



Social Grievances and Violent Extremism in Indonesia

Exploring the appetite for psychosocial support among at-risk audiences

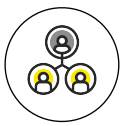
December **2020**



Background

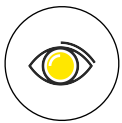
Extremist groups' online recruitment mechanisms frequently exploit the wide range of grievances and vulnerabilities experienced by individuals at-risk of radicalisation.

While it is widely accepted¹ that mental health and wellbeing play a vital role in resilience to violent extremism, most approaches tend to focus on preventing violent extremism through purely ideological means and are not sufficiently tailored to the individual at-risk.



The at-risk audience

Moonshot CVE has previously conducted research into the violent extremist audience in Indonesia in order to understand the geo-demographic characteristics of this specific online audience, and the types of content in which they are most interested. Moonshot found that Indonesian men and women displayed remarkably similar levels of interest in the various types of content published online by violent extremist groups, notably videos, books and magazines or newsletters. Women were more interested in anasheed and media platforms than men.²



Ideological counter content vs psychosocial content

In an effort to understand this audience further and, more importantly, the most effective means of preventing violent extremism, Moonshot conducted an experiment into the propensity for at-risk users in Indonesia to engage with ideological counter content compared to psychosocial support content. Psychosocial support is defined in this context as support which addresses the social issues (such as a lack of belonging and employment opportunities) and psychological factors (depression, stress, anger and loneliness) that extremist groups typically exploit in their recruitment.

This report details the results of this pilot, which analysed the engagement of users searching for violent jihadist content with ads offering traditional counter-narrative content³ and ads offering psychosocial support⁴ on Google Search over four months (11 June - 22 September 2020). Where possible, demographic data was also collected to enable analysis of any differences based on age and gender.

¹ Koehler, D. Understanding Deradicalization. Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism. Oxon/ New York: Routledge. 2016.

² Moonshot. *Gender And Violent Extremism: An Analysis Of Online Behaviour Across Asia Pacific - Indonesia*. London, 2018.

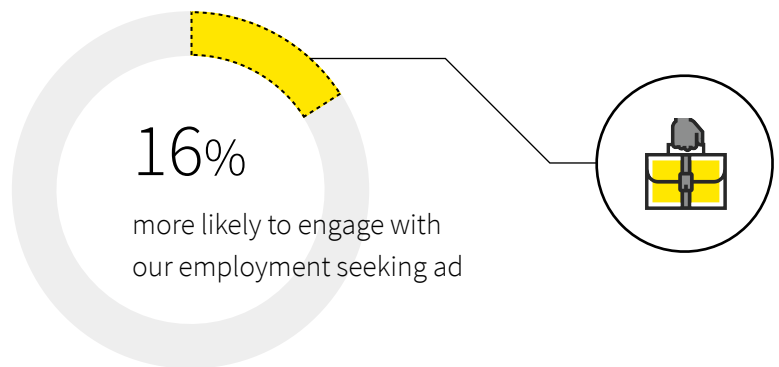
³ The counter-narrative ad offered content related to the extremist ideologies being searched for.

⁴ Moonshot tested six different psychosocial needs - (1) loneliness, (2) depression, (3) anger, (4) stress, (5) lack of belonging and (6) unemployment. Each ad was headlined with the question "do you feel [type of psychosocial need]?" and followed with an offer of support.

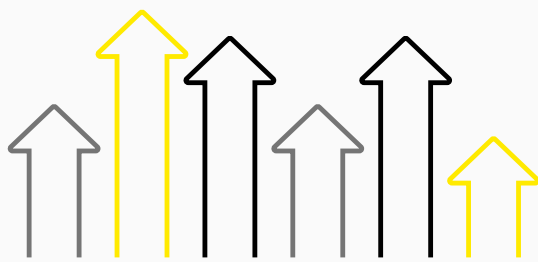
Key findings

The results show that at-risk audiences in Indonesia are more likely to click on ads offering employment assistance than ads offering ideologically-based counter content. However, users whose searches indicated a desire to join or engage with violent groups demonstrated a greater appetite for psychosocial support ads that were tailored to a feeling of loneliness. This audience was also more inclined to engage with ads offering support with employment those offering traditional counter-narrative content.

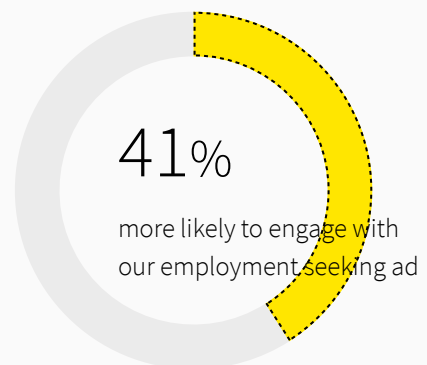
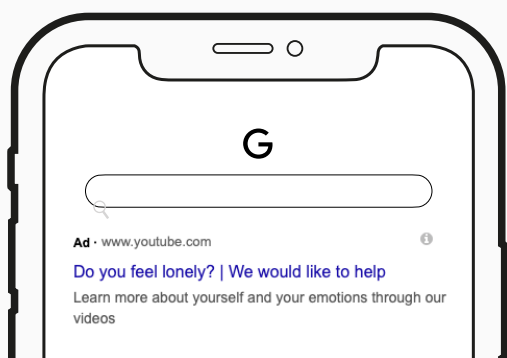
Compared to ads offering counter-narrative content, Indonesian audiences searching for violent jihadist content online were:



Audiences indicating a desire to join or engage with violent groups online were:



128% more likely to engage with our loneliness ad

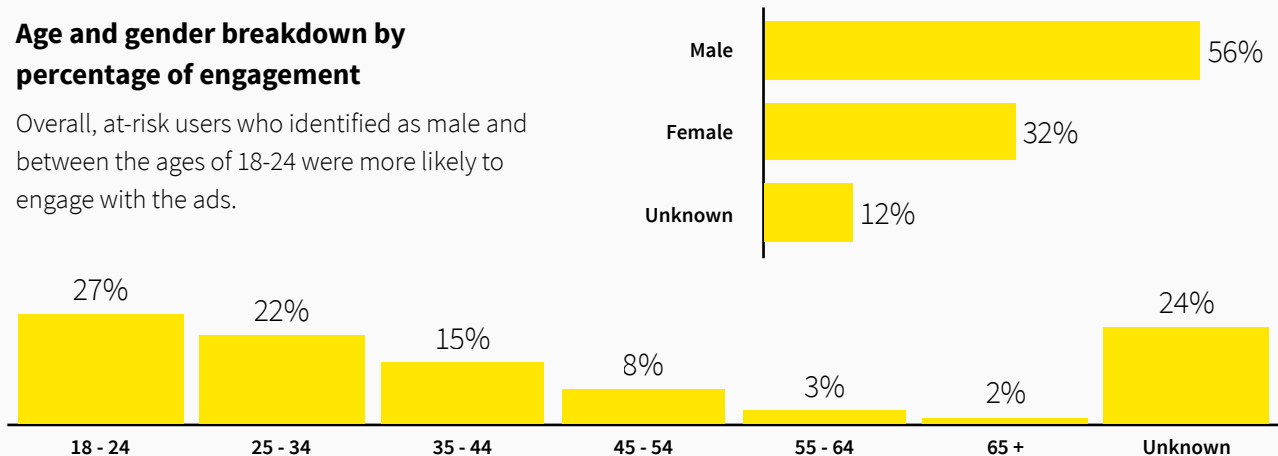




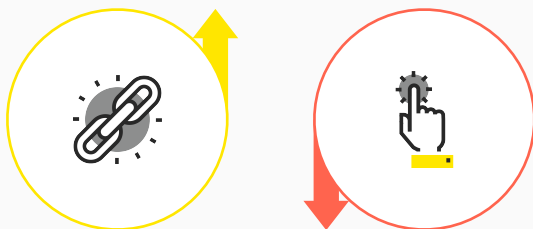
Breakdown by gender and age

Age and gender breakdown by percentage of engagement

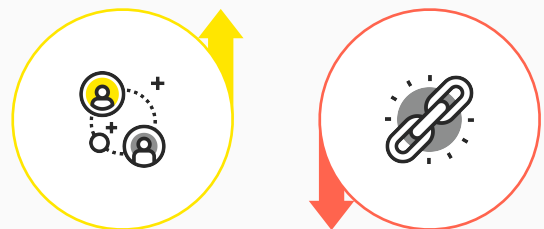
Overall, at-risk users who identified as male and between the ages of 18-24 were more likely to engage with the ads.



Male users were more likely to engage with ads offering support for depression and stress, and less likely to engage with ideological counter content.



Conversely, users identifying as female were least likely to engage with depression and stress ads. Instead they were most likely to engage with ads offering support for loneliness, anger and unemployment.



At-risk users over the age of 55 were:

40%



more likely to engage with ads offering support for than those aged 18-54.

At-risk users aged 18-34 were:

131%



more likely to engage with ads offering support with employment than those over the age of 35.



Conclusion

The data gathered during this pilot indicate that psychosocial support is an area of unmet need in people most vulnerable to violent jihadist recruitment online in Indonesia, and that this population is open to engaging with support online.

This echoes the literature on disengagement in Indonesia, which argues that disillusionment of the movement, a strong support network and new opportunities were key factors in why individuals chose to leave terrorist groups.⁵

There are a number of intervention providers in Indonesia that work to address issues of loneliness and unemployment of violent extremist individuals, by providing therapy, soft skills training, entrepreneurship coaching in tandem with disengagement assistance. But at present there is no secure online offramping mechanism to connect this specific at-risk audience with support services. Moonshot has successfully piloted online multi-platform offramping mechanisms in a number of different contexts; in these scenarios, at-risk individuals can voluntarily engage with professional support services in their local areas (both online and offline, where the risk threshold is deemed appropriate). Moonshot CVE's innovative online offramping technology can initiate and manage this process at scale.

Recommendations

1

Recommendation #1 / Digital campaigns

Micro-targeted messaging campaigns can use online advertising services to provide at-risk search engine users with alternative, credible content that is specific to their risk level as well as their unmet psychosocial needs.

Rather than focusing heavily on content that debunks extremist ideologies, campaigns should offer users a different path by directly confronting unemployment or loneliness depending upon the users' appetite for violent extremism and needs. The support offered should be specific to the gender and age of users, where possible. This level of granularity will ensure that individuals are connected with the most appropriate content and have the greatest chance of receiving the support they need and ultimately disengaging from socially harmful movements.

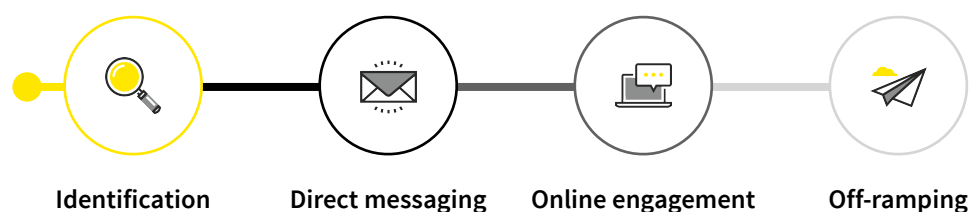
2

Recommendation #2 / Online interventions

Users seeking to join or engage with violent jihadist content online should be provided with an alternative: professional support to help them transition out of extremist movements.

At-risk Individuals can be messaged by trained intervention providers who will offer them online support for their needs, in an effort to establish trust and engage in sustained conversations. The relationship will then transition to the offline space, where individuals will be off-ramped into a range of services, including organisations that provide mental health support and soft-skills training.

And end-to-end model
of engagement



⁵ Chernov Hwang, Julie. *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement Of Indonesian Jihadists*. Cornell University Press, 2018.

