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Far-Right Violent Radicalization Profiles of Youth in the Netherlands

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Objective: Far-right violent radicalization has been on the rise in Europe, with youth being more at risk. Previous research on the topic has mostly been variable-centered and conducted in adults. To better tailor prevention efforts based on the needs of different subgroups of youth, a person-centered study was conducted to explore the presence of far-right violent radicalization profiles in a sample of Dutch youth (N = 1,167, age range: 15–26 years old). Person-centered analyses can capture diversity in youth's far-right violent radicalization tendencies. ***Method:*** Data collection took place online and in educational settings. To detect possible profiles, latent profiles analyses were conducted based on participants' far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes. Associations between profile membership, demographic variables, and radicalization risk factors (i.e., perceived injustice, governmental illegitimacy, aggression, lack of intergroup contact, perceived group threat, superiority) were tested. ***Results:*** The four detected profiles were named as follows: Far-right violent radical (n = 75), violent experimenter (n = 287), low-violence (n = 386), and no-violence (n = 419). An association with profile membership was found for certain background characteristics (e.g., younger age, being male) and all risk factors. ***Conclusions:*** For prevention purposes, it is important to understand risk factors associated with far-right violent radical attitude profiles. Current findings demonstrate the importance of considering youth's behavioral problems and their societal experiences in terms of injustice, governmental illegitimacy, and feelings of superiority.

Keywords: far-right, violent radicalization, latent profile analysis, youth, risk factors

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Far-right violent radicalization has gained more ground in recent years (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, 2022). Those arrested for planning right-wing violent extremist attacks are becoming younger in age, with some even being minors (Europol, 2021). The search for identity, recognition, and belonging, combined with a tendency for provocation may make youth vulnerable to radical ideologies and violence (Schröder et al., 2022). Previous studies have identified important risk and protective factors for violent radicalization (Emmelkamp et al., 2020; Lösel et al., 2018). Most earlier work has used a variable-centered approach, focusing on the relations between variables, rather than a person-centered approach, which has the advantage of being able to identify specific subgroups of youth based on individual variation on a set of variables (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010; Howard & Hoffman, 2018). Applying a person-centered approach, this study aims to detect subgroups of youth (15–26 years old) based on far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes (1). To comprehend youth's variation in far-right violent radicalization tendencies, differences in demographic factors between the profiles were assessed (2). Finally, the relevance of previously identified risk factors for violent far-right radicalized youth were tested (3).

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Violent radicalization is a process during which one becomes increasingly likely to embrace beliefs that justify the use of violence for social and/or political purposes (Doosje et al., 2016). Even though not applicable to all, the violent radicalization process can sometimes occur in stages: from becoming sensitive to a radical ideology (Stage 1), to becoming part of a group with the same beliefs (Stage 2), to a willingness to act violently based on the groups' ideology (Stage 3; Doosje et al., 2016). For an exceedingly small number of individuals, violent radicalization can also result into violent extremism, which is the use of violence to demand political/social change (Lösel et al., 2018). This study focuses on violent radical attitudes, defined as a person's willingness to commit violence based on ideological beliefs. Radical attitudes (i.e., having fundamentally different ideas about society and governance) do not have to be problematic and can also be helpful—even necessary—for the functioning of a healthy democratic society (Neumann, 2013). And even endorsing violence to achieve change (i.e., violent radical attitudes) does not have to form a threat to society, as most endorsers will not become violent extremists (e.g., Lösel et al., 2018). However, those who do act violently due to their beliefs most likely had violently radical attitudes first (e.g., Moghaddam, 2005). For prevention purposes, it is therefore considered important to understand factors associated with different levels of violent radical attitudes (e.g., Zych & Nasaescu, 2022), which is the purpose of the present study.

Violent radicalization can be fueled by different types of ideologies (Lösel et al., 2018), including far-right attitudes characterized by nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2019). The present

study focuses on a proxy of far-right attitudes, namely nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes whereby followers call for "nonnative" others to be excluded from society (Golder, 2016; Pirro, 2022). In the 21st century, the far-right's key "nonnative" target in European societies are Muslims (Mudde, 2019), who are often falsely referred to as immigrants despite having citizenship status and being born and bred in the "native" country (Mudde, 2019). The present study focuses on the far-right, nativistic attitudes, including Islamophobic attitudes that were at the center of the "refugee crisis" (Wike et al., 2016) at the time of data collection (2015).

Risk Factors for Violent Radicalization

Research has tried to understand variation in tendencies for violent radicalization, looking at specific demographic factors such as age, gender, education. For instance, young males with certain vulnerabilities (e.g., financial deprivation, substance use) are considered to be at increased risk for violence engagement (e.g., Assink et al., 2015; Campelo et al., 2018). The socioecological framework proposes that the interaction between micro (individual), meso (group), and macrolevel (societal) risk factors may make someone vulnerable for violent radicalization (Doosje et al., 2016). It can be viewed as a global public health issue, resulting from the presence and interaction of risk factors at different levels (Miconi et al., 2021). Recently, several meta-analyses and reviews have identified which risk factors in particular are important for violent radicalization (e.g., Emmelkamp et al., 2020). In this study, we will investigate to what extent these key risk factors are associated with youth's profiles of positive attitudes toward far-right violent radicalization.

Microlevel Risk Factors

Perceived *personal injustice*, feeling unfairly treated or disadvantaged compared to others, has been associated with violent radicalization (Doosje et al., 2012; van den Bos, 2020). Perceived injustice, stemming from negative events or conditions, leads to negative emotions that may make individuals susceptible to radical ideologies, which attribute blame for the perceived harm to a specific group. Radical groups may then justify violence as a corrective response to address the perceived injustice, potentially leading to violent radicalization (Social Strain Theory; Agnew, 2010).

Perceiving the *government as illegitimate*, whether due to unfair treatment or perceiving politicians as incompetent, may lead to rejection of social norms and an increased interest in alternative—more radical—norms. This may lead to a breakdown of informal control mechanisms, making people less likely, for example, to accept law and order, and more likely to break the law and violently radicalize (Becker, 2021). At the time of data collection, Dutch national polls demonstrated that trust in politics was around 50%. People felt that politicians did not listen enough to the average Dutch citizens (Dekker & den Ridder, 2015). A majority of Dutch people disapproved of governmental handling of immigrants into Europe (Dekker & den Ridder, 2015); worries about immigration are thought to have contributed to a far-right anti-Islamic party becoming the second biggest party in the 2017s elections (Damhuis, 2019).

Aggression is seen as nonideological motivator for violent radicalization, although it may also be indicative of a more latent inclination toward antisocial or rule-breaking behavioral pattern (e.g., Nivette et al., 2017). In a retrospective study with former members of a violent White supremacist group, for example, 93% of participants had aggressive and delinquency problems during their adolescence (Simi et al., 2016).

Mesolevel Risk Factors

Lack of *intergroup contact* has been associated with support for political violence (McKeown & Taylor, 2017). While lack of intergroup contact may not be sufficient for displaying violence, risks for violent radicalization may increase significantly when people also perceive that their in-group is currently under threat. An out-group is often appointed as causing the perceived threat, which is portrayed as being detrimental to the in-group in some ways, resulting in a *perceived group threat* (Pauwels & De Waele, 2014).

Perceived group threat has been found to be an important risk factor for violent radical attitudes in youth (Emmelkamp et al., 2020) and adults (Campelo et al., 2018; Wolfowicz et al., 2021). The threat does not have to be real: Recent adaptations of the integrated threat theory explain that both actual and perceived threats can contribute to negative out-group behavior (Pauwels & Heylen, 2020). Ultimately, the perceived threat may lead to violent radicalization because it increases the urgency and legitimacy of violent action as a corrective act (Nickolson et al., 2021).

Individuals who perceive threats from out-groups, are more likely to hold *feelings of superiority* about their own group, which has been positively associated with the endorsement of far-right motivated violence in Dutch youth (Doosje et al., 2012). The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) posits that people's identities are defined by their social group (status). People are motivated to see their own group as superior because it enhances their self-esteem (Doosje et al., 2012). These inflated perceptions toward one's own group can result in derogation of an out-group, which may stimulate violent radicalization (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019; Williamson et al., 2021).

Macrolevel risk factors were not measured in the present study. Still, it is important to consider the Dutch context at the time of data collection in 2015, which started just a few weeks after the terrorist attacks in Paris (Charlie Hebdo, Jewish supermarket). Over the course of 2014 and 2015, there was a surge of refugees into Europe; this period became referred to as the "refugee crisis" (Wike et al., 2016). In a poll of Dutch citizens in early 2015, immigration and integration were rated the third political priority (following health care and economics; Dekker & den Ridder, 2015). A majority of Dutch people reported being worried about terrorism as a result of immigration. Negative attitudes toward Muslim refugees were soaring (Wike et al., 2016), resulting in one of the biggest wins of Dutch far-right anti-Islamic and anti-immigration party in the 2017 elections.

The Present Study

Previous research has mainly used a variable-centered approach to show the relevance of risk factors for violent radicalization (e.g., Wolfowicz et al., 2021). However, this approach cannot capture diversity in youth's violent radicalization tendencies. Therefore, a person-centered approach is used in the present study, which is crucial for identifying subgroups with varying levels of violent radicalization tendencies, enabling more tailored prevention efforts that can contribute to a safer society (Howard & Hoffman, 2018).

The present study aimed to: (a) examine within a large group of adolescents and young adults (N = 1,167) what profiles could be identified based on far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes. We expected significant heterogeneity in youth's far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes to detect profiles. (b) understand youth's diversity in far-right violent radicalization tendencies by assessing differences in demographic characteristics between profiles, and (c) test the relevance of risk factors for far-right violent radicalization profile membership. We hypothesized a higher likelihood of risk factors to be present in the more violently radicalized profiles.

Method

Participants

Adolescents and young adults between 15 and 26 years old (M = 18.3 years old, SD = 2.7) participated in the present study between January and March 2015. Participants were recruited in educational settings across the Netherlands, including secondary and postsecondary educational institutions of all levels. The link to the questionnaire was also distributed online, on social media platforms that are visited by youth, such as Facebook. There were no inclusion criteria for study participation other than that participants had to be at least 15 years old in educational settings and 18 years old in online settings (because it was not possible to get permission from parents for the online group).

In total 1,825 participants in the age range of interest to this study (15–26 years old) had started with the questionnaire. Participants who discontinued after opening the questionnaire or after answering only the first few demographic questions (e.g., date of birth) were removed (n = 576), leaving a total of 1,249 participants. Furthermore, data from Muslim participants (n = 82) were not included in this study as the focus is on far-right nativistic radicalization, including Islamophobia. Of the 1,167 participants, 57.6% (n = 672) were recruited online and 42.4% were recruited in educational settings (n = 495). More than two thirds of the participants identified as male (n = 805; 69%) and approximately one third of the participants identified as female (n = 362; 31%). In terms of educational enrollment, 55.6% of participants were enrolled in secondary education (n = 649), 42% were enrolled in postsecondary education (n = 491), and a minority of 2.3% selected "other," indicating that they were currently not enrolled in education (n = 27). Most participants were enrolled in higher secondary or postsecondary education programs (n = 817; 70%), whereas approximately one third of participants was enrolled in a vocational program (n = 323, 27.7%). In terms of cultural background, 82% of participants were born in the Netherlands and had parents who were born in the Netherlands as well (n = 957). A smaller group of participants were born abroad (i.e., first-generation immigrant, 5.2%, n = 61) or were born in the Netherlands but had parents who were born abroad (i.e., second-generation immigrant, 12.8%, n = 149).

Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was obtained prior to the start of data collection from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences of the University of Amsterdam (2014-CDE-3931), and the study was preregistered (https://osf.io/59gkr). Participation in the study was voluntary. Prior to study participation, participants were presented with a digital informed consent form. All gave their approval for study participation before continuing with the questionnaire. The informed consent form and questionnaire were presented in Qualtrics. Questionnaires were filled out in educational settings or online. If administered in educational settings, important information of the consent form (e.g., participation is voluntary, there are no right or wrong answers) was verbally repeated in some cases. Some educational settings did not want the questionnaire to be administered during lesson time. In these instances, the link to the questionnaire was provided in the electronic learning environment of the school and students were encouraged by teachers to fill in the questionnaire in their free time. Most participants took around 25 min to complete the survey. Response-speed was checked as an indicator for meaningless responding (i.e., less than 1 s per item, Wood et al., 2017). None of the participant failed the response-speed criterion.

Measures

Unless stated otherwise, we used subscales from a questionnaire of a former Dutch research project on radicalization in youth to measure the constructs of interest (van den Bos et al., 2009). This questionnaire was selected because items had been successfully used in a similar age group and target population. All items were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*fully disagree*) to 5 (*fully agree*) and a mean score of these items was calculated, with a higher score reflecting higher presence of the measured construct (van den Bos et al., 2009). Mean scores, standard deviations, correlations between variables, and reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Profile Indicators

Far-right nativistic attitudes were assessed using five statements that were independently selected by two researchers (first and second author; verified by last author) based on face validity: "I believe that a beautiful world can only exist when everybody is proud of the Netherlands," "In my opinion, foreigners should not be allowed to live in the Netherlands," "It makes me angry when people are not proud of the Netherlands," "I would prefer to not send my (potentially future) children to a school where most students are Muslim," and "I would hate to see more and more Islamic teachers in the Netherlands."

Violent radical attitudes, that is, the willingness to commit violence based on ideological beliefs was assessed using the subscale Violence, which consists of three items: "I would be willing to … disrupt the order (1)/destroy things (2)/use violence against other people (3) … to achieve something that I find really important."

Demographic Variables

Age was calculated based on participants' date of birth and response date. In addition, participants reported their *gender* (male/female). *Cultural background* was dichotomized: "native" (self and parents born in the Netherlands) and "immigrant" (self or parents born outside the Netherlands). In terms of *education*, participant indicated their current educational program enrolment, which was coded as vocational or postsecondary education. *Financial problems*

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Main Study Constructs, Including Correlations, Means (Standard Deviations), and Reliability Coefficients

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	*M* (*SD*)	α
1. Viol. rad	—															2.1 (1.0)	.85
2. Far-right att.	.129***	—														2.9 (0.9)	.78
3. Age	−.120***	.158***	—													18.3 (2.7)	
4. Parents tog.	−.061	−.005	−.130	—													
5. Female	−.156***	−.295***	−.142		—												
6. Immigr.	.058	−.104**	−.147			—											
7. Postsec. ed.	−.217***	−.180***	.512***				—										
8. Fin. probl.	−.046	−.080	.104					—									
9. Drug probl.	.280***	.079*	.316***						—								
10. Perc. injust.	.255***	.277***	.035	−.072**	−.153***	.077**	−.152***	.120***	.086**	—						2.6 (0.6)	.84
11. Gov. illegit.	.235***	.134***	−.055	−.126**	−.218***	.026	−.222***	.089	.189***	.339***	—					3.0 (0.9)	.73
12. Aggression	.366***	.043	−.081*	−.027	−.019	.033	−.052***	.039	.163***	.274***	.145***	—				1.3 (0.4)	.90
13. No cont.	.170***	.131***	−.097**	.024	.002	.050	−.203***	−.014	.097***	.039	.009	.180***	—			2.2 (0.9)	
14. Gr threat	−.011	.699***	.215***	.031	−.282***	−.039	−.030	−.057	.029	.266***	.117***	−.036	.017	—		3.4 (0.9)	.93
15. Sup	.315***	.597***	.010	−.009	−.273***	−.001	−.216***	−.013	.144***	.349***	.178***	.182***	.220***	.415***	—	2.3 (0.9)	.90

Note. N = 1,167. Viol. rad. = violent radicalization; att. = attitudes; tog. = together; immigr. = immigrant background; postsec. ed. = postsecondary education; Fin. probl. = financial problems; probl. = problems; Perc. injust. = perceived injustice; Gov. illegit. = governmental illegitimacy; No cont. = lack of intergroup contact; Gr = group; Sup = perceived superiority.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

were dichotomized as no problems or problems, based on whether there were concerns at home about being able to pay bills in time. Participants were also asked to specify their *religion*. Finally, participants were asked about how often they used *substances* (i.e., I use substances; not alcohol, tobacco, or prescribed medication; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). The substance use variable was dichotomized as not (at all) and sometimes/often.

Microlevel Radicalization Risk Factors

Perceived injustice (14 items) captured perceived relative deprivation, discrimination, and procedural injustice (e.g., "I think I do not get as many chances as others in the Netherlands").

Governmental illegitimacy (four items) was defined as the extent to which institutions (i.e., governmental bodies, the police) are deemed legitimate sources of power (e.g., "I respect the Dutch government," reverse coded).

Aggression was assessed using the aggression subscale of the Youth Self-Report Form (17 items; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Items (e.g., I fight often, I am mean to others) were answered on a 3-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 3 (*often*).

Mesolevel Radicalization Risk Factors

Lack of intergroup contact was measured by one item "I am never in touch with people who think differently from me."

Perceived group threat was assessed using the Realistic Threat and Symbolic Threat scales (16 items; Stephan et al., 2002; van den Bos et al., 2009) and defined as the extent to which participants perceive "their" group as being "pressured" by Muslims in society (e.g., Muslims have too much power in the Netherlands compared to non-Muslims).

Feelings of superiority (eight items) reflected general feelings of superiority (e.g., In my opinion, everybody should think like me") and far-right feelings of superiority (e.g., "In my opinion, people who are truly proud to be Dutch are very special people. They are destined to change the world").

Analyses

Profiles

Of the 1,167 participants, 164 participants (14%) had incomplete data on violent radical attitudes and some of the risk factors. Before performing latent profile analyses, missing data were dealt with using multiple imputation in Mplus 8.0. Mplus uses the Bayesian estimation method for imputation (for more information, see Asparouhov & Muthén, 2022). Fifteen imputed data sets were generated based on available information of the profile indicators, all risk factors, and demographic information. Next, parameter estimates were calculated based on an average across the imputed data sets. Similarly, standard errors were calculated over the average of the imputed data sets and based on between analysis parameter estimate variation (Muthén & Muthén, 2017).

To identify profiles of far-right radicalization, latent profile analyses were performed in Mplus 8.0. Far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes were included as latent profile indicators. First, a single-profile model was tested. Subsequently, two, three, four, and five profile-models were tested. The following fit statistics were used to evaluate model fit: Bayesian information criterion, Adjusted Bayesian information criterion, Akaike information

criterion, with lower values indicating a better fit (McLachlan & Peel, 2000). Furthermore, entropy values were examined, which represent the accuracy of class membership, with higher values indicating a better categorization of persons in subgroups (Berlin et al., 2014). Overall, the best profile model was determined based on model fit statistics, entropy values, sufficient sample size in each profile (i.e., at least 5% of sample size; Collins & Lanza, 2010), parsimony, and interpretability (Berlin et al., 2014). In addition, Lo–Mendell–Rubin likelihood ratio tests were conducted to assess whether each additional profile model significantly improved model fit. Finally, the final profile membership of each case was saved, and Wald tests were conducted to examine to what extent profiles differed based on violent radicalization tendencies and far-right attitudes.

To conduct power calculations, Monte Carlo simulations with 1,000 replications were performed in MPlus (following procedures described in Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Each replication generated parameter estimates and significance levels, with power determined by the proportion of replications where parameters were statistically significant. In addition, parameter and standard error bias were calculated to determine robustness of findings. Coverage rates were also assessed to ensure accuracy of confidence intervals.

Demographic Profile Characteristics

To comprehend youth's variation in far-right violent radicalization vulnerabilities, Wald tests were conducted to examine difference in demographic characteristics of violently radical profiles and nonviolently radical profiles.

Violent Radicalization Risk Factors

To assess if profile membership was associated with risk factors, the manual three-step approach was followed (Nylund-Gibson et al., 2014): (1) The latent profile posterior distribution and model class assignment for the best-fitting model was saved; (2) A nominal most likely class variable was created, and the average misclassification error computed; (3) Risk factors were added to predict profile membership while accounting for the misclassification error. Models were fitted separately for each risk factor. Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals for the associations between latent profile membership and risk factor are reported. As a last step, to address for possible confounding between risk factors, all significant risk factors were fitted in one model. To correct for multiple testing, the Benjamini and Hochberg (1995) correction was applied.

Results

Profiles

Table 2 shows the fit indices of the latent profile analyses for the one-, two-, three-, four-, and five-profile models. The four-profile model was chosen as the best model: It showed better fit than the 3-profile model according to all three information criteria and the Lo-Mendell-Rubin ratio test, and also yielded higher entropy. Even though the five-profile model had a better fit than the four-profile model, the additional profile was conceptually less meaningful, splitting the smallest profile into two. Furthermore, the five-profile model yielded two profiles with less than 5% of the participants (see Supplemental Materials), which is considered less optimal (Collins & Lanza, 2010). Overall, the four-profile model provided the most parsimonious, well-fitting, and conceptually meaningful solution.

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and pairwise profile comparisons; Supplemental Figure S1 visually displays these data. The four profiles are named as follows: "far-right violent radical," "violent experimenter," "low-violence," and "no-violence." Most youth reject violent radical attitudes, which is why they are referred to as the "no-violence." The far-right violent radical group is the exception and has the highest level far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes. The violent experimenter profile scored second highest on violent radical attitudes, and their far-right nativistic attitudes were also elevated compared to the low-violence group, who had the lowest far-right nativistic attitudes comparable to the no-violence group. The low violence profile had low levels of violent radical attitudes, but they were still higher than those of the no-violence group.

The simulation study demonstrated robust power in detecting the four-profile model, as evidenced by significant coefficient of 1.000 for all parameters, which is exceeding the standard of 0.8 power. In addition, there was low parameter (between 0.003% and 1.4%) and standard error bias (between 0% and 3.0%) for all estimates. Finally, coverage rates in between 0.935 and 0.964 were found indicating high accuracy of confidence intervals close to the correct value of 0.95 (see Supplemental Materials for a complete overview of the Monte Carlo Simulation results).

Demographic Profile Characteristics

Table 4 includes descriptive demographic information per profile and pairwise profile comparison results. Overall, youth in the more violently radicalized profiles were more likely to be male, less likely to be enrolled in postsecondary education (not significant after multiple testing correction for far-right violent radical group), and

Table 2
Latent Profile Analysis Indices of Model Fit

Number of class	AIC	BIC	Adjusted BIC	Entropy	Smallest profile size	Lo–Mendell–Rubin ad hoc adjusted likelihood ratio test (LMRT)
1	6433.595	6453.844	6441.138	NA	1,167	
2	6296.112	6331.548	6309.313	0.841	82	137.017***
3	6140.195	6190.817	6159.054	0.827	57	154.618***
4	5789.213	5855.022	5813.729	0.962	75	340.892***
5	5457.283	5538.278	5487.456	0.990	32	322.701***

Note. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; NA = not applicable.
*** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Pairwise Profile Comparisons, Means, and Standard Deviations for Constructs Violent Radicalization and Far-Right Nativistic Attitude

	Violent radicalization	Far-right nativistic attitude	
Profile	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*N* (%)
Far-right violent radical	4.43 (0.58)[a,b,c]	3.41 (1.20)[a,b,c]	75 (6%)
Violent experimenter	3.00 (0.24)[a,d,e]	2.91 (0.95)[a,d]	287 (25%)
Low-violence	2.01 (0.24)[b,d,f]	2.73 (0.98)[b,d]	386 (33%)
No-violence	1.09 (0.18)[c,e,f]	2.82 (0.96)[c]	419 (36%)

Note. $N = 1{,}167$. Pairwise comparison $p < .05$.
[a] Far-right violent radical versus violent experimenter. [b] Far-right violent radical versus low-violence. [c] Far-right violent radical versus no-violence. [d] Violent experimenter versus low-violence. [e] Violent experimenter versus no-violence. [f] Low-violence versus no-violence.

more likely to report substance use (not significant after multiple testing correction for low-violence group).

Violent Radicalization Risk Factors

Table 5 includes the odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals for the associations between latent profile membership and risk factors.

Microlevel Risk Factors

Compared to the no-violence group, all microlevel risk factors were more likely to be present in the more violently radical profiles. For all microlevel risk factors, likelihood was highest for the far-right violent radical group, followed by the violent experimenter and low-violence profile respectively. When accounting for the influence of other significant risk factors, perceived injustice was no longer a risk factor for the far-right violent radical and the low-violence profile.

Mesolevel Risk Factors

Compared to the no-violence profile, lack of intergroup contact and perceived superiority were more likely for the violent experimenter and far-right violent radical groups, although for this latter group lack of intergroup contact was no longer significant when accounting for the influence of other risk factors.

Perceived group threat was less likely in the violent experimenter and low-violence profiles, compared to the no-violence group. For the low-violence group, this effect was no longer significant after correction for multiple testing.

Discussion

The first goal of this study was to examine distinct far-right violent radicalization profiles in youth (15 to 26 years old). As hypothesized, there was variation in the profile variables among youth; the four detected profiles were named: far-right violent radical (6%), violent experimenter (25%), low-violence (33%), and no-violence (36%). Far-right violent radicals endorsed a higher level of far-right nativistic and violent radical attitudes, compared to the other profiles. The violent experimenter and low-violence profiles had significantly higher levels of violent radical attitudes, compared to youth in the no-violence profile, whereas there was no difference in their far-right nativistic attitudes.

The second goal of the study was to assess the association between demographic factors and different levels of far-right violent radicalization as captured by the profiles. The participants with the highest levels of far-right and violent radical attitudes were more likely to be male, in line with previous research (e.g., Schröder et al., 2022). Substance use was more common in the more violently radical profiles. Even though substance use is not uncommon during adolescence and young adulthood, substance abuse is an important risk factor for persistent delinquent behavior in juveniles more generally (e.g., Assink et al., 2015) and has also been found to be associated with violent radicalization (Wolfowicz et al., 2021).

Table 4
Descriptive Information per Profile

Demographic	Far-right violent radical	Violent experimenter	Low-violence	No-violence
Age (*M, SE*)	18.03 (0.39)	**17.78** (0.17)[a]	**18.32** (0.14)[b]	18.78 (0.15)
Parent status (parents together)	70.9%	66.7%	74.7%	76.3%
Gender (female)	**2.0%**[c]	**18.3%**[a]	29.0%	27.5%
Cultural background (immigrant)	24.0%	16.0%	20.8%	15.8%
Education (postsecondary)	64.5%[c,d]	**54.2%**[a]	78.4%	78.3%
Financial problems (significant)	7.5%	8.4%	9.9%	9.8%
Substance use (sometimes/often)	**50.7%**[c]	**34.3%**[a]	21.6%[b,d]	15.6%

Note. Findings in bold are significant. *SE* = standard error. Pairwise comparison $p < .05$.
[a] Violent experimenter versus general youth. [b] At-risk youth versus general youth. [c] Far-right violent radical versus general youth. [d] Failed to reach significance after applying the Benjamini–Hochberg correction.

Table 5

Odds Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals for Associations Between Latent Profile Membership and Micro- and Mesolevel Risk Factors

Risk factor	Far-right violent radical versus no-violence	Violent experimenter versus no-violence	Low-violence versus no-violence
Microlevel risk factors			
Perc. injustice	**5.00** [3.06, 8.17][a]	**2.26** [1.79, 2.85]	**1.27** [1.02, 1.59][a]
Gov. illegitimacy	**2.61** [1.58, 4.30]	**1.87** [1.60, 2.21]	**1.37** [1.19, 1.57]
Aggression	**54.95** [24.03, 125.68]	**11.81** [6.85, 20.60]	**4.45** [2.62, 7.58]
Mesolevel risk factors			
Lack of intergroup contact	**1.71** [1.25, 2.34][a]	**1.47** [1.27, 1.70]	1.07 [0.93, 1.23]
Perc. group threat	1.30 [0.91, 1.86]	**0.81** [0.69, 0.95]	0.83 [0.72, 0.96][b]
Perc. superiority	**4.01** [2.87, 5.59]	**1.98** [1.64, 2.39]	1.15 [0.96, 1.39]

Note. Odds ratio in bold are significant. Perc. = perceived; gov. = governmental.
[a] Adjusted odds ratio no longer significant when accounting for other significant risk factors. [b] Failed to reach significance after applying the Benjamini–Hochberg correction.

The third goal of the study was to test the relevance of risk factors for far-right violent radicalization profile membership. The majority of risk factors were associated with profile membership in a univariable and multivariable (i.e., independent) manner. As hypothesized, they were overall more likely to be present in the more violently radical profiles corroborating research that suggests that it is the presence of a multitude of risk factors that increases the risk for violent radical attitudes (e.g., Wolfowicz et al., 2021).

The microlevel risk factor of aggression stood out and had an extremely high likelihood to be present in the far-right violent radicals. Aggression is one of the most important risk factors for general criminal or antisocial behavior (Assink et al., 2015), demonstrating overlap in risk factors for violent radicalization and crime more generally (Lösel et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the mesolevel risk factors lack of intergroup contact and perceived superiority were most often present in the far-right violent radical groups, while they did not play a role for the low-violence profile. This latter profile had relatively low levels of violent radical attitudes, which might explain why only some risk factors were relevant.

Contrary to expectations, perceived group threat was not significantly associated with the far-right violent radical profile, whereas violent experimenters were slightly less likely than the no-violence profile to perceive their group as threatened. Perhaps these findings are indicative of higher levels of perceived group threat in this sample overall. As in other European countries, the Netherlands has seen a rise in right-wing populist parties over the last decade whose discourse often include an emphasis on a supposed threat from Muslims. A general anti-Muslim sentiment in Dutch society was—and is—prevalent (Bell et al., 2021; Brubaker, 2017). This pattern was reflected in our findings as group threat was strongly correlated with far-right nativistic attitudes (while it was not related to violent radical attitudes).

When accounting for the influence of other risk factors, perceived injustice was no longer significant for young people in the far-right violent radical and low-violence group, while remaining important for the violent epxerimenters. This suggests that for some, the other risk factors played a more important (i.e., independent) role in their association with profile membership. Some studies have found perceived injustice to be an important determinant of a radical belief system in interaction with other risk factors (e.g., Doosje et al., 2013). The related concept of perceived unfairness has also been identified as playing a central role in violent radicalization (van den Bos, 2020). Overall, these findings suggest that studying (mutually reinforcing) interactions between risk factors, in relation to their situational context, is important for understanding violent radicalization across different groups (Clemmow et al., 2020, 2023).

Lack of intergroup contact was also no longer significant when accounting for the influence of other risk factors for young people in the far-right violent radical group. Even though lack of intergroup contact may be associated with prejudice and support for political violence (McKeown & Taylor, 2017; Paolini et al., 2021), it does not take precedence when other risk factors are considered that reflect individuals' perception of themselves, others, and society. The independent role of aggression in the far-right violent radical group stood out, similar to antisocial behavior and delinquency more generally (Assink et al., 2015).

Limitations

The design of the present study was cross-sectional. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about the direction of effects. This could mean, for example, that some risk factors are consequences of violent radicalization, rather than precursors. Moreover, no inferences can be made about the development far-right violent radicalization over time, which is important to emphasize.

Violent radicalization was measured in the form of attitudes, specifically examining individuals' "willingness to commit violence for ideological reasons." It is likely that all acts of ideological violence are preceded by a willingness to commit violent acts, and previous research demonstrates that the correlation between violent radical attitudes and behavior is strong (Wolfowicz et al., 2021). However, most people who embrace violently radicalized attitudes still do not become violent (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). Therefore, risk factors for cognitive (as measured in the present study) versus behavioral radicalization might be different (Wolfowicz et al., 2021), and current findings can therefore not be generalized to behavioral radicalization. In light of this limitation, we caution against attributing higher risk of committing violence based on people's expressed willingness to commit violence (i.e., radical violence), which can be counterproductive (e.g., Moskalenko & McCauley, 2021).

Overall, it is important to emphasize that violent radicalization is a low base-rate problem.

In that context it is also important to emphasize that (as expected in a general population) mostly low levels of violent radicalization and far-right nativistic attitudes were found in the sample in this study. This means that the makeup of risk and protective factors for far-right violent extremists; that is, those who have already committed (violent) extremist acts; will most likely be different on certain aspects than the risk factors found in the current sample. Also, the assessment of far-right attitudes in the present study was quite narrow, focusing on nativistic attitudes exclusively. Even though this is a crucial component of the far-right, other important aspects include authoritarianism and populism (Mudde, 2019). In general, it is important to note that many of the instruments developed to measure violent radicalization in the general population, including the ones used in the present study, have not been validated (Campelo et al., 2018).

In addition, it is important to consider potential sampling and selection bias of the non-probability-based sampling used. All young people self-selected to participate in the current research, which limits generalizability of the findings to the Dutch population. Unknown/unobserved bias may have also resulted from the educational settings that chose to participate, and the online forums that were selected for data-collection (e.g., Facebook). In general, it is difficult to control who ends up filling out your survey online. For example, after distributing the survey link on youth-related platforms, we noticed that the survey got picked up by GeenStijl (NoStyle): a Dutch right-leaning commentary news blog that has been criticized for being xenophobic, provocative, sexist, and discriminatory. Even though the link was deleted almost immediately, it could have led to an overrepresentation of participants who were concerned or held negative views about the topic of multiculturalism in society.

Future Research Directions

Given that data collection took place in 2015, generalizing the results to Dutch youth today should be done cautiously. Similar to 2015, discrimination of Dutch Muslims is still prevalent and far-right populist parties have only risen in popularity in 2024, making it essential to continue to examine far-right violent radicalization tendencies in youth (Andriessen et al., 2019; Silver, 2022). Future longitudinal research is needed to determine to what extent the identified putative risk factors are associated over time with far-right radicalization. Longitudinal research can also shed light on the mediating role some risk factors might play. Although some key examples of longitudinal radicalization research exist (e.g., Nivette et al., 2017), most is unfortunately still cross-sectional. In addition, future research should also examine the difference in risk factors between (more or less) violently radical groups. It is unclear to what extent risk factors found in the current sample, would also apply to a violent extremist sample (Clemmow et al., 2020). In order to prevent violent extremist acts, it is important to have an understanding of the relevant risk and protective factors at all stages of the violent radicalization process.

Another important area for future research to address is the assessment of violent radicalization. Currently it is unclear to what extent instruments accurately assess violent radicalization, as no validated instruments have been developed (Campelo et al., 2018). Moreover, to prevent violent extremist acts, it is important for future research to include more behavioral outcomes of violent radicalization—rather than just cognitive measures—to get more clarity on risk factors for attitudes versus behavior (for a recent overview, see Wolfowicz et al., 2021). Finally, future research into far-right radicalization in youth should also include a more comprehensive assessment of contemporary far-right attitudes, including not only nativism but also authoritarianism and populism (Mudde, 2019). It is important to mention that by including two Islamophobic statements, the present study may have unintentionally contributed to further stigmatization of Muslims by, for example, reinforcing prejudiced attitudes and discrimination. While it is essential to conduct research on stigmatized topics, future research should employ specific research strategies (e.g., self-reflection, risk assessment, inclusion of stigmatized communities in research design) to help mitigate risks of secondary stigmatization (Millum et al., 2019).

Prevention and Policy Implications

Most systematic reviews on radicalization have focused on adults and have included variable-centered studies (e.g., Campelo et al., 2018). A strength of the present study is that it provides a more nuanced picture by demonstrating different patterns of far-right and violent radical attitudes in a young population, including a description of characteristics associated with higher levels of far-right violent radicalization. As a result of the person-centered approach, current findings demonstrated how certain risk factors co-occurred in the profiles, which suggests prevention programming for violent radicalization should target multiple risk factors present at different levels.

Primary prevention may screen for and address aggression, as this risk factor was much higher for youth with high levels of violent radical attitudes. Factors associated with "general" crime had the largest relationship with violent radicalization in a recent systematic review, while these are often not considered as central in risk assessment and interventions (Wolfowicz et al., 2021). In line with the Risk-Needs-and Responsivity model, it is important for program effectiveness to target criminogenic needs that have the largest association with violent radicalization (e.g., Wolfowicz et al., 2021). Prior experience with violence may play a role in the endorsement of violently radical attitudes (e.g., Dahl, 2020); therefore, antiradicalization programs might learn from and mirror evidence-based anticrime programs (Jugl et al., 2021). Thus far, numerous programs against violent radicalization exist, but their varied approaches lack consensus and empirical support (Jugl et al., 2021). Tailoring prevention efforts is more effective than relying on universal programs for all youth (Schröder et al., 2022). In addition to aggression, addressing perceptions of injustice, governmental illegitimacy, lack of intergroup contact, and group superiority may be important for preventing violent radicalization.

In terms of prevention, it is also important to emphasize that some of the profiles' risk factors (e.g., perceived injustice) and demographic correlates (e.g., higher substance use, lower educational background) could have resulted from actual experiences of discrimination or adversity in society. Therefore, it seems appropriate and helpful to apply a public health perspective to the problem of violent radicalization. To this date, countries have often adopted ineffective, and sometimes even counterproductive, security-driven approaches to address violent radicalization with the risk of increasing public

anxiety, stigmatization, and unjust profiling (Miconi et al., 2021). Furthermore, programs that build youth's resiliency against violent radicalization might, from a public health perspective, fall short. Policies are needed to address systemic injustice, discrimination, and general adversity that may draw some to violent radicalization (Stephens & Sieckelinck, 2020).

Finally, study findings demonstrated how far-right nativistic attitudes were differently associated with violent radical attitudes across the youth profiles. This suggests the need for tailored prevention strategies that distinguish between violent and nonviolent far-right attitudes (Mudde, 2019). While the focus of this study has been on identifying factors associated with far-right violent radicalization, nonviolent far-right attitudes might pose a significant challenge to liberal democracies more generally. These attitudes, such as the opposition to minority rights, the rule of law, and the separation of powers are increasingly normalized globally and warrant attention in prevention and policy efforts (Mudde, 2019).

Conclusion

Four profiles were detected in youth in the present study, which were named far-right violent radical (6%), violent experimenter (25%), low-violence (33%), and no-violence (36%). The demographic and risk factors found to be associated with the more violently radical profiles can provide direction for prevention programming and policies to foster resilience against far-right violent radicalization.

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