

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, thank you for joining me today to discuss a critical topic: “Women Confronting Radicalisation: A Sociological View.”

I am truly honoured to be before you today to discuss the critical role that women play in confronting radicalisation from a sociological perspective.

This discussion delves deeply into the complexities of radicalisation and the numerous pathways it takes, emphasising the critical importance of understanding these pathways in order to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies.

Throughout this speech, we will look at various aspects of women’s roles and experiences in combating radicalisation.

These roles include the sacred positions of women as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, as well as their invaluable participation in counter-violent extremism (CVE) programmes.

Let us begin by recognising the critical role that women play in identifying and responding to radicalisation. They are frequently the first in their families and communities to notice early warning signs.

Mothers are keen observers, closely monitoring changes in their children’s behaviour and attitudes.

These observations could range from changes in hobbies and social groups to the use of extremist language. This unique insight into their children’s lives enables mothers to intervene and try to prevent their radicalisation.

But do not forget about the wives, another important demographic. They frequently endure the most of their husbands’ extremist ideologies, resulting in increased isolation and restrictions in their daily lives.

These consequences demonstrate the far-reaching effects of radicalisation on family dynamics.

Furthermore, the radicalisation of brothers, sons, and fathers can expose women to harassment, discrimination, or violence, creating a hostile environment that necessitates their active participation in CVE efforts.

These fearless women take on the role of spotting warning signs and confronting radicalisation in their own families. Their emotional attachments to their loved ones frequently motivate their efforts to bring them back from the brink of extremism.

These efforts, while necessary, are fraught with complexity and risk. Women who intervene may face intimidation, threats, and violence, emphasising the dangers of the role.

In addition to their individual and family-based efforts, women are increasingly organising and taking leadership roles in CVE programmes.

These programmes are meticulously designed to prevent radicalisation and divert vulnerable individuals away from extremism through a variety of strategies such as education, social support, economic opportunities, and political participation.

Women-led grassroots campaigns and nonprofit organisations are using local knowledge of women to develop context-specific CVE programming.

One striking example is the “Mother’s Schools” in Nigeria, where women are empowered to identify signs of radicalisation and intervene with vulnerable youth.

Initiatives such as “Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE)” in Tajikistan bring together women who have been affected by extremism to support prevention efforts.

These woman-centred approaches effectively counter extremism by leveraging women’s unique understanding of their communities and their extensive network of local connections.

However, we must acknowledge that women’s participation in CVE efforts is fraught with difficulties.

Among these challenges is the perpetuation of stereotypical gender roles, which frequently portray women as peacemakers and carers while ignoring their potential as leaders in developing comprehensive CVE policies. Furthermore, patriarchal constraints in some societies limit women's political participation and power, making it difficult for them to lead efforts to combat radicalisation.

Challenges are an unavoidable part of the de-radicalisation journey. However, it is critical to recognise that overcoming these obstacles is not an insurmountable task. Women's unique positions and perspectives, in fact, provide powerful tools in our collective fight against extremist ideologies.

The impact of technology and the internet on the radicalisation process is an important consideration. The digital age has brought both benefits and drawbacks, and this is no different in the context of extremism. The internet has become a hotbed of radicalisation, allowing extremist ideologies to spread like wildfire. Social media platforms, online forums, and encrypted messaging apps are ideal places to recruit vulnerable people into extremist groups. The internet has the potential to amplify and echo these dangerous ideologies, particularly among young and impressionable minds.

This is where women's roles in combating radicalisation take on a new dimension. In the digital age, women's unique ability to foster open communication and nurture relationships is critical. They can play an important role in encouraging critical thinking in their family members, especially the younger generation. Mothers and sisters can help their loved ones develop the tools to distinguish extremist propaganda from genuine discourse by encouraging open dialogue about the content they encounter online.

Furthermore, women's empathy can create safe spaces for people to express their doubts and concerns about extremist ideologies. Women can identify early warning signs and intervene before radicalisation takes hold by maintaining an open line of communication.

Another pressing issue is the radicalisation of women. In some cases, women are active participants in extremist movements rather than passive observers. They may be drawn to these groups for a variety of reasons, such as a desire for identity, a desire to belong, or a misplaced sense of purpose. Recognising this, addressing the issue of deradicalisation among women who have become involved with extremist ideologies becomes critical.

This challenge emphasises the importance of women-led initiatives, counselling, and rehabilitation programmes designed specifically for individuals affected by radicalisation, regardless of gender. These programmes must be sensitive to the individual experiences and motivations that lead women down this path. It is critical to provide them with an alternative narrative, a path to disengagement, and a chance to reintegrate into society.

Education is a powerful weapon against extremism, and women can play an important role in spreading it. Women can empower their families to think critically and resist extremist ideologies by instilling a love of learning in them. They can also advocate for educational systems that promote tolerance, diversity, and respect for different cultures and faiths.

Women have historically been the keepers of cultural and moral values in many societies. They can use their influence to advocate for education that not only enriches academics but also instils a strong sense of ethics and compassion. By doing so, they can shape future generations' minds to be resistant to extremist propaganda.

Women can also take an active role in community initiatives that promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue. These efforts can help bridge the gap between different communities and combat the "us versus them" mentality that extremist groups frequently promote.

Women's ability to form relationships and trust can function as a change agent, promoting a more inclusive and harmonious society.

But do not forget that economic empowerment is another powerful weapon in the fight against radicalisation.

Individuals, particularly young people, can benefit from economic stability and access to opportunities for resisting the pull of extremist ideologies.

Women, as mothers and providers, can play an important role in promoting economic self-sufficiency in their families.

Women can advocate for initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, job training, and access to economic resources, particularly in communities at risk of radicalisation.

These efforts can help break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion, which extremist recruiters frequently exploit. When people see a future filled with hope and opportunities, extremist ideologies lose their appeal.

Women can help dispel the myth that combating radicalisation is solely the responsibility of governments and security agencies. Women can be at the forefront of this movement by involving the broader community. They can collaborate with religious leaders, community elders, and local influencers to instil a sense of collective responsibility for combating extremism.

Women can help build a united front against radicalisation by organising community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and interfaith initiatives. These efforts not only highlight the dangers of extremist ideologies but also demonstrate the community's strength in diversity and unity.

The challenges of combating radicalisation are significant, but women have unique characteristics that position them as powerful agents of change. Their responsibilities include everything from preventing radicalisation within families to combating extremist narratives in their communities and promoting education, economic stability, and interfaith dialogue.

The digital age has added new dimensions to conflicts, but women's compassionate and nurturing nature can help families and communities resist the allure of extremist propaganda. Furthermore, addressing deradicalisation among women is critical, and women-led initiatives can play a critical role in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

As we move forward, keep in mind that women are more than just passive observers in the fight against radicalisation. Recognising and supporting their contributions, as well as addressing the unique challenges they face, will be critical to making the world a safer and more inclusive place for all. We can work together to create a future free of extremist ideologies, one of peace, understanding, and cooperation.

In many Muslim communities, women have actively participated in confronting extremist ideologies, often in underappreciated or overlooked ways. Mothers, for example, have used their parental authority to discourage their children from joining extremist organisations and, when necessary, to encourage disengagement.

Their influence extends from identifying signs of extremist behaviour in the early stages of radicalisation to the critical task of steering their loved ones away from the path of violence.

However, in some conservative Muslim societies, strict gender segregation practices can be a double-edged sword for women. On the one hand, these practices can protect women from becoming directly involved with extremist groups. On the other hand, they can limit social interactions and their ability to engage with potentially radicalised individuals outside of their immediate family circles. This isolation may impede their outreach efforts and reduce their overall impact.

To address these issues, it is critical to recognise and support women's activism in difficult environments.

This acknowledgement entails not only recognising their contributions but also actively working to remove the barriers that prevent them from fully participating in CVE efforts. Empowering women to function as change agents in the fight against extremism necessitates promoting gender equality and dismantling patriarchal norms that limit their roles and influence.

Furthermore, addressing broader issues such as conflict, displacement, and community breakdown is critical to creating an environment in which women can effectively confront radicalisation and build resilient, peaceful societies. In our efforts to combat extremism, we must not underestimate the transformative potential of gender-inclusive strategies.

Women play a variety of roles in combating radicalisation, ranging from victims and bystanders to potential interveners. Their perspectives and participation are critical for understanding the pathways to radicalisation and implementing effective counter-extremist ideologies. While there has been significant progress in recognising women's contributions, structural barriers related to gender remain.

It is critical to fully include women in policy development and leadership positions within community-based efforts to confront radical ideologies and prevent the spread of extremism in the future. This comprehensive approach recognises women as active agents in the fight against radicalisation, rather than passive observers.

Let us honour women's roles in combating radicalisation and recognise their unique challenges and contributions in various cultural contexts. It is critical that we emphasise the importance of gender-inclusive strategies in combating extremism.

Thank you for your time, and please continue to support and lift up the incredible women who are at the forefront of this critical fight against radicalisation.