly available. Instead, it presents key findings of each publication in the form of direct quotes. These quotes, while offering valuable information about a study’s findings, are necessarily limited in scope. Where possible, users of the repository should thus use their institutional access to publications to complement their navigation of the repository with the review of full-text publications. To expand access to full-text publications, future steps in the development of the repository may include the possibility for authors to share preprint versions of included articles on this platform. Third, it should be noted that the repository does not offer its own syntheses of findings or policy recommendations. Rather, it provides an overview of relevant research findings, which may include contradictory findings for risk and protective factors. The repository, in this regard,

does not necessarily offer conclusive findings for the role and significance of individual risk and protective factors. Instead, the repository's displayed findings require careful interpretation and translation to (local) fields of practice.

Applying the INDEED repository in primary and tertiary prevention

A key promise of the INDEED repository lies in its potential to support an evidence-based design of P/CVE initiatives. The repository offers a platform where individuals tasked with or considering the creation of an initiative to prevent or counter violent extremism can inform themselves about available research on risk and protective factors. Specifically, the repository offers a valuable tool that promises to facilitate primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. In the following, this chapter will illustrate this potential by discussing ways in which the tool can be applied in primary and tertiary prevention to inform and strengthen the process of planning, designing, and evaluating P/CVE interventions.

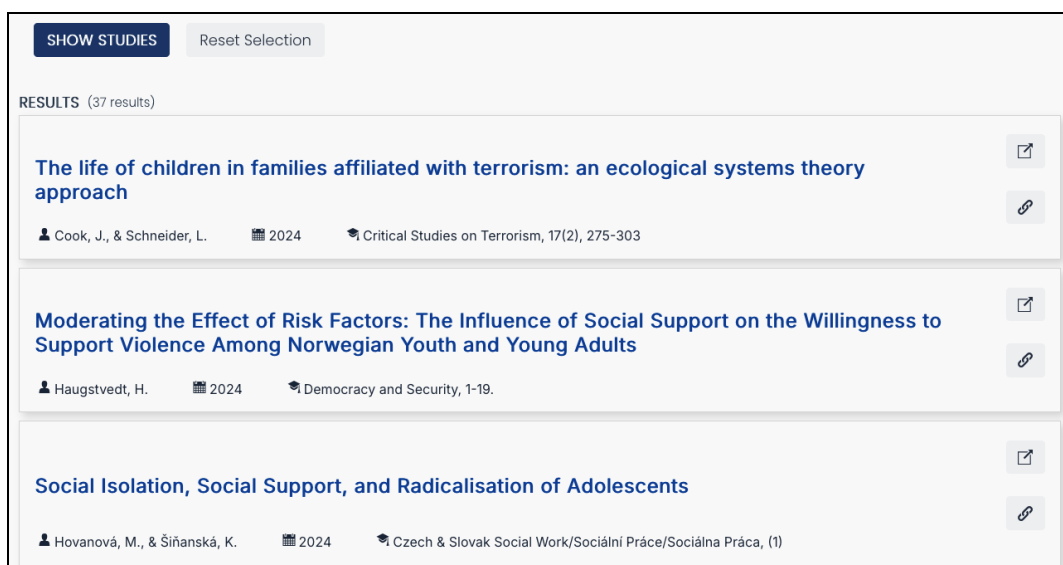
Applying the INDEED Repository in Primary Prevention

To illustrate how the INDEED repository can be employed to support evidence-based primary prevention, this section discusses its potential application in a secondary school setting. Secondary schools are increasingly viewed as representing a focal point for prevention (Horgan et al., 2024; Mayer et al., 2024) and may be encouraged by authorities or constituents to develop an initiative to prevent violent extremism within their locality. To develop such an initiative, head teachers, assistant principals, or teachers can draw on their own experiences and knowledge, but may find it difficult to systematically engage with existing research in P/CVE, which, as highlighted above, is often scattered across disciplines and locked behind paywalls.

The INDEED repository promises to address these challenges and facilitate the adoption of evidence-based practice in the planning, design, and evaluation of P/CVE initiatives. In the planning phase, during which the need for and relevance of a P/CVE initiative is assessed, the repository offers a platform for gathering valuable background information about risk and protective factors associated with violent extremism and their role in different population subsets. Thus, for instance, it enables users to perform a targeted

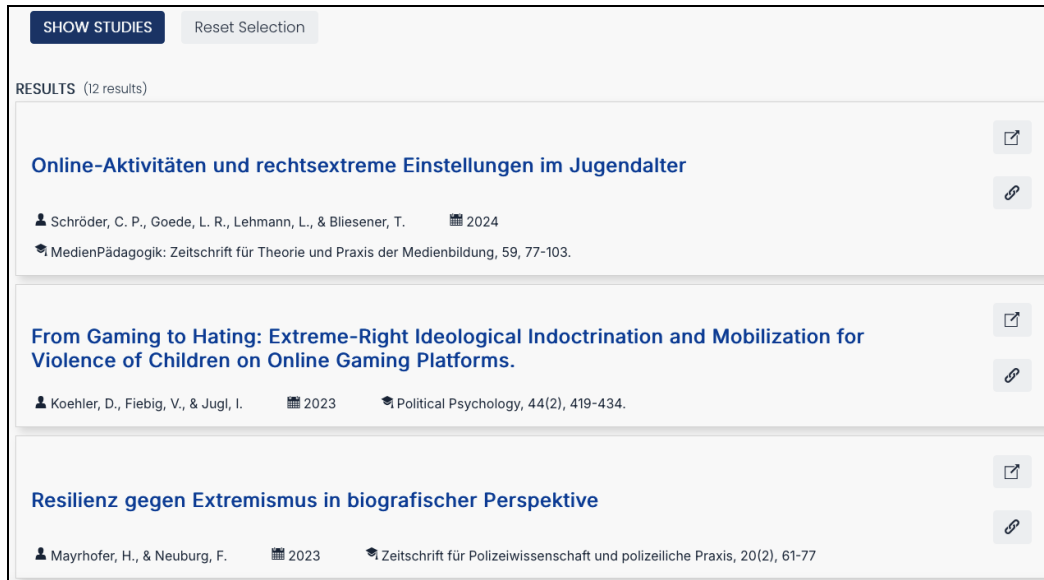
search for studies focused on risk and protective factors associated with “adolescents,” which is of particular relevance for the preparation of initiatives in a secondary school setting. At present, the repository includes 37 studies focused on adolescents (see figure 4), which can support an evidence-based discussion about key factors facilitating or preventing violent extremism in young people, and the possible role of schools in addressing such factors.

Figure 4: Display of studies on risk and protective factors associated with adolescents



To inform more specific discussions about risk and protective factors associated with violent extremism in adolescents, the repository further allows for a targeted search which zooms in on risk and protective factors related to “adolescents” in the context of specific strands of extremism. For instance, it enables a targeted search for studies which focus on risk and protective factors associated with “adolescents” and “right-wing extremism,” which at present yields a list of twelve studies (see figure 5). These findings, in turn, can serve to inform an evidence-based discussion about the most effective ways for schools to address right-wing extremism in their student population.

Figure 5: Display of studies on risk and protective factors associated with adolescents and right-wing extremism.

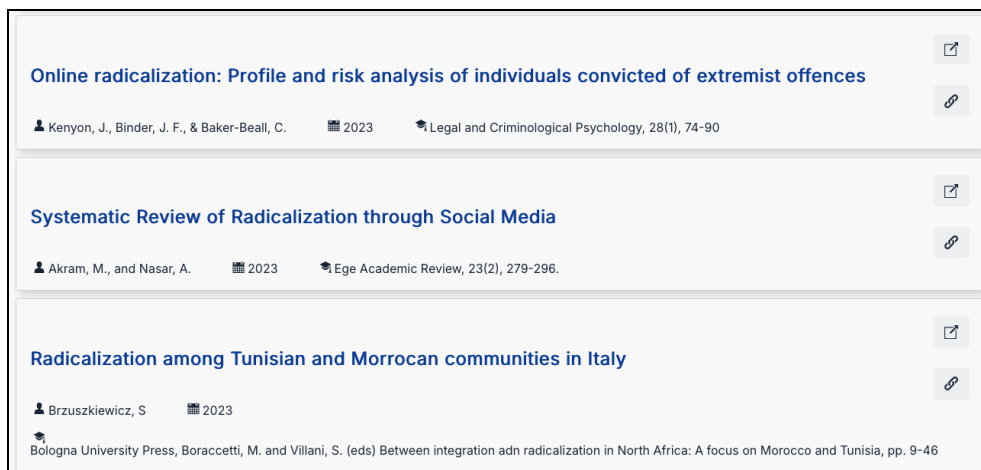


In the design phase, where concrete measures to counter or prevent violent extremism are discussed and decided on, the repository further promises to aid the creation of a robust and evidence-based theory of change, which lays out and provides the justification for an initiative's rationale and objectives. By offering insights into the role and relevance of individual risk and protective factors - such as social isolation, online gaming, or positive parenting – the repository enables the creation of propositions for initiatives whose assumed logic is research-informed and consciously developed rather than based on imitation or intuition. More robust propositions for a P/CVE initiative, grounded in a review of available research on risk and protective factors, in turn, enable an informed discussion of and responsible decisions on (competing) proposals for a P/CVE initiative at school level which can serve to avoid unintended consequences and facilitate the efficient use of available resources.

Finally, in the evaluation phase, in which an agreed initiative is tested and further reflected on, the repository can serve as a tool for re-assessing or refining an initiative (and its theory of change). Once an initiative has been agreed and implemented, the repository can, moreover, serve as a platform for a time-efficient monitoring of the evolving research landscape. If, for instance, a school has agreed on and implemented a P/CVE initiative

informed by research on the use of social media as a risk factor, then the repository can be used to regularly update and evaluate the initiative’s theory of change and implementation practices. The repository, in this regard, allows for a time-efficient and targeted search of (newly) available research related to risks, for instance, related to “online networks and social media”. Currently, the repository includes 29 studies on the latter subject, of which 16 have been published between 2022 and 2024 (see figure 6). The repository, by offering an overview of key findings for each of these studies, offers a platform where P/CVE practitioners, including teachers implementing related initiatives in secondary schools, can keep up to date on a fast-developing knowledge base and evaluate and adjust their initiatives in view of the evolving evidence.

Figure 6: Display of studies on the risk factor of “online networks and social media”



Applying the INDEED Repository in Tertiary Prevention

Next to primary prevention, the repository further promises to support the preparation, design, and evaluation of secondary or tertiary P/CVE programmes. The repository, for instance, can be employed to inform the development of tertiary reintegration programmes which aim to promote desistance through a process of embedding extremists into “a network of social relations [which may involve] reintegration back into the family” (Marsden, 2016: 11).

More specifically, the INDEED repository can facilitate the preparation of reintegration programmes by providing an overview of existing research on the role of social networks – including family, peer, and community networks –in (de)radicalisation processes. Currently, the repository includes 95 studies which discuss “social networks” as a risk factor, as well as 36 studies which contain insights into the role of “social networks” as a protective factor. By making these findings accessible to a larger audience through the display of key quotes from each study, and by collecting these findings in one integrated database, the repository can provide valuable background information which can be integrated with practical knowledge about specific (local) conditions to inform an evidence-based discussion about the design of a reintegration initiative.

At the design stage, the repository can further facilitate the development of a theory of change, which can guide a specific programme by clarifying its objectives and proposed mechanism. As noted by Glazzard (2025: 425), the development of such a theory is “not an academic issue but one with substantive practical implications” as interventions with a clear theory of change “are more likely to be effective”. To develop a clear and evidence-based theory of change, programme designers may draw on the repository to identify, substantiate, and verify assumptions about their proposed reintegration programme. To verify the assumptions about a reintegration programme aimed at family reintegration, programme designers may, for instance, use the repository to gain an updated overview of relevant insights into the protective quality of “family networks”. At present, the repository includes 13 studies which investigate the protective factor of “strong social bonds/ family ties”. The presentation of such findings is illustrated in the two figures below, which display results for the protective factor of “strong social bonds/ family ties” of two recent studies, including one systematic review (Miconi et al., 2024; Zych and Nasaescu, 2022).

Figure 7: Display of findings (Zych and Nasascu, 2022) for the protective factor “strong social bonds/ family ties”

Strong social bonds/ family ties
The current systematic review showed that parental ethnic socialization, extremist family members and family conflict were significant risk factors for radicalization whereas high family socio-economic status, bigger family size, and high family commitment were significant protective factors against radicalization. Thus, several family-related risk and protective factors for radicalization have been described, although many were based on a limited number of studies and results should be taken with caution (p. 51).

Figure 8: Display of findings (Miconi et al., 2024) for the protective factor “strong social bonds/ family ties”

The fact that the ‘Non-violent’ profile was the largest one (34.07%) is reassuring and points to an overall peaceful engagement of youth towards democratic contributions to society and social transformation (Lerner et al., 2003). Adolescents in this group had a higher probability of reporting a better school performance compared to the other profiles; youth in this group also reported higher perceived social support from family compared to the ‘Pro-Violence’ and ‘Low support’ profiles, which showed either high levels of support for violence and/or an overall preference for violence over non-violence. The ‘Average support’ profile was characterized by a below-average engagement in all profile indicators. Individuals in this profile differed from the youth in the ‘Non-violent’ one especially for reporting less perceived social support from family, indicating that family support may have a crucial role in helping youth differentiate between violent and non-violent forms of activism and in empowering youth towards more democratic forms of activism (Jahnke et al., 2023). This confirms prior findings on how academic achievement and support from family can protect youth from violence (Jahnke et al., 2023) and suggests that positive experience in the family (p. 11).

Such findings, in turn, cannot only serve to inform the design but also the (re)assessment and refinement of a re-integration programme’s theory of change. Programme evaluators, thus may, for instance, use the repository to assess the extent to which a programme’s theory of change continues to be consistent with or undermined by emerging research on the role of family ties in (de)radicalisation and desistance dynamics, and propose commensurate reflections on the programme’s assumed mechanisms and outcomes. This form of evaluation may be particularly relevant in the field of tertiary prevention, where research on push and pull factors has evolved considerably in recent years (Hassan et al., 2023).

The INDEED Repository in P/CVE Programme Development: Key Limitations and Ways Forward

The online repository, as outlined above, promises to strengthen the process of evidence-based programme development in several important ways. Facilitating a robust review of relevant research on risk and protective factors, it allows P/CVE practitioners to gain valuable knowledge about the phenomenon of violent extremism, which can otherwise be difficult to access. Such knowledge, in turn, can inform the design and (re)assessment of P/CVE initiatives within specific localities. Regular updates of the repository, moreover, enable practitioners to efficiently monitor evolving research on specific risk and protective factors, which can be integrated into the design and implementation of ongoing initiatives.

While the repository has several advantages, its ability to support evidence-based programme development, however, is, at the same time, limited in some notable respects. First, it is important to recall that evidence-based practice requires the integration of best

available evidence, professional judgement, and client (or community) values, preferences, and circumstances. The repository, which primarily supports the review of best available evidence, thus only addresses one element of evidence-based practice, which needs to be complemented further. This implies that initiatives should not be designed unreflectively based on retrieved research findings on risk and protective factors. Instead, decisions on programme development should further consider and integrate practitioner knowledge and experience, and carefully consider the values, preferences, and circumstances of communities affected by proposed initiatives. Evidence-based programme development, in other words, cannot and should not rest on the review of available research on violent extremism alone.

Second, it is important to stress that evidence-based programme development should not only rely on the consultation of the best available external evidence (i.e, available research in P/CVE) but also the best available internal evidence, which includes available documentation on violent extremism within the institution for which an initiative is proposed. Internal evidence, such as case reports, offers a valuable source for assessing the importance of individual risk and protective factors at the micro (individual) and meso (group) level, and allows for greater tailoring of an initiative design to the local context. The consultation of the INDEED repository, in this regard, cannot and should not replace but rather complement a careful review of an institution's internal documentation, which remains highly relevant for evidence-based programme development.

Finally, the repository, which presents an overview of the evidence base for risk and protective factors, only provides a limited overview of relevant external evidence in the field of P/CVE. The repository, in this regard, should not be seen as a one-stop shop for the review of "best available evidence" but rather as an important starting point for developing a research-informed process of initiative design. This process should also include other types of external evidence, notably the results of programme evaluations, which can provide an understanding of the extent to – and the circumstances under – which existing P/CVE programmes have shown to be (in)effective. In view of the latter, programme developers may use the INDEED repository of risk and protective factors in combination with the "INDEED

repository of evaluations and evidence-based practices,”⁵ which provides a platform for collecting evaluation results in the field of P/CVE.

The INDEED repository and evidence-based policing: A police officer’s perspective

The INDEED repository of studies on risk and protective factors has been developed through close collaboration between researchers and practitioners, including police agencies from different EU member states. Police agencies, including the Hellenic Police in Greece, have provided valuable advice on the design and functions of the repository and applied and promoted the tool within their local or national context. In the following section, the co-author of this paper, Hellenic Police Brigadier General Vasileios Theofilopoulos, reflects on 1) the capacity of the repository to advance an evidence-based policing approach to P/CVE, 2) challenges to the effective use of the repository by police practitioners and 3) the potential for developing the repository further in the future.

The repository’s potential to advance evidence-based policing in P/CVE

Police agencies are potentially well-equipped to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism (Sydes et al., 2023). Through intelligence gathering, investigation, and enforcement, police agencies can play an important part in counter-terrorism activities (Halford, 2023). Research suggests that the police can also “play a role in tackling violent extremism by participating in, and implementing, programmes that promote community connectedness” (Mazerolle et al., 2020: 3). Police agencies may further be a valuable partner within multi-agency programmes to address radicalization and violent extremism (Mazerolle et al., 2021), and play an important part in training officers in recognizing and responding to radicalization, and educating others through awareness raising programmes (Sydes et al., 2023: 4).

The police require a good understanding of the phenomena of radicalization and violent extremism to develop well-grounded and evidence-based training and interventions (Ratcliffe, 2022). Access to reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date research is therefore a

⁵ The INDEED repository for evaluations and evidence-based practices remains in an early stage of development and can be publicly accessed here: <https://www.toolkit.indeedproject.eu/RepositoryPathView>

vital concern. The INDEED repository can serve as a key resource for strengthening an evidence-based policing approach to violent extremism by providing access to empirical studies and a central platform that integrates global research on risk and protective factors associated with radicalization and violent extremism. It connects focused knowledge and unifies fragmented research on the phenomenon, carried out in different countries, helping to approach and understand it holistically, and to deal with it more effectively. In providing this service, the repository promises to advance evidence-based policing in three important respects.

First, the repository supports the creation of baseline knowledge and training curricula. By providing a pool of knowledge, it helps practitioners to grasp the complexities of radicalization and to raise their awareness in this field. The repository can support the development and updating of training curricula and manuals on specific subjects related to radicalization and violent extremism. The repository, in this regard, allows for the creation of trainings that challenge preconceived ideas and create expertise, including in areas where experience and primary knowledge is missing. Considering the latter, the Hellenic Police, for instance, has used the repository to gain knowledge on lone actor terrorism, a phenomenon with which Greece has limited experience. The authors of the training material consulted the repository by selecting the “study population” of “lone actor terrorists,” which produced a list of thirteen studies on the subject. The findings of these studies were carefully reviewed, and retrieved knowledge on “lone actors” was subsequently integrated into a national training manual on extremism and violent radicalization.

Second, by reviewing the repository, law enforcement officers can obtain valuable information which can inform the development of targeted strategies and interventions to prevent radicalisation and counter violent extremism. The repository, for instance, can support the creation and assessment of interventions which address the challenge of children growing up in families involved in terrorism which has gained renewed attention after the fall of the Islamic State in 2019. In this concrete example, the repository can be utilized by practitioners to review research on associated risk factors (e.g., Cook and Schneider, 2024), and develop interventions that address the root causes of radicalization, including multi-agency support systems, which look beyond immediate security risks and incorporate broader psychological,

social and developmental challenges faced by children growing up in families involved in terrorist organizations.

Third, and finally, insights gleaned from the repository can help to tailor police operations and strengthen evidence-based decisions by practitioners in ad-hoc situations. By drawing on the repository's wealth of empirical studies, practitioners can develop more effective responses to urgent situations which are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of risk and protective factors, allowing for a more nuanced and adaptable approach in dynamic, high-risk environments. It also strengthens the capacity of law enforcement agencies to adopt responses which focus not only on security but also on long-term prevention and reintegration strategies. The repository, moreover, can support the internal evaluation and assessment of operations and ad-hoc actions, and inform reflections on and efforts to learn from operational experiences.

Challenges and ways forward

While the repository's extensive database offers enormous potential, it also presents challenges for practitioners who must navigate, interpret, and apply this wealth of information in context. One critical challenge that practitioners face when using the repository is the massive amount of information available. While the comprehensive nature of the repository is one of its strengths, it can also be overwhelming for practitioners pressed to make timely decisions. Sorting through numerous studies, reports, and datasets to find the most relevant and usable information requires considerable time and expertise. For practitioners who may not have specialized training in survey analysis, this task can be challenging, potentially leading to missed opportunities to apply critical knowledge. Practitioners, moreover, are often called upon to act on short notice, making it difficult to invest the hours necessary to sift through extensive databases, review the latest studies, and ensure that the strategies chosen are supported by hard evidence.

Another important challenge for practitioners is to ensure that the information coming from the repository is relevant to the specific environment in which it will be applied. Radicalisation processes and the effectiveness of countermeasures can vary significantly between different regions, communities, and socio-political contexts. Therefore, practitioners must be skilled not only in retrieving data but also in critically assessing whether it is

applicable in their local context. This requires a deep understanding of the phenomenon of radicalisation in different contexts, as well as the ability to adapt general findings to local realities. The repository, therefore, while an essential tool, is not enough on its own to guarantee evidence-based practice. Professional judgment and a detailed understanding of the local context are crucial to ensuring that the strategies derived from the repository are effective and relevant. Without this contextual awareness, there is a risk of implementing strategies that may fail to address the unique challenges of the community or, worse, exacerbate the problem.

One effective solution to some of the challenges described above may be the creation of a dedicated position or structure within the policing sector to monitor, interpret, and translate research findings into actionable and appropriate strategies for P/CVE. Such a position could help to ensure that key insights from the repository are not only accessible but also effectively integrated into daily practice, including the planning, implementation, and internal reviews of law enforcement (and broader multi-agency) strategies and operations. This could be achieved in part through the development of targeted training programs, regularly updated guidelines, and real-time advisory support. This approach can go a long way to build and strengthen bridges between research and practice, empowering practitioners to make informed decisions swiftly and accurately in their local contexts.

Additionally, the repository can itself be further developed to support the efficient and targeted review of studies on risk and protective factors associated with radicalization and violent extremism. On the one hand, interactive features such as user feedback mechanisms and discussion forums can promote user engagement and knowledge sharing within the repository. Implementing a feedback loop where users can share their experiences and suggestions can help the repository evolve in ways that meet the changing needs of its audience. Interactive elements can also help users interpret and analyse research results more effectively, enhancing collaboration and innovation in P/CVE. On the other hand, linking the repository up with other relevant databases in the field of P/CVE, including the INDEED repository on evaluations and evidence-based practices in P/CVE, can provide users with a more comprehensive understanding of violent extremism and radicalization processes, and help to share and disseminate critical information about the effectiveness and challenges related to potential solutions.

Conclusions and ways forward

This article has outlined key functions of the INDEED repository and discussed its potential to strengthen evidence-based practice in P/CVE. The article suggests that the INDEED repository is well-suited to facilitate a more efficient consultation and integration of research in critical P/CVE practices, including the (re)designing of initiatives. It, moreover, highlights the repository's capacity to support the integration of research into professional training, manuals, and advice, and by extension to strengthen evidence-based learning in different institutions tasked with P/CVE, including law enforcement agencies. The article, in this regard, argues that the INDEED repository can play an important part in advancing evidence-based practice across different sectors of the P/CVE field.

At the same time, the article has also pointed out several limitations. First, it has highlighted that the repository does not provide research syntheses or policy recommendations and therefore requires users to interpret research findings on their own, which can be a challenging and time-consuming task. Second, the article has stressed that the repository only addresses one strand of the P/CVE literature and should thus not be considered a one-stop shop for the consultation of research evidence by P/CVE practitioners. As the repository is primarily focused on facilitating the consultation of research evidence, it should moreover be seen as addressing only one of three key pillars of evidence-based practice, which denotes the integration of best available evidence, professional judgement, and client (or community) values, preferences, and circumstances. A review of the repository on its own, therefore, should not warrant the labeling of a practice in P/CVE as "evidence-based". Third, the article has stressed that the repository, while aiming to be as comprehensive as possible, does not claim to offer a complete overview of existing research, especially with respect to non-English language publications.

These limitations, in turn, point to some future direction for developing the repository further. First, to support practitioners in reviewing and interpreting study findings displayed in the repository, the creation of interactive feedback mechanisms and discussion forums could present a useful addition to the repository's current toolset. The creation of tutorials and online training materials, moreover, could facilitate in-house trainings on the use of the repository, including for specific tasks such as an organization's development of a new – or

its (re)assessment of an ongoing – initiative. Second, linking the repository closer to other databases in the field, such as the European Commission’s e-library on radicalization, could help to create a more comprehensive platform which allows practitioners to efficiently review different strands of the P/CVE literature, including evaluations of past and ongoing initiatives, in an integrated online space. Third, and finally, to create an as complete database as possible for the repository, further efforts are needed to identify and assess further relevant studies, particularly currently underrepresented non-English language publications. The repository’s ability to provide access to available research on risk and protective factors could further be strengthened by giving researchers the opportunity to share preprint versions of their manuscripts to enable users to read and review research findings within the context of the original study. These efforts will require the leveraging of scientific networks in P/CVE as well as the creation of efficient communication channels, which researchers can use to share their work and to communicate suggestions for studies to be included in the repository on risk and protective factors.

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