

## NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF RADICAL THINKING IN GENERATION Z: A REVIEW ANALYSIS

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**Abstract.** Radical thinking within Generation Z demonstrates a unique combination of revolutionary beliefs and the ability to override systemic boundaries, largely shaped by the socio-political environment, as well as the wide-reaching power of the media. Nevertheless, the emergence of radical ideas among members of Generation Z poses an intriguing problem that requires particular attention due to the diverse negative consequences that it can pose on individual and social development. The objective of this study is to review the negative implications of radical thinking in Generation Z. In this study, a review analysis was used to evaluate the topic literature holistically. The steps of review analysis commenced with the definition of the scope of the research. The review analysis revealed several negative implications of radical thinking in Generation Z, including: (a) increased polarisation and conflict; (b) mental health strain; (c) disillusionment with traditional institutions; (d) risk of extremism; and (e) neglect of practical solutions. In conclusion, the construct of Generation Z being radical or innovative comes with a double-edged blade. On one hand, it decreases the chances of stagnation and social injustice, but on the other hand, it can lead to mental health issues, alienation from earthly institutions, extremism, and an over-divide in society. Further research needs to be done on the overarching impacts that radicality has on the mental state and social interaction of the Generation Z cohort, especially regarding their relations to formal institutions and civil society.

**Keywords:** *radical thinking, Generation Z, polarisation, mental health, youth activism*

### Introduction

Radical thinking within Generation Z demonstrates a unique combination of revolutionary beliefs and the ability to override systemic boundaries, largely shaped by the socio-political environment, as well as the wide-reaching power of the media. This generation has been characterised as more progressive and responsible in comparison to its forbearers and it participates in debates on important issues such as climate change, social equity, and identity politics intending to bring forward change (Wilson, 2021). These changes are in part due to the shifts towards social media as the primary source of information, which has transformed their worldview and inculcated a need to address social issues that are often deeply political, over-simplified, or controversial (Deckman, 2024). Many Generation Zs have come forth with extreme thoughts for inclusivity and equality, which in turn results in negative sentiments against preexisting ideologies and institutions. This presents a difficult situation where extreme views are at once necessary for evolution and can also be harmful (Ross, 2022). These nuances highlight the dire need for examining this generation's approach to activism and how they attempt to redefine society through the impact on mental health, community participation, and public debates on politics (Rice and Moffett, 2021).

Nevertheless, the emergence of radical ideas among members of Generation Z poses an intriguing problem that requires particular attention due to the diverse negative consequences that it can pose on individual and social development. Although social

media users belonging to this group are often recognised for their proficiency in technology and their willingness to support various social causes, the adoption of radical ideas often results in deep societal divides, the prevalence of mental disorders, and a general loss of faith in powerful institutions. These problems are worsened by the broad reach of social media, which facilitates the promotion of radical snippets while hindering productive discussions (Wilson, 2021). On top of that, there are members of this generation who tend to give the utmost importance to ideas over practical solutions which can paralyse activism and prevent it from addressing the core issues. Therefore, developing an understanding of the radical ideas of Generation Z is crucial in being able to promote and encourage reasonable dialogue and participation in issues that have the potential to bring about change without the negative consequences of extremism and polarisation.

The objective of this study is to review the negative implications of radical thinking in Generation Z. This study serves to highlight important factors which have direct positive impacts on societal engagement among the youth. Firstly, such a study captures the biological and sociological problems of that generation so educators, decision-makers, and mental health practitioners can plan strategically directed preventative measures for anxiety, disillusionment, and polarization. The understanding of people who are prone to extreme thinking enables an effective opposition education based on critical thinking, multiculturalism, and positive discourse. Furthermore, this review may contribute to the design of participatory agendas through which Generation Z is granted access to many different views while working together instead of creating an us-versus-them attitude. Moreover, identifying the dangers of radical thinking allows for deeper engagement with the topic of activism. Young people can be encouraged to pursue changes to society as narrow-minded as possible while creating change-oriented solutions that hold society together. This is why it is so important to understand the nuances of radical thinking and its dangers. Thus, Z Gen can be positively engaged in curbing negative outcomes by promoting social change efforts from radical zero-sum approaches.

### ***Literature review***

The latest research identifies the adverse effects of social media and radical ideas on Generation Z. Generation Z is severely endangered by radicalism as they can be recruited in organised violence that disrupts societal order (Putri et al., 2023). Social media does worsen the radicalisation of ideas. For instance, there was a case of a female adolescent who came across the propaganda of ISIS on different social media sites (Saputra, 2019). Furthermore, excessive positive thinking or toxic positivity is also bound to cause mental health issues for Generation Zs (Samha et al., 2022). This generation also encounters multiple threats from social media ranging from addiction, narcissism, adverse interpersonal relationships, and immoral content (Răduț et al., 2023). To address radical issues, scholars recommend the inclusion of tolerant attitudes (Putri et al., 2023), informative campaigns, appropriate legislation, and collaboration among different educational stakeholders to build the necessary coping mechanisms (Răduț et al., 2023). Generation Z responds to radical ideas differently. This reflects itself in mental health problems, social interactions, and even technology's role. For instance, this generation deals with hard radical ideologies that aggravate the stigma surrounding mental health-making it hard for them to access help and isolating them. Research shows this segment tends to have a negative perspective towards mentally ill

people considering them unreliable, which makes them less likely to accept medication (Catapano et al., 2024; Guntur et al., 2022). There is a stigma that surrounds mental health issues which, if they do not seek help, can lead to negative behavior especially when there is already a social stigma of treating others. Avoidance can, however, have constructive consequences as seen in cases where individuals are kept away from the treatments due to stigma (Cerfolio et al., 2022). The stigma with accompanying social expectations of Generation Z can worsen these mental health issues instead of solving them.

Furthermore, Generation Z has been transformed by the advancements in technology as they have lived their lives in a world dominated by social media and digital interaction. The ability to constantly check online figments of reality can result in negative self-image and disillusionment, as people are bombarded by unattainable realities (Akbar et al., 2024; Park et al., 2024). Further, the normalisation of mental disorders on social media can allow the dilution of mental health issues through self-diagnosis and glorification of pain (Ahuja and Fichadia, 2024). While the globalisation of information can increase knowledge, it can also bring about misinformation about mental health (Khairiyah et al., 2024). The radical sentiments and mental well-being of Generation Z are greatly impacted by economic uncertainty and employment dissatisfaction, which increases the level of anxiety and depression within mental health diseases (Dikeç et al., 2023; Savić et al., 2023). This combination of economic challenges and radical thoughts can give birth to hopelessness, leading to the acceptance of extreme sentiments or actions. In addition, the traditional teaching techniques used to stimulate order which is a key skill for critical thinking and resilience have not been optimised. This coupled with the advanced learning antisocial reality mask idea offered by technological advances results in over-imposing the aid mask which makes many people more vulnerable to the adoption of radicalised constructs of reality which they see as the absolute objective reality to be accepted at face value. The phenomenon of unengaged high-order thinking can result in cognitive entrapping which is highly disadvantageous in dealing with highly contentious social problems. Generation Z is in most need of targeted guidance through counselling concerning their mental health (Khairiyah et al., 2024). It is believed that radicalised ways of thinking can be tamed if sufficient support is provided to stimulate the right positive emotions while countering negative emotions. However, the attitude towards seeking help due to the stigma associated with mental health often results from students suffering in silence (Cerfolio et al., 2022; Guntur et al., 2022). Therefore, there must be a paradigm shift to one that seeks to encourage a violent free discourse to safeguard the well-being of Generation Z.

In summary, the adverse effects of radical thinking in Generation Z are closely linked to mental health concerns, societal norms, and technology addiction. To deal with these issues, tackling stigma, improving classroom instructions, and increasing support for mental health are a few measures that need to be taken. Such considerations will help modern-day stakeholders protect this generation from the harm of radical thinking and its consequences. Furthermore, creating the opportunity for discourse around mental health challenges and radicalism will help people suffering from these issues seek help and stimulate positive conversation around these topics. Furthermore, promoting the thinking that members of Generation Z should be active rather than passive recipients of information in school will assist them in taking a healthier view of social problems. In conclusion, teachers, mental healthcare givers, and community

members need to work in unison to guide this generation towards better and more responsible decisions.

## Materials and Methods

In this study, a review analysis was used to evaluate the topic literature holistically. The search process began with establishing keywords like radical thinking, Generation Z, mental health, social dynamics, and pet technology. These keywords helped conduct thorough searches in various databases, including but not limited to, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, to ensure coverage of all available academic and peer-reviewed material. The literature underwent analyses that were comprised of articles published in the last ten years, specifically peer-reviewed ones which touched upon the implications of radical thinking concerning Generation Z's mental health and social behaviour. On the other hand, studies considered for review that were far from the topic's scope and not peer-reviewed were omitted from the analyses. The steps of review analysis commenced with the definition of the scope of the research. This resulted in a specific set of articles that were sourced via a systematic search using topical keywords. Screening was then performed based on the set inclusion criteria. The next step consisted of reading the abstracts and the complete texts for all of the articles in the studies to gather relevant information. The focus was on these findings: mental health struggles, societal norms, and technology's impact on the development of extreme ideologies. These thematic blocks served as a basis for the interpretation of the selected articles and facilitated the first phase of analysis, which aimed at uncovering the more negative aspects of radicalism in Generation Z. On each level of these thematic conclusions, efforts were made to reduce the level of bias by employing clear selection criteria and bias analysis as a standard. This method, more practically, verified all attempts at understanding the phenomenon under study as radical thinking behaviour is much targeted in this group.

## Results and Discussion

The review analysis revealed several negative implications of radical thinking in Generation Z, including: (a) increased polarisation and conflict; (b) mental health strain; (c) disillusionment with traditional institutions; (d) risk of extremism; and (e) neglect of practical solutions.

### *Increased polarisation and conflict*

The growth of radical perspectives amongst Generation Z users has indeed brought about further polarisation and conflict, especially in social-political settings. This generation that grew up with the internet usually participates in group-based activities and is more inclined to work together, which can intensify collaborative radicalism (Septiawan and Masrunik, 2020). Quite a number of them seek thoroughness in various aspects including social justice or environment, which sometimes yields extreme ultimatums. The effects of social media have further worsened this form of polarisation by serving as a source of pre-existing fragments where extreme views are supported and opposing views are suppressed (Yunus, 2021). As a result, this type of setting can curb free discussion and open up alternative views to consider. The issues brought forth in

these parts of polarisation are further worsened by the rapidness of the spread of information online, making it quite hard for people to assess the validity of their beliefs critically. In the end, such situations can create a divided society hence a commonly accepted understanding will be harder, if not impossible, to reach. Cognitive biases are prevalent in this demographic including overconfidence and loss aversion which can create distortions in judgement and decision making further deepening the divides (Yulandari, 2023). Such biases could lead to the rejection of alternating viewpoints, reinforcing people's beliefs to the point where compromise is intangible. Generation Z's preference and ability to discard complex debates for quick online conversations may hinder the potential of productive conversations in person, resulting in a greater chance of conflict (Yunus, 2021). The absence of more nuanced communication on these platforms has the potential to create a lack of empathy aided by misunderstandings such as the missing context of the conversation. Often, the ability to mask one's identity in the digital world can create a situation where people can more easily express extreme opinions since the fear of consequence is significantly lower. Although the rationale for Generation Z's radical thought is centred on the enormous social change, the underlying challenge remains to bridge the gap and understand the other side of the divide. There is a need to compartmentalise the problem further and find long-term working solutions to the divide that has emerged. These challenges may be lessened by educational programs that foster critical thinking and empathy.

### ***Mental health strain***

The strain of experiencing radical thinking has weakened the mental health of Generation Z individuals which is further escalated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Social isolation, uncertainty regarding the future, and not having any coping mechanisms served as the perfect storm for increased anxiety and depression to develop leading to psychological impairments (Vacchiano et al., 2023; Shanahan et al., 2020). The context in which these individuals grew up contradicted their mental health. Generation Z's parallel exposure to extremist ideologies whilst developmentally engaging in online communities proves to be detrimental to their already impaired mental health. It has been shown that feelings of insecurity coupled with the internet's desire for validation results in radicalisation (Zych and Nasaescu, 2022; Ozer et al., 2020). Having the desire to conform to social change with the burden of feeling conflicted poses a challenge to every young individual. In the process of identity-seeking, they tend to adopt radical concepts which are easier to comprehend compared to progressive ones. The forward-thinking avenues for expression remain unexplored. It is evident through the negative self-expression that the implications of radical thinking extend far beyond the anticipated consequences leading to stunted social, emotional, and personal development.

Additionally, the widespread use of social media is a catalyst that fosters a culture of social comparison and social validation which aggravates the sense of inadequacy and anxiety problems among Generation Z (Yap et al., 2021). The combination of these factors provides a fertile ground for mental health issues, as persistent negative emotions may be coped through radical thinking, which causes further psychological problems in the long term (Cantrell, 2024; Khairiyah et al., 2024). Because of these social pressures, many people will find themselves in situations where they are forced to adopt radical positions for the mere purpose of seeking approval from those around them. Such a cycle in which extreme positions are adopted for the mere purpose of

being validated through the adopted views poses a threat because, that course of action only distances them from the commonly accepted views, which makes their mental health problems even worse. Thus, it is critical for mental health in this case to create environments that foster healthy discussion as opposed to the harms of social media and extremist thinking. These are areas that require a multifaceted approach that draws upon the concern of the most uncertain aspects of the life of this generation (Ameen et al., 2023).

### ***Disillusionment with traditional institutions***

Generation Z appears to be disenchanted with traditional institutions, and this is evidenced by their behavioural changes and attitudes. This discontent is particularly noticeable as disenchantment towards authority figures has been linked to their vaccine attitudes as well; poor views of authority have been associated with lower vaccination rates (Tomljenovic et al., 2022). Furthermore, the development of self-media has enabled this generation to articulate their distaste for the current political realities that showcase their disappointment with the mainstream media and the political system (Liu, 2024). This disillusionment is not only restricted to health issues as distrust of government, education, and corporations is apparent among them as well. Hence, many Generation Z people tend to support social movements that appreciate their worldview and are ready to embrace information from different and independent channels. This shift in point of view indicates their desire and expectation for Chin to change, but more importantly shows how the institutions have to start interacting with them, to slowly build the trust that has been lost.

In addition, values held by Generation Z tend to differ from previous generations due to the emphasis placed on authenticity and social responsibility. This phenomenon is evident in how they approach consumer behaviour and relationships with brands (Shin et al., 2022). These changes point to an emerging tendency to challenge and reshape preconceived values and practices to meet their needs for both idealistic values of transparency and institutional sustainability (Nowacki et al., 2023; Dębski and Borkowska-Niszczota, 2020). They are often motivated from within to engage with brands that practice ethics and are to some extent, committed to social justice causes. This shift in attitude means that firms not only have to scale up their marketing, particularly to young people, but they also need to ensure that their companies stand for values that appeal to young consumers. As a result, firms need to change their marketing and positioning policies towards this cohort to overcome the risk of obsolescence in the changing scenario. That extreme sort of thinking makes it difficult for companies and other institutions to cope and this new generation of consumers expect more from them. For companies looking to attract Generation Z, prioritising social impact and adopting innovative strategies is the only way forward.

### ***Risk of extremism***

The digital world acts as a catalyst to the already alarming spread of radical ideology, which causes a great deal of concern for the Generation Z demographic and their susceptibility towards extremism and violence. To add on, radicalism creates a narrative that promotes a singular truth- which furthers the divide between different communities while simultaneously using violence as the main instrument to enforce solidarity. Many students are still formulating their worldviews, which makes them particularly

susceptible to violence and conflict being justified as a tool to solve issues in society (Putri et al., 2023). With the use of the internet and social media, radical ideologies can easily spread which makes it all the more important to foster an environment where these trends can be counteracted (Ramadhan et al., 2023). It's only a matter of time before youth become completely detached from societal norms and fully dedicate themselves towards further radicalised actions. Moreover, the emotional appeal brought by those narratives is even more persuasive to the youth who find themselves in distressing and unfortunate situations. In such cases, it becomes exceedingly tough for them to search for moderate and alternative outlooks. To truly understand and properly tackle the interlinked issues being faced, there needs to be a focused coalition work between methods used by governmental organisations and community service foundations.

Furthermore, Generation Z's digital skills and other distinctiveness features can be useful in promoting inclusion and moderation. This generation requires the focus of community educators and leaders towards constructive rather than radical participation (Putri et al., 2023; Ramadhan et al., 2023). Technology and social networks can be used by all relevant agencies as instruments for positive transformation that will enable respectful interactions and critical thinking among the youth. In addition, students can be trained to tackle sophisticated issues like extremism, tolerance, and civic responsibility by including these subjects in the education curricula. In the end, ensuring that Generation Z is active in their communities should help curb the attraction of radical ideologies, resulting in societies that are integrated. Thus, the risks associated with radical thinking in Generation Z should be dealt with from an integrated and holistic perspective focusing on education, community, and boosting sophistication in combating extremism.

### ***Neglect of practical solutions***

Generation Z's extreme thinking tends to disregard practical solutions, which diminishes their ability to solve real-world problems. This generation tends to prefer innovation and risk-taking as indicated by the research on entrepreneurial leadership (Ardi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this extreme mentality can lead to detachment from the real world which is why there tend to be issues related to critical thinking and persistence in the face of challenges (Seibert, 2021). Their zest for transformation is remarkable but it also means that there are no checks and balances placed on the commencement and implementation of the plan, something which is essential. Hence, this kind of thinking can cause issues when their ambitious plans do not lead to any positive outcomes, resulting in disappointment towards systems that they want to rectify. This gap can be closed by promoting an innovative yet practical setting for Generation Z so that their creativity is put to use most productively.

Generation Z has a strong commitment to social and environmental issues, however, their involvement usually lacks the systematic assistance necessary to transform ideals into actual results (Hamadeh, 2022). This gap could stem from a tendency to trust impractical concepts instead of grounded ones, which is important for participation in both social and employment settings (Atmaja and Khalid, 2023). For example, without suitable guidance or resources, their commitment may contribute to half-hearted attempts that do not result in tangible change. Furthermore, excessive information available on the internet can result in confusion and lack of action on those issues which need attention. Therefore, blurring the lines between radical ideologies and pragmatic

solutions is important when attempting to boost the effectiveness of Generation Z in making real change in the world. With mentorships and opportunities for physical work, communities can direct their zeal towards dealing with the most important problems using effective case strategies.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the construct of Generation Z being radical or innovative comes with a double-edged blade. On one hand, it decreases the chances of stagnation and social injustice, but on the other hand, it can lead to mental health issues, alienation from earthly institutions, extremism, and an over-divide in society. As the world progresses at a rapid speed, its elements become harder and harder to achieve and therefore, this generation is burdened with the stress of reality. It becomes, therefore, essential to not only focus on the radical brilliance of new ideas but also how feasible these notions are in real life. These problems can be countered through dialogue, educational programs, and constructive positivity which should try to dilute the negative impacts of radicalism that should be avoided. Further research needs to be done on the overarching impacts that radicality has on the mental state and social interaction of the Generation Z cohort, especially regarding their relations to formal institutions and civil society. Disciplinary mixing is recommended, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to better capture the experiences and attitudes of some of the younger people active in these movements. Also, exploring how digital media contributes to radicalization and its effects on youth self-conception may add further context to the phenomenon. There is also a need to formulate and investigate effective measures to address the harm-dominated consequences observed, such as intervention programs that encourage the fostering of critical thinking and healthy debates. In the end, all these approaches are designed to address the challenges posed by harnessing radicality to do good, while ensuring that negative consequences are kept in check.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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