Faith-Based Responses to Youth Radicalization: Religious Education, Digital Media, and Community Prevention

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Abstract

Youth radicalization is one of the most difficult moral, educational, religious, and public security challenges facing contemporary societies. It cannot be reduced to one cause, one ideology, one community, or one digital platform. Young people may become vulnerable to extremist narratives through identity crisis, moral confusion, discrimination, family breakdown, political grievance, social isolation, online propaganda, peer networks, trauma, and the search for belonging. This article argues that faith communities can play a constructive and nationally significant role in preventing youth radicalization when their work is rooted in sound religious education, digital literacy, pastoral care, family support, interfaith cooperation, and community-based prevention. Drawing on the Qur'an, Hadith, Prophetic Seerah, comparative religious ethics, theories of religious boundaries, public responsibility, social identity, moral formation, digital media studies, and contemporary prevention literature, the article develops a Faith-Based Community Prevention Model. The model combines theological clarity, moral education, digital resilience, trusted mentoring, early support, and public partnership. It rejects both securitized suspicion of religion and naive romanticization of religious communities. Instead, it shows that mosques, churches, synagogues, schools, families, universities, and civic institutions can work together to protect youth from violent extremism while preserving human dignity, religious freedom, and social trust. In keeping with the scholarly pattern of recent work on interreligious boundaries, faithful public ethics, and responsible artificial intelligence, this study connects classical religious resources with contemporary concerns such as online recruitment, hate speech, Islamophobia, antisemitism, religious illiteracy, youth vulnerability, and civic peace. The article concludes that the most effective faith-based response to youth radicalization is neither surveillance alone nor preaching alone. It is a holistic moral ecology in which youth are educated, heard, spiritually guided, digitally equipped, socially included, and connected to peaceful forms of religious identity and public service.

Keywords: Youth Radicalization; Violent Extremism; Religious Education; Digital Media; Community Prevention; Islamic Ethics; Interfaith Dialogue; Public Responsibility; Youth Resilience; Faith Communities

Introduction

Youth radicalization has become a major concern for scholars, policy makers, educators, parents, religious leaders, and community organizations. The term radicalization is often used broadly, but in public safety discussions it usually refers to a process through which a person adopts extremist ideas that can justify hatred, exclusion, or violence. Not every radical idea leads to violence, and not

every intense religious conviction is dangerous. The danger arises when religious, political, racial, ethnic, or ideological identity is transformed into moral permission to dehumanize others and use violence against them. For young people, this danger is especially serious because adolescence and early adulthood are periods of identity formation, emotional intensity, social search, and moral experimentation.

This article focuses on faith-based responses to youth radicalization. It does not claim that religion is the only cause of radicalization. In fact, the opposite is often true. Violent extremist groups frequently misuse religious language, scriptural fragments, historical wounds, and moral symbols to recruit young people who are already searching for meaning, dignity, belonging, or revenge. UNESCO emphasizes that prevention must begin with education, dialogue, respect for human rights, and the rule of law, and that education can build learners' resilience against hateful and violent narratives.[1] This insight is consistent with religious ethics because authentic religious education aims to form conscience, discipline desire, deepen compassion, and connect human beings to divine accountability.

The problem becomes more complex in the digital age. Social media platforms, encrypted messaging applications, video-sharing sites, gaming communities, memes, short videos, and algorithmic recommendation systems can expose youth to narratives of humiliation, conspiracy, hate, and heroic violence. Extremist recruiters do not always begin with explicit calls for violence. They often begin with emotional belonging, grievance, humor, identity affirmation, selective history, victimhood narratives, and the promise of purpose. Digital radicalization therefore requires more than content removal. It requires digital literacy, emotional support, theological correction, family awareness, peer resilience, and trusted community intervention.

Religious communities are uniquely positioned to respond because they shape moral imagination before a crisis becomes visible. A mosque, church, synagogue, temple, school, youth circle, or family gathering can become a space where young people learn how to disagree without hatred, how to interpret sacred texts responsibly, how to live with religious difference, and how to transform anger into service. Yet religious institutions can also fail if they ignore youth questions, avoid digital realities, rely on fear-based preaching, or reduce radicalization to policing language. A responsible faith-based response must therefore be educational, pastoral, theological, social, and civic at the same time.

The present article follows the scholarly pattern of a recent comparative religious article on Jews, Gentiles, Muslims, interreligious boundaries, ethical interaction, and public responsibility. That article argues that religious boundaries can preserve identity while also becoming a moral test of how communities treat outsiders.[2] This study applies a similar method to youth radicalization. It asks how religious education can preserve faithful identity without producing hatred, how digital media can be addressed without demonizing youth culture, and how community prevention can strengthen public safety without violating dignity or religious freedom.

The central argument is that faith-based prevention succeeds when it holds together six principles: sound theology, moral character, digital resilience, youth belonging, interfaith literacy, and community partnership. If any one of these elements is missing, prevention becomes weak.

Theology without compassion can become harsh. Compassion without theology can become vague. Digital monitoring without trust can push youth into hidden spaces. Community programs without families can miss early warning signs. Public safety work without religious literacy can produce suspicion. Religious preaching without social support can fail to reach vulnerable youth. The task, therefore, is to build a moral ecology of prevention.

Why Youth Radicalization Requires Religious and Public Reason

Youth radicalization is not only a security problem. It is also a crisis of meaning. Young people are often drawn to extremist narratives not because they have carefully studied theology or politics, but because they are searching for identity, clarity, belonging, justice, and emotional recognition. Extremist groups exploit these needs by offering simple answers to complex pain. They divide the world into pure and impure, believer and enemy, victim and oppressor, hero and traitor. This binary imagination can be powerful because it gives a confused young person a complete story about the self and the world.

Mary Douglas's theory of purity and danger helps explain why extremist narratives are emotionally effective. Douglas argues that societies create order by classifying what belongs and what does not belong; impurity is often "matter out of place."[3] Extremist movements misuse this structure by portraying pluralism, compromise, religious difference, or ordinary weakness as impurity that must be removed. A faithful religious response must resist this distortion. Religion needs boundaries, but boundaries must be governed by justice, mercy, knowledge, and humility.

Talal Asad's concept of religion as a discursive tradition also matters. Religion is not merely private feeling; it is formed through texts, institutions, embodied practices, authority, and discipline.[4] Youth prevention must therefore engage the real institutions where religious meaning is produced: families, mosques, seminaries, churches, weekend schools, online teachers, WhatsApp groups, YouTube channels, and peer circles. If legitimate religious educators are absent from these spaces, young people may learn religion from anonymous influencers, fragments, or manipulative recruiters.

Robert Bellah's work on religious evolution reminds us that religious traditions contain both particular identity and universal moral aspiration.[5] This tension is important for youth. A young believer needs a confident identity, but that identity must open toward responsibility rather than hostility. When religious belonging is taught as superiority without service, it can become dangerous. When it is taught as covenant, mercy, accountability, and public good, it becomes a source of resilience.

Rene Girard's theory of scapegoating provides another warning. Communities under stress may project their fear onto outsiders and unify themselves by blaming a vulnerable group.[6] Extremist radicalization often operates through scapegoating. It tells youth that all humiliation, poverty, political disorder, or moral confusion is caused by a single enemy. Faith-based education must expose this mechanism. It must teach youth that justice is not achieved by dehumanization and that religious commitment does not permit indiscriminate blame.

Literature Review and Scholarly Context

The literature on youth radicalization is multidisciplinary. It includes security studies, psychology, sociology, education, media studies, religious studies, theology, criminology, and public policy. A balanced literature review must avoid two errors. The first error is to treat religion itself as the automatic cause of radicalization. The second error is to deny that religious language can be misused by extremist movements. The more accurate view is that radicalization is a process shaped by personal vulnerability, social networks, political grievances, ideological narratives, online ecosystems, and community context.

UNESCO's work on preventing violent extremism through education places strong emphasis on critical thinking, respect for diversity, dialogue, nonviolence, citizenship, and human rights.[7] This educational approach is highly relevant to religious communities because faith-based education also seeks to form moral judgment. However, religious education must go beyond generic tolerance. It must teach young people how their own tradition understands mercy, disagreement, dignity, justice, sin, repentance, and the sanctity of life.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has emphasized that children recruited or exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups must be understood not only as potential offenders but also as victims of manipulation, exploitation, and harm.[8] This is crucial for faith communities. A young person flirting with extremist content should not immediately be treated as an enemy. Early intervention should include listening, mentoring, family support, psychological care, and theological clarification.

The European Radicalisation Awareness Network and related prevention initiatives emphasize the value of practitioners, local knowledge, early prevention, and multi-sector cooperation.[9] Faith communities can contribute to this ecosystem because they often have long-term relationships with families and youth. They see changes in behavior before formal institutions do. They can also provide moral vocabulary that secular programs may lack.

The uploaded comparative religious article provides an important scholarly foundation for this study because it connects religious boundaries with public responsibility. It draws on Douglas, Asad, Bellah, Boyarin, Girard, Hayes, Cohen, Sabih, Zetterholm, and contemporary Islamic scholarship to show that religious identity need not become hostility toward others.[10] This article builds on that insight by asking how religious identity can be taught to youth in a way that resists extremist boundary-making.

Contemporary Islamic and interfaith scholarship is especially relevant. Works on mosque-based social unity, interfaith harmony, Islamophobia, charity across faiths, tolerance, compassion, minority rights, mental health, environmental responsibility, economic justice, and AI ethics all show that religion can contribute to public life when interpreted through responsibility and mercy.[11] These works help move prevention from fear to constructive public ethics.

Studies by Salman Arif and co-authors on atheism, morality, scientism, minority rights, ecological ethics, artificial intelligence, digital surveillance, leadership, and Islamic responses to modern challenges further support the argument that religious scholarship must address contemporary

intellectual and social crises.[12] Youth radicalization is one such crisis because it concerns religion, identity, ethics, digital life, and public safety at the same time.

Religious Education as Moral Formation

Religious education is often misunderstood as the transfer of information about doctrines and rituals. In the context of radicalization prevention, it must be understood more deeply as moral formation. A young person may know many religious slogans and still lack wisdom, compassion, patience, and interpretive discipline. Extremist recruiters often exploit shallow religious knowledge by presenting isolated verses, selective historical episodes, and emotional stories without context. Sound religious education must therefore teach method, not only memory.

In Islam, the Qur'an repeatedly links faith with justice, mercy, patience, truthfulness, and accountability. Human diversity is described as part of divine wisdom, not a mistake to be erased: humanity was made into nations and tribes so that people may know one another.[13] The Qur'an also states that there is no compulsion in religion and commands believers to argue with the People of the Book in the best manner.[14] These principles do not remove theological difference, but they discipline how difference is lived.

The Prophetic Seerah is central to prevention because it provides a living model of religious conviction joined with mercy, covenant, patience, and public responsibility. The Constitution of Medina shows that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, established a civic framework in which different groups could belong to a shared political order while retaining distinct religious identities.[15] This model can help youth understand that Islamic identity does not require social hatred or withdrawal from plural society.

Religious education for prevention should include at least five areas. First, it should teach sacred texts with context. Verses about conflict, justice, covenant, and religious difference must be explained historically, linguistically, ethically, and legally. Second, it should teach the objectives of religion: preservation of life, dignity, faith, intellect, family, property, and public welfare. Third, it should teach the ethics of disagreement, including adab, patience, and restraint. Fourth, it should teach the difference between courage and recklessness. Fifth, it should teach that service to neighbors, charity, environmental care, and social unity are religious duties, not secondary concerns.

In Jewish and Christian contexts, similar principles apply. A young person must learn that covenant, chosenness, salvation, or religious truth do not permit contempt toward others. The uploaded comparative article shows that Judaism and Islam both maintain meaningful boundaries, but these boundaries are not reducible to hostility or superiority.[16] This insight should become part of youth education. Strong identity is not the enemy of peaceful citizenship. Poorly formed identity is the danger.

Digital Media and the New Ecology of Radicalization

Digital media has changed the speed, form, and emotional texture of radicalization. In the past, recruitment often required physical networks, printed materials, secret meetings, or direct

organizational contact. Today, a young person can encounter extremist material through ordinary online browsing, humor pages, gaming chats, encrypted groups, comment threads, or algorithmic recommendations. Radicalization can begin with memes, identity jokes, conspiracy theories, edited videos, or selective images of suffering. The pathway is rarely linear. It is often a gradual movement from curiosity to grievance, from grievance to belonging, and from belonging to ideological closure.

The digital environment is especially powerful because it offers constant emotional stimulation. A teenager who feels ignored in family, school, or community may find online spaces where anger is affirmed and confusion is given a heroic explanation. Extremist media often presents itself as authenticity against hypocrisy, courage against weakness, and brotherhood against loneliness. It may also use religious language to transform ordinary frustration into sacred anger.

Artificial intelligence and platform algorithms add a further challenge. Recommendation systems are designed to increase engagement, not necessarily moral wisdom. When a user interacts with polarizing content, the platform may recommend more intense material. This does not mean technology alone radicalizes youth, but it can accelerate exposure and deepen echo chambers. Recent Islamic ethical scholarship on artificial intelligence and digital surveillance warns that digital systems must be evaluated through human dignity, justice, accountability, and public welfare.[17]

Faith communities need a digital prevention strategy. Sermons alone are not enough if youth spend many hours a day in online worlds where religious identity is being shaped by influencers, clips, and anonymous accounts. Parents and religious educators should be trained to recognize digital warning signs without panicking. Warning signs may include sudden withdrawal, obsession with violent content, dehumanizing language, rigid us-versus-them thinking, secrecy around online groups, rejection of trusted family or teachers, and fascination with martyrdom or apocalyptic conflict. These signs should prompt care, not public shame.

Digital literacy should be taught as part of religious literacy. Youth should learn how propaganda works, how images can be edited, how algorithms shape attention, how conspiracy theories manipulate fear, and how extremist groups use religious fragments. They should also learn how to verify sources, ask scholars, understand context, and pause before sharing inflammatory content. Digital restraint can be taught as a spiritual discipline: guarding the eyes, tongue, heart, and intention in online spaces.

Family, Mosque, School, and Community Prevention

Community prevention begins before a young person encounters extremist content. It begins with belonging. Many youth who become vulnerable to radicalization experience emotional distance from family, humiliation at school, discrimination in society, or alienation from religious institutions. Prevention must therefore create spaces where young people can ask difficult questions without being mocked, silenced, or immediately judged.

The family is the first prevention institution. Parents do not need to be experts in counterterrorism, but they need trust, communication, and awareness. A child who cannot speak honestly at home

will search elsewhere. Parents should listen to youth questions about politics, faith, sexuality, discrimination, war, suffering, and injustice. Avoiding these topics does not protect youth. It leaves them to online interpreters. Family education programs in mosques, churches, and community centers should therefore teach parents how to discuss difficult issues with wisdom.

Mosques and religious centers are also central. Scholarship on the role of mosques for social unity in light of the Sirah shows that mosques can be centers of worship, education, reconciliation, charity, consultation, and social trust.[18] A mosque that only provides ritual services may miss its preventive responsibility. It should offer youth circles, mentorship, counseling referrals, family workshops, interfaith programs, service projects, and safe question forums.

Schools and universities also matter. Religious literacy should not be treated as a threat to secular education. Ignorance about religion can increase prejudice and make youth more vulnerable to simplistic narratives. Education that teaches comparative religion, ethics, civic responsibility, media literacy, and respectful disagreement can reduce fear and strengthen resilience. Interfaith educational programs are especially valuable because they humanize the religious other. Works on interfaith harmony, common ethical values, prayer, sacred texts, charity, tolerance, and compassion provide useful foundations for such programs.[19]

Community prevention also requires partnerships with mental health professionals. Some youth vulnerabilities are spiritual, but others are psychological, social, or traumatic. A young person struggling with depression, loneliness, anger, or family conflict may need counseling as much as religious instruction. Islamic scholarship on mental health and spiritual well-being shows that spiritual care and psychological care should not be treated as enemies.[20] Faith leaders should know when to refer youth to trained professionals.

Theological Misuse and Corrective Religious Literacy

Extremist movements often misuse theology in three ways. First, they isolate sacred texts from interpretive tradition. Second, they turn legitimate grievances into permission for hatred. Third, they erase moral restrictions by claiming emergency, revenge, or divine mandate. Corrective religious literacy must address each misuse directly.

The first misuse is textual isolation. A verse, hadith, legal ruling, or historical event is removed from its context and presented as a complete doctrine. Youth may be impressed because the recruiter appears confident and scriptural. The response should not be to hide difficult texts. The response should be to teach how interpretation works: language, occasion, purpose, scholarly disagreement, legal conditions, ethical limits, and the broader objectives of revelation.

The second misuse is grievance absolutism. Extremist narratives often begin with real suffering: war, occupation, racism, Islamophobia, poverty, humiliation, or moral hypocrisy. Faith communities should never dismiss these concerns. Works on Islamophobia and social dignity show that religious communities must take prejudice seriously.[21] However, pain does not justify injustice. Religious education must teach youth how to pursue justice through lawful, ethical, and constructive means.

The third misuse is moral exception. Extremist ideologues often argue that ordinary ethical rules no longer apply because the community is under attack. This is where Seerah-based education is essential. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, faced persecution, exile, war, betrayal, and grief, yet his model preserved mercy, covenant, restraint, and concern for noncombatants. Studies on compassion, gentleness, modesty, and character formation show that Islamic ethics cannot be separated from moral discipline.[22]

Interfaith Dialogue as Prevention

Interfaith dialogue is often treated as a symbolic activity for adults, but it can also be a practical method of youth prevention. Extremist narratives depend on distance from the other. They become stronger when young people have never met the people they are taught to fear. Dialogue weakens dehumanization by creating real relationships. It does not require theological compromise. It requires truthful encounter.

The comparative study of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions can teach youth that religious difference has always existed and that sacred traditions have developed ethical tools for living with difference. The uploaded article on Jews, Gentiles, and Muslims shows that boundaries can be interpreted as identity-forming structures that may become either protective disciplines or exclusionary instruments.[23] Youth need this distinction. A believer can know who he or she is without hating those who are different.

Interfaith prevention should be concrete. Youth from mosques, churches, synagogues, and civic groups can serve food together, visit one another's houses of worship, discuss shared ethical themes, work on anti-bullying campaigns, support refugees, or organize environmental service. Charity across faiths is especially powerful because it turns religious identity toward public mercy.[24] When youth experience religious difference through shared service, extremist caricatures become less believable.

At the same time, interfaith programs must avoid shallow harmony. Young people are intelligent. They know that religions differ about God, scripture, prophecy, salvation, law, and worship. Mature dialogue should make space for honest difference. The goal is not to say that all religions are the same. The goal is to teach that difference does not require hostility.

A Faith-Based Community Prevention Model

This article proposes a Faith-Based Community Prevention Model for youth radicalization. The model has six connected layers: theological clarity, moral character, digital resilience, trusted belonging, early care, and public partnership.

The first layer is theological clarity. Youth need religious education that is confident, contextual, and spiritually deep. Confusion creates vulnerability. When young people do not understand their own tradition, they can be attracted to loud voices that claim certainty. Theological clarity includes correct interpretation of scripture, knowledge of Prophetic ethics, awareness of legal limits, and understanding of religious diversity.

The second layer is moral character. Prevention is not only about rejecting bad ideas. It is about forming patience, humility, compassion, gratitude, courage, and self-control. Character-based education is strongly supported by Islamic teachings and contemporary scholarship on moral formation.[25] A young person with disciplined character is less likely to be manipulated by anger.

The third layer is digital resilience. Youth should be trained to recognize propaganda, emotional manipulation, conspiracy thinking, and dehumanizing language. Religious institutions should create media literacy workshops and trusted online content. Faith leaders must be present in digital spaces where youth already live.

The fourth layer is trusted belonging. Extremist groups recruit by offering brotherhood, purpose, and recognition. Faith communities must offer stronger forms of belonging: mentorship, youth leadership, service projects, sports, study circles, counseling, and spiritual companionship. Youth who feel seen and valued are less likely to seek dangerous belonging elsewhere.

The fifth layer is early care. Not every warning sign is radicalization. Some signs may reflect depression, trauma, bullying, grief, or family stress. Early care means responding before a crisis. It includes private conversation, family support, pastoral counseling, mental health referral, and connection to positive peers. Public shaming should be avoided because it can deepen isolation.

The sixth layer is public partnership. Faith communities should cooperate with schools, social workers, mental health professionals, civic organizations, and public safety institutions while protecting religious freedom and community trust. The U.S. and international prevention literature emphasizes community-based and multi-sector approaches.[26] Partnership should not turn religious institutions into surveillance agencies. It should help them become trusted places of prevention, support, and referral.

Table 1. Faith-Based Community Prevention Model

Layer	Main Purpose	Practical Application
Theological clarity	Prevent misuse of scripture and doctrine	Contextual tafsir, Seerah study, question forums, trained teachers
Moral character	Form patience, mercy, justice, and restraint	Youth halaqahs, service learning, character education
Digital resilience	Reduce vulnerability to online propaganda	Media literacy, source verification, safe reporting, positive online content
Trusted belonging	Replace extremist belonging with healthy community	Mentorship, youth leadership, peer support, mosque/church/synagogue programs
Early care	Respond before crisis or criminalization	Pastoral counseling, family support, mental health referral
Public partnership	Connect faith communities with civic prevention	Schools, social workers, interfaith networks, public safety resources

Policy and Institutional Implications

Faith-based responses to youth radicalization have direct implications for public policy and institutional practice. Governments and civic institutions should recognize religious communities as partners in prevention, not merely as objects of suspicion. When faith communities are treated only through a security lens, trust is damaged and youth may become more isolated. When they are supported as educational, pastoral, and civic institutions, they can help reduce vulnerability before violence emerges.

Policy makers should invest in religious literacy. Teachers, social workers, police officers, and public officials often encounter religious youth but may lack basic understanding of religious language, rituals, and community structures. Misreading ordinary religious devotion as extremism can produce harm. At the same time, ignoring genuine warning signs because of fear or political sensitivity can also produce harm. Religious literacy helps institutions distinguish between conservative belief, ordinary activism, emotional distress, and movement toward violence.

Universities should develop interdisciplinary programs on religion, digital media, youth development, and prevention. Such programs can train religious leaders, educators, social workers, and community organizers together. The field needs scholars who can understand classical texts and digital platforms, theology and psychology, public safety and civil liberties. This is especially important for national-interest work because youth radicalization affects education, community trust, religious freedom, immigrant integration, and public safety.

Faith institutions should also create internal safeguarding policies. A mosque or religious center should know how to respond if a youth expresses fascination with violence or extremist ideology. The response should be confidential, careful, and proportionate. Leaders should document concerns, involve parents when appropriate, consult trained professionals, and avoid public accusations. Where there is credible risk of violence, legal and safety responsibilities must be followed. Prevention requires both compassion and seriousness.

Recommendations

First, religious education programs should include modules on the ethics of disagreement, religious diversity, digital literacy, and nonviolence. Youth need to learn not only what their tradition teaches, but how to interpret, apply, and live it responsibly.

Second, mosques, churches, synagogues, and community centers should establish youth mentoring programs led by trained adults who understand both religion and contemporary youth culture. Mentors should be able to discuss difficult questions about injustice, war, discrimination, doubt, identity, and online influence.

Third, faith leaders should receive training in digital radicalization, mental health first aid, trauma awareness, and referral procedures. Religious authority alone is not enough for complex youth cases.

Fourth, parents should be offered workshops on online safety, communication, and early warning signs. The goal is not to create fear in the home, but to build trust and awareness.

Fifth, interfaith youth service projects should be expanded. Shared service weakens extremist stereotypes and teaches youth that religious identity can be expressed through mercy and public good.

Sixth, schools and universities should partner with faith communities for religious literacy, anti-hate education, and community resilience programs. Such partnerships should be transparent and respectful of constitutional and legal boundaries.

Seventh, digital platforms should cooperate with educators, scholars, and civil society organizations to reduce the spread of violent extremist propaganda while protecting legitimate religious speech and political debate.

Eighth, scholars should continue developing faith-informed public ethics that address artificial intelligence, digital surveillance, minority rights, Islamophobia, antisemitism, ecological responsibility, and youth formation. Prevention requires a broad moral vision, not isolated interventions.

Ninth, community prevention should be evaluated through trust, youth participation, family engagement, reduced isolation, improved literacy, and referral capacity, not only through security statistics.

Tenth, religious communities must publicly reject all forms of dehumanization, including anti-Muslim hatred, antisemitism, racism, sectarian hatred, and political violence. A community cannot prevent youth radicalization if it tolerates hatred in its own language.

Conclusion

Youth radicalization is a crisis of meaning, belonging, education, technology, and public trust. It cannot be solved by law enforcement alone, nor by religious preaching alone. Young people need a moral ecology that forms conscience, answers questions, builds resilience, and connects them to healthy communities. Faith-based institutions can play a vital role when they combine theological clarity with compassion, digital literacy with spiritual discipline, and community belonging with public responsibility.

This article has argued that religious education must be treated as moral formation. It should teach youth how to interpret sacred texts responsibly, how to respond to injustice without hatred, how to live with religious difference, and how to use digital media wisely. It has also argued that digital radicalization requires faith communities to enter online spaces with better education, stronger relationships, and credible alternatives to extremist narratives.

The proposed Faith-Based Community Prevention Model offers a practical framework: theological clarity, moral character, digital resilience, trusted belonging, early care, and public partnership. This model does not criminalize youth, stigmatize religion, or ignore public safety. It seeks to protect young people before extremist movements capture their pain and imagination.

A faithful community is not one that isolates youth from the world. It is one that prepares them to live in the world with wisdom, mercy, courage, and responsibility. When religious communities teach identity without hatred, conviction without cruelty, and service without superiority, they become powerful guardians against radicalization. They also become partners in the wider public good.

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