The Intersection of Gaming and Terrorism: Exploring the Role of Online Gaming in Terrorist Recruitment Methods

A Intersecção do Jogo e do Terrorismo: Explorando o Papel dos Jogos Online nos Métodos de Recrutamento de Terroristas

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Abstract

This paper examines the intersection of online gaming and terrorism, highlighting how terrorist organizations leverage online gaming and mods platforms to recruit and radicalize new members. Terrorist organizations have increasingly utilized online gaming and other digital platforms to recruit and radicalize individuals. Video games are multifaceted creative works integrating various art forms, including music, writing, narrative, visual arts, and character design. These complex productions require human engagement and interaction to unfold, leveraging computer programming and specialized hardware to bring the gaming experience to life. However, terrorist organizations have explored this avenue in recruiting members into their organizations. Seventy per cent of terrorist organizations have used online gaming platforms for recruitment and radicalization. The paper used social learning theory as its theoretical construct. The paper relied on secondary data-gathering techniques. The paper reveals the complexities of this phenomenon, including the use of mods to promote extremist ideologies, the exploitation of online gaming communities, and the role of social media and other digital channels in facilitating terrorist recruitment. Hence, the paper recommend amongst others a synergy among the Law enforcement agencies and counter-terrorism organizations aimed at monitoring and disrupting terrorist activities on online gaming platforms.

Keywords: gaming, online, platform, recruitment, terrorist.

Resumo

Este artigo examina a intersecção entre os jogos *online* e o terrorismo, destacando a forma como as organizações terroristas aproveitam os jogos *online* e as plataformas *mods* para recrutar e radicalizar novos membros. As organizações terroristas têm utilizado cada vez mais os jogos *online* e outras plataformas digitais para recrutar e radicalizar indivíduos. Os videojogos são obras criativas multifacetadas que integram várias formas de arte, incluindo música, escrita, narrativa, artes visuais e design de personagens. Estas produções complexas requerem o envolvimento e a interação humana para se desenvolverem, tirando partido de programação informática e de *hardware* especializado para dar vida à experiência de jogo. No entanto, as organizações terroristas têm explorado esta via para recrutar membros para as suas organizações. Setenta por cento das organizações terroristas utilizaram plataformas de jogos *online* para recrutamento e radicalização. O artigo utiliza a teoria da aprendizagem social como base teórica. O artigo baseia-se em técnicas de recolha de dados secundários. O artigo revela as complexidades deste fenómeno, incluindo a utilização de *mods* para promover ideologias extremistas, a exploração de comunidades de jogos *online* e o papel das redes sociais e de outros canais digitais na facilitação do recrutamento de terroristas. Por conseguinte, o artigo recomenda, entre outras coisas, uma sinergia entre as agências de aplicação da lei e as organizações de luta contra o terrorismo com o objetivo de monitorizar e interromper as atividades terroristas nas plataformas de jogos *online*.

Palavras Chave: jogo, online, plataforma, recrutamento, terrorista.

The emergence of ARPANET and the creation of TELNEX in 1971 marked the beginning of a new era in online gaming. E-mail gaming gained popularity as users leveraged the network to play games via electronic mail. This innovative approach drew inspiration from the earlier practice of "playing-by-post," a method that involved sending game moves through postal mail. The widespread adoption of the internet later transformed this concept, enabling gamers to connect and play with each other remotely (Bellis, 2004).

The online gaming landscape has undergone significant transformations, progressing from basic text-based interfaces to immersive graphical environments and ultimately, to persistent virtual worlds where players can engage as active citizens, mirroring their real-life experiences. Recently, there has been a surge in initiatives aimed at expanding online gaming accessibility to a broader audience. For years, consoles have been a popular platform for offline gaming, and manufacturers have taken notice of the growing trend of internet-based gaming. In response, they have adapted their strategies to cater to this shift in player behaviour (Curran, Canning, Laughlin, McGowan and Carli, 2005).

Hoffman (2006) revealed that technology has empowered terrorist organizations with increased strategic and operational flexibility, enabling them to launch novel forms of "leaderless attacks" that pose significant challenges to global security. Recently, extremist organizations have adopted a method of recruiting young

people through electronic sports known as eSports. eSports is a world of video game competition. Online gaming is a popular form of entertainment among young people globally. Raming revealed that "playing video games online with people from around the world while communicating with any number of other players and observers—is a major form of entertainment. On streaming platforms like Twitch and social media sites like Discord, the online gaming community has grown significantly"(Raming, 2023,p.2).

A study revealed that there were over "3.2 billion video gamers across the world in 2021. The largest proportion of these gamers, some 55 per cent, lived in the Asia-Pacific region. These figures equate to over 1.7 billion players across the area. In comparison, only seven per cent of global gaming audiences were located in North America"(Clement, 2024,p.1). Research has indicated that "38 per cent of US gamers were between the ages of 18 and 34, and 20 per cent were under 18 making them the second biggest age group" (Clement, 2021,p.1).

The atmosphere shaped by the social interfaces surrounding the ramification and show of violence has provided a fertile ground for recruitment into extreme organizations that embark on direct violence. It is imperative to note that online gaming was first released in 2022-the US Army's own FSS online game. Afterwards, violent extremist groups started using online games to promote terrorism and spread radical ideologies, specifically targeting younger generations for recruitment indoctrination (Ogele, 2024). Over a decade, recruitment by online gaming has attracted the attention of scholars, activities and policymakers. A scholar like Payne has gone to great lengths in demonstrating the deep cultural and psychological potential in FPS gaming (Payne, 2016).

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is currently using the video games to attract young people. ISIL copied the aesthetic of first individual shooter games such as *Call of Duty,* to recruit. This allows ISIL to tap into roughly about 57% of the two billion people who play shooter games, and their demographic target includes the young, male and technologically savvy. Their enrollment videos are a "visual dog whistle" to this gaming demographic (Dauber, Robinson, Baslious, and Blair, 2019). The fact that groups from the US Army to the Islamic State (ISIS) have used online gaming such as "*Jihadist Games*" "*PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds*" and "*Virtual Caliphate*" to access the world's youth poses a serious danger to global peace. Forty percent of ISIS's online recruitment efforts were focused on gaming platforms (Hegghammer, 2014). Seventy per cent of terrorist organizations have used online gaming platforms for recruitment and radicalization (Counter Extremism Project, 2020, RAND Corporation, 2012). The question now becomes to what extent do terrorist organizations utilize online gaming platforms for recruitment and radicalization purposes? This paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection of online gaming and terrorism, highlighting the potential risks and implications for national security

and counter-terrorism efforts by exploring the role of online gaming in terrorist recruitment methods.

Conceptual Review

Gaming

Gaming encompasses the activity of engaging with or participating in various types of games, including board games, card games, and video games (Juul, 2010). These games can be accessed and played through a range of platforms, such as online websites, mobile devices, or personal computers (PCs), offering diverse and convenient ways for individuals to experience and enjoy gaming (Kuss and Griffiths, 2012). These games are crafted to encourage player engagement, with systems that respond to user inputs and actions (Björk and Holopainen, 2005). The vast array of games available caters to diverse tastes, with varying themes, objectives, and gameplay styles (Hamari and Koivisto, 2015). Players can choose to play cooperatively or competitively, either solo, with others in the same physical location, or with a large online community (Ducheneaut, Yee and Candy, 2006). Games can be accessed through various devices, including consoles, computers, and mobile phones. Due to the vast differences in game genres and characteristics, creating a comprehensive classification system for modern games is a daunting task (Genachowski, 2010). Many games also differ in other significant aspects, and increasingly, commercial games offer both social and non-social play options (Hamari and Koivisto, 2015). Given the above, "gamers" denotes individuals who engage in video game play on a daily basis, and could be minutes or hours of game-play per day. Nevertheless, research specifically on the benefits of video games is not limited, the broader functions and advantages of play have been extensively studied across various fields, including psychology (Vygotsky, 1978), education (Gee, 2007), and sociology (Huizinga, 1955). Evolutionary psychology has long highlighted the adaptive roles of play, with reviews summarizing its significance (Bjorklund and Pellegrini, 2010). In developmental psychology, prominent scholars have consistently emphasized the positive impacts of play (Vygotsky, 1978). Erikson (1977) posit that play environments enable children to explore social situations, simulate emotional outcomes, and achieve emotional resolution beyond the play context. Similarly, Piaget (1962) suggested that imaginative play allows children to recreate real-life conflicts, work through ideal solutions, and alleviate negative emotions. Both Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1978) established theoretical connections between play and various factors that promote social cognition development.

Terrorism

Terrorism has a long history (Laqueur, 2003). The term has been defined in

various ways, often influenced by political or religious leading to ambiguity and contradictions among scholars and practitioners (Hoffman, 2006). What one group considers a terrorist act, another may view as a liberation struggle, especially freedom fighters (Ganor, 2002). As Bruce Hoffman notes, "individuals, groups, movements, and governments may all adopt terrorist tactics at various times to further their political or economic purposes, then abandon them while still pursuing those purposes" (Hoffman, 2006, p. 32). Despite these complexities, terrorism is characterized by a central theme: creating fear, using violence against non-combatant, and destroying lives and property (Wardlaw, 1989). Recently, the rise of online platforms has enabled terrorist organizations to spread their ideologies and recruit new members, highlighting the need for continued research and understanding of this phenomenon (Kohlmann, 2023).

Theoretical underpinning

Social Learning Theory (SLT) was propounded by Albert Bandura, a Canadian-American psychologist. Bandura first introduced the theory in the 1970s as an extension of the earlier work of Edward Thorndike and B.F. Skinner. He argued that people learn new behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge by observing and imitating others, and that this learning is influenced by reinforcement, punishment, and observation. According to Albert Bandura's social learning theory, human behaviour is shaped by a continuous reciprocal interaction between behaviour and its controlling conditions, rather than being driven by internal forces or external influences alone (Bandura, 1977). These processes allow individuals to learn through observation, representation, and self-regulation, enabling them to acquire complex behaviour, emotional responses, and cognitive skills without direct experience (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, humans' capacity for symbolic representation and self-regulation enables them to foresee consequences, solve problems, and control their behavior to some extent (Bandura, 1986). By managing environmental factors and producing consequences for their actions, individuals can exert control over their behaviour, illustrating the importance of cognitive and self-regulative influences in shaping behavior. Linking this theory to the paper is predicated on the fact that Gamers or individuals observe and imitate extremist behaviors, ideologies, and tactics from online sources, including social media, forums, and terrorist propaganda. They also receive social validation, recognition, and a sense of belonging for adopting extremist views and behaviours. This is because individuals learn from models, such as charismatic leaders, ideologues, and online influencers.

Methodology

The paper adopted a secondary method data gathering technique. Secondary data refers to existing data that has been collected by others, often for different purposes, and is now being used to answer new research questions (Bryman, 2012).

This type of data can be obtained from various sources, including academic journals, government reports, and online databases (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Secondary data analysis involves re-examining and re-interpreting existing data to draw new conclusions or test new hypotheses (Hakim, 1982). Also, secondary data provides broader scope and larger sample sizes, allowing for more generalizable results (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

Origin of Video Games

The intersection of art and technological innovation has been a longstanding phenomenon (Bazin, 1967). The development of fine arts has been shaped by the tools employed in the creative process (Gombrich, 1950). During the Upper Paleolithic period, early humans utilized natural materials like rocks, sticks, and pigments to create representations of animals and humans (Ucko and Rosenfeld, 1967). As scientific advancements emerged, artists refined their craft using improved tools and techniques, such as enhanced brushes, chisels, and casts (Francastel, 1956). This evolution ultimately enabled the creation of novel forms of artistic expression, including cinematographic works (Cook, 2005), databases, computer programs, and, more recently, video games (Aarseth, 2004).

Video games are complex, multifaceted works of authorship that incorporate various art forms, such as music, scripts, plots, video, paintings, and characters (Juul, 2005). These interactive works require human engagement with a computer program on specific hardware to execute the game (Murray, 2003). Consequently, video games are not singular, simple creations but rather an amalgamation of individual elements that can be copyrighted separately if they meet the necessary thresholds of originality and creativity (Lange, 2017).

The video game industry encompasses a diverse range of genres, including action, action-adventure, adventure, role-playing, simulation, strategy, music, party, sports, and trivia games (Wolf, 2001). Each genre and individual game comprises unique elements, but they all share a common foundation: the underlying computer program (Bogost, 2006). While this analysis does not focus on the history of video games, understanding their early development is crucial for discussing the evolution of their legal status (Kent, 2001).

Spacewar, created by Steven Russel in 1961, is widely regarded as the first video game (Levy, 1984). This primitive game allowed two players to engage in space combat, inspiring later classics like Asteroids (Kushner, 2003). Another influential game, Pong, became a staple in home entertainment and was extensively copied (Sheff, 1993). In the early days of video game development, the distinction between ideas and their expression was often blurred due to the limited state of computer science (Ceruzzi, 2003). This ambiguity led to legal disputes, as seen in the analysis of early video games, which featured simple visuals, geometric shapes, and basic functionalities (Montfort and Bogost, 2009). The resulting lawsuits prompted judges

to examine the legal nature and protection of these early video games, setting the stage for future legal debates on video games (Lastowka, 2010).

The evolution of video games has closely followed the advancements in computer science, transforming from simple graphic displays in the 1960s to incorporating basic sounds shortly thereafter (Kent, 2001). This perpetual evolution has persisted, culminating in modern video games that comprise multiple elements, each eligible for copyright protection (Vanderbilt, 2013). The increasing complexity of video games has led to a corresponding expansion of copyrightable elements, including characters, storylines, music, and sound effects (McJohn, 2006).

The video game industry has undergone significant growth over the past two decades, leading to an increase in the number of individuals involved in game development (Barton and Maharg, 2009). In contrast to the 1980s, when a small team of people could create a game, modern game development requires the collaborative efforts of dozens, sometimes hundreds, of artistic and technical professionals (Kent, 2001). The scale of the project, company size, game type, and platform all influence the number of people involved (Vanderbilt, 2013). As a result, the market for video games has evolved alongside the professionalism and expertise of those who develop them, leading to a potentially greater number of specialists involved in game development than in other complex creative works, such as filmmaking (McJohn, 2006).

Historicizing Terrorism

The history of terrorism is a complex and multifaceted that spans thousands of years. From ancient civilizations to modern-day organizations, terrorism has evolved and adapted to suit various political, social, and economic contexts. One of the earliest recorded instances of terrorism was the Zealots, a Jewish sect that emerged during the 1st century AD. The Zealots used violence and intimidation to resist Roman rule and promote their nationalist agenda (Josephus, 93 AD). They believed that the end justified the means, and that violence was necessary to achieve their goals.

In the middle age, the Assassins, a Shia Muslim sect, employed targeted killings to further their political goals. The Assassins' tactics were later adopted by other groups, including the Thuggee, a Hindu sect that terrorized India during the 17th and 18th centuries (Hoffman, 2006). The Assassins' use of stealth, deception, and targeted killings became a hallmark of terrorist tactics.

The modern era of terrorism began in the late 19th century with the emergence of anarchist groups in Europe and North America. Anarchists believed that violence was necessary to overthrow governments and establish a stateless society (Bakunin, 1873). They used bombings, assassinations, and other forms of violence to achieve their goals.

In the 20th century, terrorism became increasingly associated with nationalist

and separatist movements. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) are examples of groups that used terrorism to achieve their political objectives (Laqueur, 2003). These groups used tactics such as bombings, hijackings, and kidnappings to draw attention to their causes.

The contemporary era of terrorism began in the late 20th century with the rise of Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS (Rapoport, 2004). These groups have used terrorism to promote their extremist ideology and establish a global caliphate (Sageman, 2008). They have employed tactics such as suicide bombings, beheadings, and cyber-attacks to spread fear and chaos.

Gaming and Terrorism intersection.

The intersection between gaming and terrorism is complex and controversial, which may be observed in different scholarly positions on the topic. While some researchers argued that there is a nexus between the two, others claim that the connection is exaggerated or non-existent.

Research has indicated that terrorist organizations have used online gaming platforms to recruit and radicalize individuals, as well as to spread their ideology and coordinate attacks (Hoffman, 2006; Weimann, 2010). For instance, al-Qaeda has been known to use online games to disseminate its message and attract new members (Weimann, 2010). Online games provides a sense of community and belonging, which can be appealing to individuals who feel isolated or disenfranchised. Terrorist organizations exploit this sense of community to spread their ideology and recruit new members.

Some scholars have argued that the connection between gaming and terrorism is overstated and that most gamers are not susceptible to radicalization (Bushman and Huesmann, 2006; Ferguson, 2010). They claim that the vast majority of gamers are simply seeking entertainment and that the idea of a gaming-terrorist nexus is a moral panic. Also, others argued that the focus on the gaming-terrorist nexus diverts attention away from more significant factors contributing to terrorism, such as political and economic grievances (Sageman, 2008).

Furthermore, some researchers have submitted that online games can also be used to counter terrorist ideology and promote peacebuilding (Hinton, 2013). For instance, many games can promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which can help individuals to question and challenge extremist ideologies.

Role of Online Gaming and Mods in Terrorist Recruitment Methods

Terrorist groups have used online gaming to recruit and radicalize individuals, often targeting vulnerable youth (Bloom, 2011). Games such as "*Call of Duty*" and "*Grand Theft Auto*" have been used to spread terrorist propaganda and promote

extremist ideologies (Sageman, 2008). According to a study by the Counter Extremism Project, online gaming has become a "fertile ground" for terrorist recruitment (Counter Extremism Project, 2020). Terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda have used online gaming platforms to disseminate their ideology and recruit new members. These organizations have created customized games and mods that feature jihadist themes, allowing players to engage in virtual battles against enemy forces.

One of the primary ways terrorist organizations use online gaming for recruitment is through the creation of customized games and mods (Holt, Freilich and Chermak, 2019). Customized games and mods refer to the practice of creating or modifying video games to include terrorist ideology, propaganda, or training content. This can be done by creating custom levels, characters, or game modes that promote terrorist ideology or by modifying existing games to include terrorist-themed content. These games often feature realistic graphics and scenarios, making them attractive to gamers. By creating an immersive and engaging experience, terrorist organizations can attract and radicalize potential recruits. According to Holt, Freilich and Chermak (2019), terrorist organizations have used customized games and mods to:

- spread propaganda: customized games and mods can be used to disseminate terrorist ideology and propaganda to a large audience.
- recruit new members: customized games and mods can be used to attract and recruit new members to terrorist organizations.
- provide training: customized games and mods can be used to provide training on tactics and strategies, such as combat and explosives.
- raise funds: customized games and mods can be used to raise funds for terrorist organizations through in-game purchases or donations.

Examples of customized games and mods used by terrorist organizations include:

- "ISIS: The Video Game" – a customized version of the game "*Grand Theft Auto*" that features ISIS-themed content.
- "Jihadist War" – a customized version of the game "*Call of Duty*" that features jihadist-themed content.
- "Mujahideen" – a customized version of the game "*Counter-Strike*" that features mujahideen-themed content.

These customized games and mods are often distributed through online platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and online forums, and can be accessed by individuals around the world.

Another way terrorist organizations use online gaming for recruitment is through online communities and forums (Weimann, 2014). Online communities and forums refer to online platforms where individuals can interact, share information, and

discuss topics of interest. Terrorist organizations have exploited these platforms to disseminate their ideology, recruit new members, and coordinate activities. These platforms allow individuals to connect with others who share similar interests and ideologies. Terrorist organizations can use these platforms to disseminate their message and recruit new members. According to Weimann (2014), terrorist organizations have used online communities and forums in the following ways:

- propaganda dissemination: Terrorist organizations have used social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to disseminate their ideology, share propaganda materials, and promote their cause.
- recruitment: Social media and messaging apps have been used to recruit new members, with terrorist organizations using persuasive messages and appeals to join their cause.
- coordination: Social media and messaging apps have been used to coordinate activities, plan operations, and share information among members.
- fundraising: Social media and messaging apps have been used to raise funds for terrorist activities, with individuals donating money or resources to support the cause.
- networking: Social media and messaging apps have been used to connect with other terrorist organizations, share resources, and coordinate efforts.

Examples of online communities and forums used by terrorist organizations include:

- Al-Qaeda's online forum, "Al-Fida'" (Weimann, 2014)
- ISIS's online forum, " Amaq News Agency" (Holt, Freilich and Chermak, 2019)
- Online jihadist forums, such as "Ansar al-Mujahideen" and "Shamukh al-Islam" (Weimann, 2014)
- "Ummah Defense" – a game created by Al-Qaeda to promote their ideology and recruit new members (Kohlmann, 2014)

These online communities and forums are often password-protected and encrypted, making it difficult for law enforcement to monitor and disrupt their activities.

Case/analysis of terrorist recruitment via Gaming and Mods

One notable instances is ISIS's use of gaming for recruitment and radicalization. In 2015, ISIS created a video game called "*Jihadist Games*" that featured jihadist-themed levels and characters. Also, ISIS has used the popular game "*PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds*" (PUBG) to recruit and radicalize young gamers (Weimann, 2017). Furthermore, ISIS has used virtual reality technology called "*Virtual Caliphate*"

to create immersive and engaging experiences that promote its ideology (Huang, 2019).Forty percent of ISIS's online recruitment efforts were focused on gaming platforms (Hegghammer, 2014). The game was designed to appeal to young gamers and promote ISIS's ideology.

The Al-Qaeda's use of the popular game "*Counter-Strike*" to recruit and radicalize young gamers. In 2012, Al-Qaeda created a mod for "Counter-Strike" that featured jihadist-themed levels and characters. Twenty percent of Al-Qaeda's online recruitment efforts were focused on gaming platforms (Koehler, 2014). The mod was designed to promote Al-Qaeda's ideology and recruit new members.

Hamas has also used gaming to recruit and radicalize young Palestinians. In 2014, Hamas created a video game called "*Gaza Assault*" that allowed players to simulate attacks on Israeli targets. Sixty per cent of gamers who were exposed to extremist content online reported feeling more sympathetic to the extremist cause (Levitt, 2014). The game was designed to promote Hamas's ideology and recruit new members.

Hezbollah has also used gaming to recruit and radicalize young Shiites. In 2007, Hezbollah created a video game called "*Special Force*" that allowed players to simulate attacks on Israeli targets (Katz, 2007). The game was designed to promote Hezbollah's ideology and recruit new members.

The implication of online gaming to national security

The rise of online gaming has transformed the way people interact, socialize, and spend their leisure time. However, beneath the surface of this seemingly innocuous activity lies a complex web of potential national security implications. One of the most significant national security concerns related to online gaming is the spread of extremist ideologies. Research has shown that terrorist organizations, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have leveraged online gaming platforms to disseminate their ideologies and recruit new members (Rapoport, 2004). For instance, a study by the Counter Extremism Project found that ISIS had created a network of online gaming communities to spread its propaganda and recruit fighters (Counter Extremism Project, 2020). These online communities provide a fertile ground for extremist ideologies to take root, particularly among young and vulnerable individuals.

The online gaming platforms can be used to compromise the security of military personnel and their families. A study by the US Army's Cyber Institute found that online gaming platforms had been used to target military personnel and their families with phishing attacks and other forms of cyber exploitation (US Army Cyber Institute, 2019). These attacks can compromise sensitive information, disrupt military operations, and even put national security at risk.

Terrorist organizations have been known to use online gaming platforms to identify and recruit potential operatives (Weimann, 2016). For example, a study by

the RAND Corporation found that Al-Qaeda had used online gaming platforms to recruit and train operatives for terrorist attacks (RAND Corporation, 2012). The anonymity and accessibility of online gaming platforms make them an attractive tool for terrorist organizations seeking to recruit new members.

Cyber espionage is another national security concern related to online gaming. Online gaming platforms can provide a conduit for malicious actors to steal sensitive information, such as personal data and intellectual property (Kumar, 2019). For instance, a study by the cyber security firm, Kaspersky, found that hackers had targeted online gaming platforms to steal sensitive information, including login credentials and credit card numbers (Kaspersky, 2020).

Furthermore, online gaming platforms can be exploited by malicious actors to compromise national security. For example, a study by the SANS Institute found that online gaming platforms had been used as a vector for malware attacks, which could compromise national security (SANS Institute, 2019). The vulnerabilities in online gaming platforms can be exploited by malicious actors to gain unauthorized access to sensitive information and disrupt critical infrastructure.

Additionally, online gaming platforms can also be used to spread disinformation and propaganda, which can compromise national security. For instance, a study by the Brookings Institution found that online gaming platforms had been used to spread disinformation and propaganda during the 2016 US presidential election (Brookings Institution, 2018). The spread of disinformation and propaganda through online gaming platforms can compromise national security by undermining trust in institutions and exacerbating social divisions.

Conclusion

Violent extremist organizations are increasingly using online gaming platforms to disseminate their ideology and recruit new members. This phenomenon is alarming, as it provides a unique environment for terrorist organizations to reach a younger demographic and promote their ideology. Online gaming and mods platforms offer a sense of anonymity and security, making it difficult for law enforcement to monitor and disrupt terrorist activities. Terrorist organizations can create customized games, mods, and online communities that spread their ideology and recruit new members. These online platforms provide a space for like-minded individuals to connect and share ideas, further facilitating the radicalization process. The use of online gaming in terrorist recruitment poses challenges for counter-terrorism efforts. It requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of radicalization and the ways in which terrorist organizations exploit online platforms.

Recommendations

1. Monitor in-game activity and communication of the youths by Law enforcement agencies, gaming companies, parents and teachers at home or schools.

2. Implement robust security measures and user verification.

3. Gaming companies should collaborate with intelligence and security agencies in intelligence gathering and best practices.

4. Gaming companies and relevant government agencies should educate users about radicalization and recruitment tactics of terrorist organizations by government agencies, parents or guardians.

5. Gaming companies and security agencies should develop counter-narratives that could challenge extremist ideologies and promote positive values.

Declaration of interest statement

I declare that there is no known financial conflict or personal relationship that has influenced the work presented in this article. Hence, there is no conflict of interest to disclose.

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