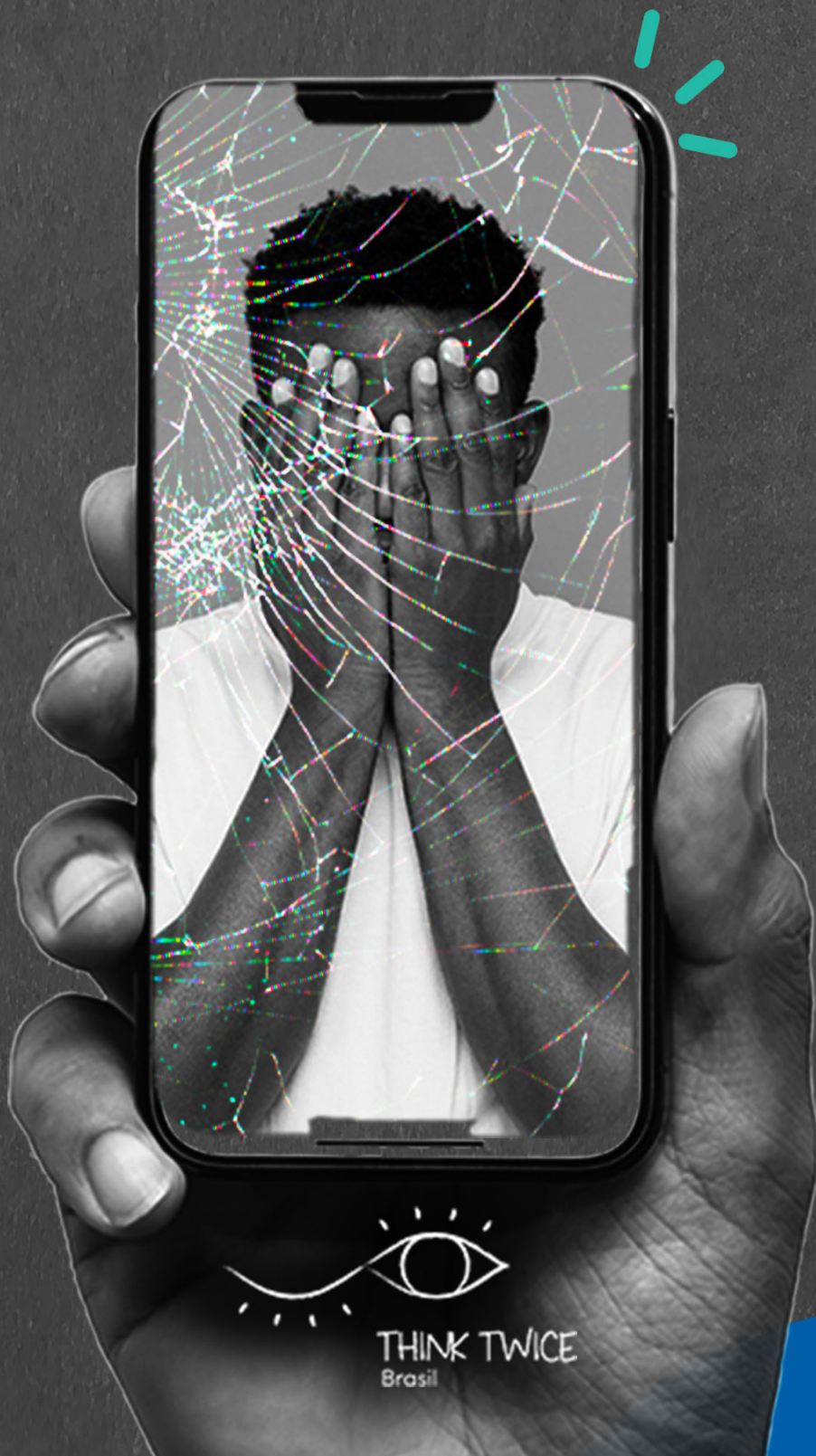


**ALGORITHMS, VIOLENCE,  
AND YOUTH IN BRAZIL:  
TOWARDS AN EDUCATIONAL MODEL  
FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**



THINK TWICE  
Brasil

This study was designed and developed by Think Twice Brasil (“TTB”), an impact organization that promotes education for peace and human rights as a tool to interrupt cycles of violence and inequality.

Founded in 2013, the TTB works in education, research and the creation of strategies for public authorities and educational institutions to confront abuses and violations of rights, establishing a culture of peace and human rights. More than 12 thousand people and dozens of organizations have already experienced, in person or virtually, TTB activities.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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## **INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT:**



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# WARNING

This report contains sensitive content that addresses issues of violence and discrimination, which may be triggering for some readers. The purpose of this report is to provide information about complex social challenges and explore potential solutions to address them. However, we recognize that discussion of such topics can provoke strong emotional reactions. If while reading you feel that you need assistance, contact a person you trust and/or a mental health professional.

# PRESENTATION

The idea of developing this study arose at the beginning of 2022, given the increasing attacks on schools in Brazil and the complex context of presidential elections. In January of that year, we launched a survey that gathered relevant information about young people's relationship with politics, the right to vote and the general perception of violence and civic participation. From then on, we created Escola de Mudadores ("School of Changers"), the first 100% digital and free Brazilian platform to promote dialogue about peace and human rights between young people and educators.

The Escola de Mudadores went live in August 2022, with an innovative and accessible learning path, designed in partnership with many civil society organizations, with the initial aim of supporting young people to break with political polarization and prepare for the exercise of the right to vote in the presidential elections that would take place in October of the same year. It turns out that, while we were working tirelessly to launch Escola de Mudadores, dozens of attacks on nurseries and schools were taking place across the country. According to the report produced by the Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup>, only in 2022, there were 7 attacks and in 2023 there were 16 more.

This scenario made it clear that it was necessary to investigate the relationship between social networks and the wave of attacks on schools and the growing political polarization among young people. Given this, we met with the young people who supported the construction of the Escola de Mudadores, collected their impressions and began implementing this study, taking care that each step considered the perspective of youth and was able to combine theory and practice to face the problems complex problems we are dealing with.

<sup>1</sup>. [Ministry of Education](#)

The purpose of this study is to share fundamental data and reflections for a responsible debate on combating structural violence, with emphasis on the devastating impact it has on children and young people. I believe that we only fail to do better or differently when we do not yet have the necessary knowledge to do so. Therefore, for more than ten years, the TTB has argued that promoting education for peace and human rights can interrupt cycles of inequality and violence that generate individual and collective suffering.

We will only be able to build the world we want to live in when we are first able to imagine it. May this study reveal the knowledge you need and encourage you to imagine a world free from violence, especially for children and adolescents.

Good reading!

Gabriele Costa B. Garcia

**Gabriele Costa B. Garcia**

Executive Director

Think Twice Brasil - TTB

# PREFACE

The research “Algorithms, Violence and Youth in Brazil: towards an educational model for peace and human rights” emerges as a call to action. In this study, we are confronted with worrying evidence of how social media algorithms can inadvertently serve as catalysts for exposing adolescents and young people to violent content, fuelling cycles of violence and enhancing processes of radicalization.

The findings of this research highlight the critical need to revisit and reinforce our content moderation strategies, to increase the degree of institutionalization of education policy for peace and human rights in the country, and to engage digital platforms for greater rights accountability. human rights and violence prevention.

It is in proposing solutions where this research adds to other initiatives, reiterating the need for new research that produces more data and evidence of the effects and impacts of education for peace and human rights as a strategy for preventing and confronting violence in the digital environment.

Given the complexity of this social phenomenon, which challenges the entire society to understand it better in order to prevent and confront it, this work presents itself as a valuable initiative. It not only provides qualitative insights for developing digital violence prevention strategies, but also points to avenues for future research, a stimulating resource for all those dedicated to the cause of peace and human rights education.

By vigorously arguing for education for peace and human rights as fundamental tools to interrupt cycles of violence and inequality, Think Twice Brasil addresses the challenge of institutionalizing an education

policy for peace and human rights in Brazil and overcoming the simplistic paradigm that results typical, topical and classic consider the distance between the theory and practice of human rights in unequal societies. Despite the insufficient engagement of platforms in mitigating the processes of radicalization and violence, the imperative of designing and applying multidisciplinary tools dedicated to interrupting and preventing violence is highlighted, expanding the scope of intervention beyond the traditional domains of justice and public security. There will be no adequate and effective response until digital violence is recognized as a social problem of great impact and prevented on a multisectoral basis.

By supporting the Think Twice Brasil initiative, the Brazilian Coalition for the End of Violence against Children and Adolescents believes that this study inspires action, dialogue and, above all, deep reflection on how we can collectively address and overcome the challenges presented by the interaction between technology, society and violence, prompting the formulation and implementation of evidence-based public prevention and response policies in Brazil.

**Lucas José Ramos Lopes**  
Brazilian Coalition to End Violence  
against Children and Adolescents





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report “Algorithms, Violence, and Youth in Brazil: Towards an Educational Model for peace and Human Rights” explores how the use of social network sites by Brazilian youth can facilitate access to violent content that may influence them to carry out violent attacks in schools in Brazil.

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first one, individuals between 13 and 24 years old based in different regions were invited to answer an anonymous survey containing questions about their engagement with the most popular social network sites in Brazil. 216 individuals answered the questionnaire. 89 (41.2%) were between 13 and 16 years old. 134 (63.2%) were women. 136 (63%) described themselves as white. 151 (69.9%) were based in the South East region of Brazil. Based on the responses given by the students, we opened an account on TikTok and engaged with the social network site from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023 aiming at mimicking the lived experience of a young internet user, observing the recommendation of videos with violent content that could potentially influence young Brazilians to perpetrate violent acts. We decided to use TikTok as the main object of investigation because Brazil is among the countries with the highest number of users, with the majority being children and young people<sup>2</sup>. Below we highlight the key findings, which will be carefully explored in the following chapters:

## **Easy access to violent videos has made some young people less sensitive to death, sexual abuse, and heinous crime**

When asked to reflect on a specific topic concerning social network sites

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<sup>2</sup>. [TIC Kids Online Brasil, 2022.](#)

that were not incorporated into the previous questions, some comments highlighted how access to violent content has normalised violence, especially in its most grotesque forms. One of the respondents said that watching violent videos has directly shaped their worldview, making them less sensitive to disturbing events.

### **Content moderation and hate speech/disinformation policies have not effectively prevented the circulation of violent content, hate speech, and fake news**

Another frequent issue pointed out by some respondents was the lack of trust in content moderation and in policies aiming at restricting the circulation of violent content, hate speech and/or disinformation insofar as despite reporting the existence of posts that undermine human rights and fake news, some respondents have declared that they have continued to receive recommendations of similar posts.

### **Algorithmic systems of recommendation have promoted violence in various ways**

220 (18.3%) out of the 1,200 videos recommended by TikTok over thirty days promoted violence. 33 constituted a case of cyberbullying targeting women; 30 presented discriminatory content; and 157 made explicit appeals to violence, in some cases openly inciting violence in schools.

### **Many videos recommended by the algorithms displayed a sexist tone disguised as humour pieces**

In our first days of engagement with TikTok, the social network site recommended several videos with a sexist tone disguised as humour pieces. Since these videos repeatedly and intentionally made the same “joke,” transforming words that, in the Portuguese language, are feminine into masculine while replacing the article “a” with “o,” these videos were categorized as cases of cyberbullying. Despite the alleged new words being used in “jokes” with men, they can be interpreted as a case



of cyberbullying directed at women because some of the words refer to the female body and female artists. Additionally, we were struck by the fact that many of the videos featured only men laughing at the changes.

### **Discriminatory videos recommended by the algorithms mainly targeted Black people and women**

TikTok's algorithms recommended several videos in which Black people and women were victims of discrimination. Whereas Black men were mainly associated with criminality, white women were depicted as lacking intelligence. Immigrants (Chinese and Arabic individuals), the LGBT-QIA+ community, autistic people, and individuals with restricted growth (dwarfism) were also victims of discrimination in some videos. Moreover, cases of weight-related discrimination were identified.

### **TikTok's algorithms quickly moved from harassing and discriminatory videos to videos explicitly promoting violence**

After 12 days "liking" videos containing harassing and discriminatory content and following the accounts that shared such videos, TikTok's algorithms started recommending videos with explicit appeals to violence. The first video showed a sequence of pictures of children murdered in disturbing ways. From the 12th day of analysis until the 30th, TikTok's algorithms recommended practically daily parts of videos reproduced by the website *Portal do Zacarias*. This news website has given access to videos filmed by individuals while torturing their victims before killing them. 115 out of the 157 recommended videos containing explicit appeals to violence referred to the website.

Overall, *Portal do Zacarias* was promoted on TikTok in various ways: through dancing and the viral song associated with the website; through individuals and/or captions describing the violent crimes showcased on the website; through footage from the videos synced with the original sound of the victims crying before being killed; through videogame simulations; through artificial intelligence; through Disney-like animation





posters. The victims of the crimes showcased on *Portal do Zacarias* and reproduced on TikTok were mainly young women or children.

### **Modified captions, illustrations, video game simulations, and artificial intelligence have been used to circumvent guardrails to prevent the circulation of material promoting violence**

Many of the examined videos recommended by TikTok used words with numbers instead of letters in the caption to deceive automated moderation, illustrations, video game simulations, and even artificial intelligence to appeal to younger audiences and hamper content moderation. One of the videos made by artificial intelligence shows a victim of a cruel crime that occurred in Guatemala describing her own death.

### **Algorithmic systems of recommendation have facilitated access to videos encouraging the use of violence as a means to deal with bullying in schools**

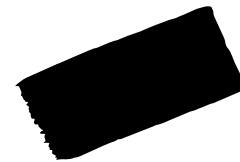
More than once TikTok's algorithms recommended videos inciting the use of violence as a means to cope with bullying in schools. One of these videos explicitly encourages students to bring a brass knuckles tap and a coconut opener to school to go after the individuals who bullied them.

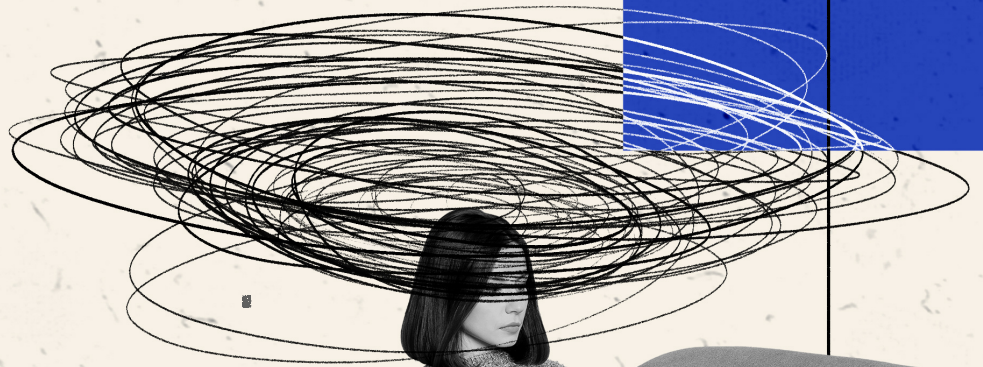
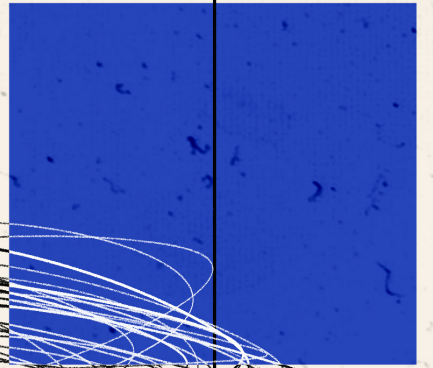
### **Algorithmic systems of recommendation have facilitated the circulation of representations of serial killers and terrorists as heroes**

Illustrations and pictures were used by some internet users to represent serial killers and terrorists as heroes. Besides conveying the message that some children want to become terrorists, some videos used Disney-like animation posters to target younger audiences.

### **Besides normalising violence (especially towards women and children), algorithms have contributed to addiction to online violent content**

In some of the examined videos referring to *Portal do Zacarias*, internet users explicitly described their engagement with videos available on the website as addictive, suggesting that they have continuously engaged with violent material. Whereas some individuals have expressed some concern over this behaviour, others have referred to it with pride, considering their emotional detachment a sign of superiority and even challenging internet users to watch more videos.

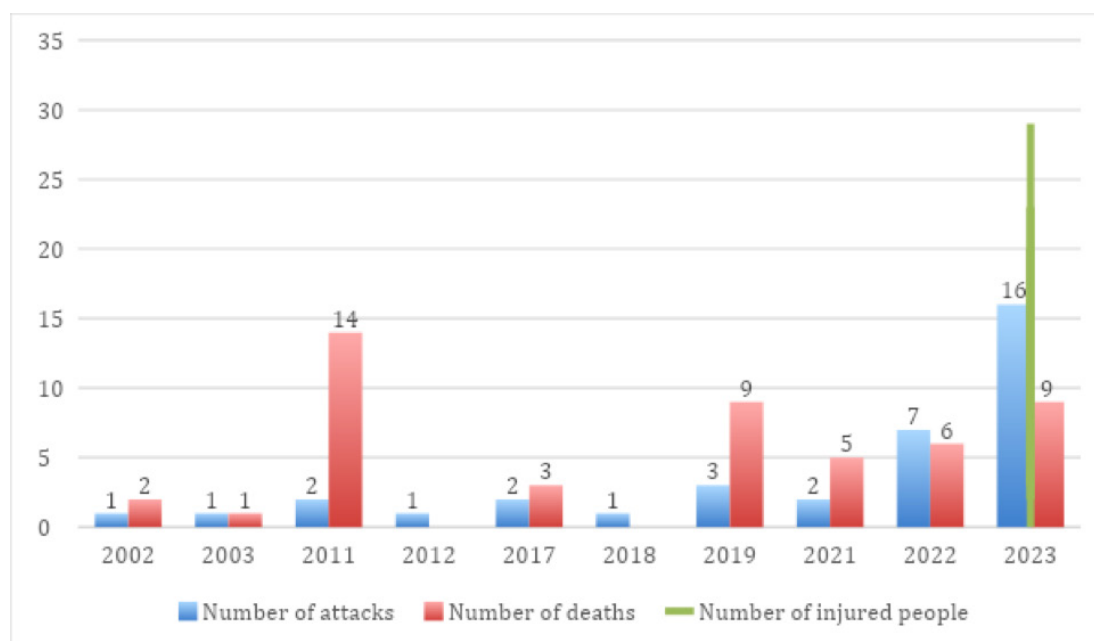




# STUDY CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

Violent attacks in schools were not common in Brazil before 2000. Since 2002, the country has recorded 36 attacks. 16 of them occurred in 2023. All the attacks were perpetrated by young men. The minimum age was 10 years old, and the maximum age was 25<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure 1. Violent attacks in schools in Brazil (from 2002 until 2023)**



Source: [Ministry of Education - Brazil](#)

In three of the recorded attacks, it is known that the perpetrator demon-

3. In 2011, a 10-year-old boy brought a gun to school and after shooting his teacher, shot himself in the head in São Caetano do Sul, São Paulo. Two of the recorded attacks were perpetrated by 25-year-old men. In 2019, a 25-year-old-man and an 18-year-old used a gun, a hammer, a bow and arrows to attack students and teachers in their former school in Suzano, São Paulo. In 2023, a 25-year-old man used a hammer to kill four children between 4 and 7 years old in a nursery in Blumenau, Santa Catarina.

strated signs of radicalisation, expressing xenophobic ideas on social media (attack in Barreiras, Bahia, in 2022) and making explicit references to Nazism (Aracruz, Espírito Santo, 2022; Monte Mor, São Paulo, 2023). In seven of them, bullying was pointed out by the police as the main factor that prompted young Brazilians to commit acts of violence: Taiúva, São Paulo, 2003; Rio de Janeiro, 2011; Medianeira, Paraná, 2018; Saudades, Santa Catarina, 2021; Sobral, Ceará, 2022; Manaus, Amazonas, 2023; São Paulo, 2023. In two cases, the police revealed that the perpetrator simulated the attack in an electronic game before perpetrating it (Vitória, Espírito Santo, 2022) and made references to massacres in schools on social media (Goiânia, Goiás, 2017)<sup>4</sup>. Two attacks were motivated by unrequited love (Alexânia, Goiás, 2017; Caraí, Minas Gerais, 2019). In these cases, the perpetrators targeted female victims.

In a report handed to the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022, Brazilian scholars emphasized the role played by right-wing extremism in the growing wave of attacks in schools, highlighting that the white supremacist soul of the extreme right is somehow linked with recent attacks in schools in Brazil insofar as all the attacks recorded between 2002 and 2022 were perpetrated by white heterosexual men<sup>5</sup>. While accessing social network sites, discussion forums, and playing on-line videogames such as Roblox, Fortnite, Minecraft, some young Brazilian have come across extremist ideas that seem to have prompted them to take violent action, especially in schools.

Some of the recorded attacks in schools echo the anti-democratic, racist, and misogynist essence of right-wing extremism, suggesting that some process of radicalisation occurred before the attacks<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to link all the recorded attacks in schools in Brazil to

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4. [National Campaign for the Right to Education: CNN Brasil](#)


5. [The extreme right among young people in Brazil: attacks in schools and alternatives to a governmental action](#) [translated from Portuguese]

6. Berger, J.M. (2018). *Extremism*. London: The MIT Press.



right-wing extremism insofar as some of them were primarily motivated by bullying.

Even though bullying can pave the way to processes of radicalisation, inducing individuals to engage with extremist ideas, it is not always the case<sup>7</sup>. One may decide to perpetrate a violent attack without incorporating extremist beliefs. As a result, to examine how social network sites have promoted violence among young people in Brazil, possibly influencing some individuals to perpetrate violent acts in schools, it is firstly necessary to define the radical and the extreme right, radicalisation, and cyberbullying. All these elements seem to have played a role in the wave of attacks in schools recently observed in Brazil and all of them seem to be closely linked to the widespread use of social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.



*Even though bullying can pave the way to processes of radicalisation, inducing individuals to engage with extremist ideas, it is not always the case. One may decide to perpetrate a violent attack without incorporating extremist beliefs.*

Since social network sites were the main medium used by many of the perpetrators to share their ideas leading up to the attacks, we used TikTok as an object of investigation to explore the relationship between social network sites and violence among young people. By illuminating how social network sites such as TikTok have been used to promote violence among young people in Brazil, we hope that our report will equip educators, parents and policymakers with the nec-

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7. Miconi, D., Levinsson, A., Frounfelker, R.L., Li, Z., Oulhote, Y., and Rousseau, C. (2022). Cumulative and independent effects of experiences of social adversity on support for violent radicalization during the COVID-19 pandemic: the mediating role of depression. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 57, pp. 1221–1233.

essary knowledge to prevent further violent attacks in schools while promoting a culture of peace and human rights.

## **RADICAL AND EXTREME RIGHT**

Contemporary radical right has three defining traits: populism, nativism, and authoritarianism<sup>8</sup>. It discursively constitutes some individuals as the native citizens of a specific country while simultaneously projecting immigrants and liberal elites as enemies. Whereas immigrants are blamed for having supposedly stolen jobs and social benefits from the perceived native citizens, liberal elites are blamed for promoting multiculturalism, affirmative action, and progressive ideas that are considered to pose a threat to the nucleus of the perceived traditional Brazilian family such as ideas supporting gender equality and the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

There is an intense debate over the difference between the radical and the extreme right. Whereas some scholars use violence as the distinguishing factor, arguing that the extreme right engages in violent action<sup>9</sup>, others contend that the dividing line between the radical and the extreme right should be drawn by their take on democratic principles such as popular sovereignty and the majority rule<sup>10</sup>. This report is aligned with this second perspective. In this sense, it understands that both the radical and the extreme right can engage in violent action. The key difference is that whereas the radical right operates within democratic systems, the extreme right rejects the essence of democracy, openly opposing popular sovereignty and the majority rule (for example Neo-Nazi groups).

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8. Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far-Right Today*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

9. Minkenberg, M. (2000). The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-modernity. *Government and Opposition*, 35(2), pp. 170–188; Mondon, A. and Winter, A. (2021). From demonization to normalization: reflecting on far right research. In Ashe, S. D., Busher, J., Macklin, G., and Winter, A. (eds) *Researching the Far Right: theory, method and practice*. NY: Routledge, pp. 370–382.

10. Gattinara, P.C. and Pirro, A.L. (2019). The far right as social movement. *European Societies*, 21(4), pp. 447–462; Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far-Right Today*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

## RADICALISATION

Engagement with the extreme right entails some process of radicalisation. In this report, we understand radicalisation as “the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs”<sup>11</sup>. In the political spectrum, engagement with right-wing ideas could motivate an individual to adopt more nativist and authoritarian views to such an extent that it could result in a complete rejection of democratic principles. In this sense, the radical right would pave the way to the extreme right, playing an important role in the process of radicalisation. Figure 2 offers a glimpse of this process of radicalisation. However, it must be interpreted as a simplification of it for two reasons. Firstly, because the frontiers between the radical and the extreme right are not as well defined as illustrated. As described by the political scientist Cas Mudde, the radical and the extreme right have been encompassed by what is known as the far right<sup>12</sup>.

Due to difficulties to delimitate a hard line between the radical and the extreme right, many scholars have used the term far right to refer to those who present some degree of hostility towards liberal democracy that can range from xenophobic views to white supremacist and neo-Nazi ideas. Secondly, because processes of radicalisation are not linear. They are much more complex than presented in Figure 2 insofar as they are dependent on contextual, social, and individual factors<sup>13</sup>.

*Figure 2. Process of radicalisation in the right-wing political spectrum*

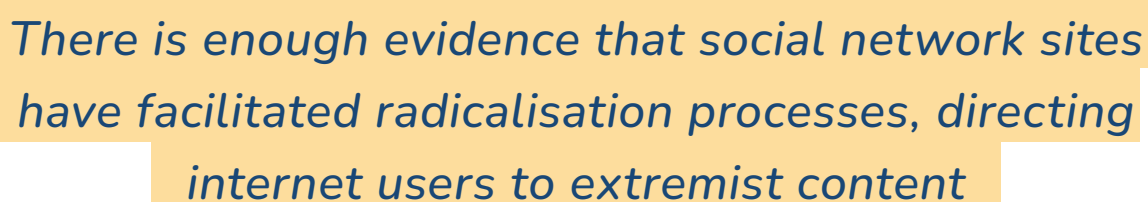


11. Borum, R. (2011). Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4(4), pp. 7-36.

12. Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far-Right Today*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

13. Ibid

There is enough evidence that social network sites have facilitated radicalisation processes, directing internet users to extremist content<sup>14</sup>. Even though the internet itself does not cause radicalisation<sup>15</sup>, there is some consensus in the literature that algorithmic recommendation systems have contributed to the wide circulation of discourses that pose a threat to democratic systems and the rights of minorities, influencing opinions and the behaviour of internet users. While engaging with over 400 transphobic videos on TikTok, for instance, researchers Olivia Little and Abbie Richards observed how quickly the social network site started recommending more discriminatory and even violent content<sup>16</sup>, facilitating encounters with the far right.



*There is enough evidence that social network sites have facilitated radicalisation processes, directing internet users to extremist content*

Reflecting on the nexus between radicalisation and violence, Professor Randy Borum draws attention to the fact that radicalisation processes do not always culminate with violent actions<sup>17</sup>. Not all individuals who adopt extremist beliefs will necessarily perpetrate violent acts. Similarly, not all violent actions are associated with extremist beliefs. Depending on the pathway and the mechanisms involved in the process of radicalisation, one may decide to either engage or not in violent action. One of the factors that can induce an individual to take violent action and that can also function as a gateway to processes of radicalisation is cyberbullying.

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14. Daniels, J. (2018). The Algorithmic Rise of the Alt-Right. *Contexts*, 17(1), pp. 60–65; Lewis, R. (2018). [Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube](#), *Data & Society*; Weimann, G. and Masri, N. (2020). [The virus of hate: far-right terrorism in the cyber-space](#); Winter, A. (2019). Online Hate: from the Far-Right to the Alt-Right and from the Margins to the Mainstream. In Lumsden, K. and Harmer, E. (eds.) *Online Othering: exploring digital violence and discrimination on the web*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 39–63.
  15. Winter, C., Neumann, P., Meleagrou-Hitchens, A., Ranstorp, M., Vidino, L., and Fürst, J. (2020). Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization, and Counter-Strategies. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 14(2), pp. 1–20.
  16. Little, O. and Richards, A. (2021). [TikTok's algorithm leads users from transphobic videos to far-right rabbit holes](#). *Media Matters*. 12.
  17. Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far-Right Today*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
  17. Borum, R. (2011). Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4(4), pp. 7–36.

## CYBERBULLYING

It is well documented that victims of bullying are at increased risk of aggressive and illegal behaviour<sup>18</sup>, especially in adolescence and early adulthood. There is also evidence that bullying is associated with school shootings, influencing students to take violent action<sup>19</sup>. When it comes to the relationship between bullying and radicalisation, a recent study conducted with over 6,000 young adults in Canada indicated that cyberbullying was associated with support for violent radicalisation<sup>20</sup>.

Overall, bullying can result in violent action with or without the mediation of extremist beliefs. In the literature, bullying is often defined as repeated exposure to negative actions from one or more people, involving a power imbalance between the perpetrator(s) and the victim<sup>21</sup>. In this report, we work with the definition of bullying adopted by the United Nations that states that bullying is an “intentional and aggressive behaviour occurring repeatedly against a victim where there is a real or perceived power imbalance, and where the victim feels vulnerable and powerless to defend himself or herself.”<sup>22</sup> The term cyberbullying implies that such behaviour occurs in online spaces. According to the United Nations, cyberbullying “involves the posting or sending of electronic messages, including pictures or videos, aimed at harassing, threatening or targeting another person”<sup>23</sup>. A study conducted with adolescents in Turkey provides evidence of the correlation between cyberbullying and violence, indicating that both perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying present violent tendencies. In the case of the perpetrator, this tendency influences the decision to inflict

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18. Gibb, S.J., Horwood, L.J., and Fergusson, D.M. (2011) Bullying victimization/perpetration in childhood and later adjustment: findings from a 30 year longitudinal study. *J Aggress Confl Peace Res* 3(2), pp. 82–88; Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M.D., Haynie, D.L., Ruan, W.J., Scheidt, P.C. (2003) Relationships between bullying and violence among US youth. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 157(4), pp. 348–353.
  19. Van Geel, M., Vedder, P., Tanilon, J. (2014). Bullying and weapon carrying: a meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatr*, 168(8), pp. 714–720.
  20. Miconi, D., Levinsson, A., Frounfelker, R.L., Li, Z., Oulhote, Y., and Rousseau, C. (2022). Cumulative and independent effects of experiences of social adversity on support for violent radicalization during the COVID-19 pandemic: the mediating role of depression. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 57, pp. 1221–1233.
  21. Ibid: Olweus D (1994) Bullying at school: basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry* 35(7), pp. 1171–1190.
  22. United Nations (2023). [Bullying and Cyberbullying](#).
  23. Ibid.

harm through online means (cyberbullying). In the case of the victim, it may prompt them to inflict harm in either online or physical realms. One of the key findings of the research is that those exposed to cyberbullying felt prone to engage in “violent behaviour after a while to defend themselves or show violence”<sup>24</sup>.

Even though cyberbullying overlaps with bullying, leading to mental health problems and violent behaviour, some scholars have observed that the impacts of cyberbullying may be significantly worse due to the exposure of the victims in online realms and the sense of helplessness due to difficulties in identifying the aggressor<sup>25</sup>. Social network sites seem to have become the perfect space to punish an individual or groups of people and seek revenge (the main motivators of cyberbullying) because besides allowing anonymous attacks, they allow the aggressor to count on the public to achieve great visibility. It is as if the aggressor only had to share one offensive post and the algorithms would work for them, resulting in reputational damage to the victim and mental health problems. Among the existing social network sites, TikTok seems to be especially friendly to individuals seeking punishment and revenge through cyberbullying insofar as it automatically plays the video, instantly increasing its exposure due to algorithmic systems of recommendation<sup>26</sup>.

Brazil recognized bullying and cyberbullying as crimes in January 2024 through a bill inscribed into the existing National Programme for Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. According to bill 14.811/2024, individuals who use computer networks, social media, apps, online games, or any other digital means or virtual environment to systematically intimidate, humiliate,


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24. Sari, S.V., Camadan, F. (2016). The new face of violence tendency: Cyber bullying perpetrators and their victims. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 59, pp. 317-326.

25. Sticca, F., Perren, S. (2013). Is cyberbullying worse than traditional bullying? Examining the differential roles of medium, publicity, and anonymity for the perceived severity of bullying. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 42(5), pp. 739-750; Mao, J. (2022). [The Role of Nudges in Mitigating and Preventing Cyberbullying on Social Media](#). Proceedings of the 2022 3rd International Conference on Mental Health, Education and Human Development. Wang, J., Nansel, T.R., Iannotti, R.J. (2011). Cyber and traditional bullying: Differential association with depression. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48(4), pp. 415-417.

26. Little, O. and Richards, A. (2021). TikTok's algorithm leads users from transphobic videos to far-right rabbit holes. *Media Matters*.

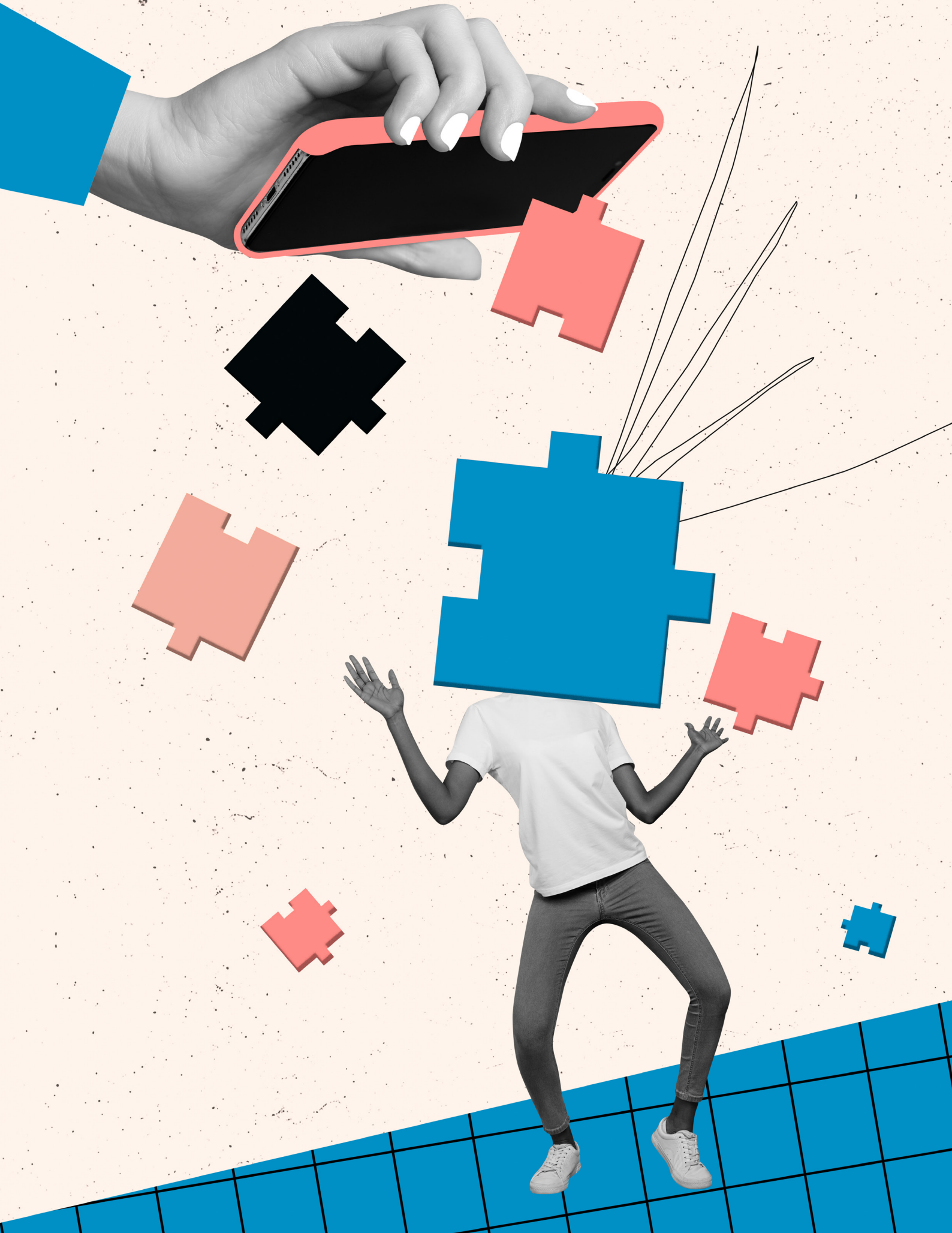
discriminate against, and/or make verbal, moral, sexual, social, psychological, physical, material and virtual attacks against one or more people repetitively and intentionally can be fined and/or receive a sentence ranging from two to four years in prison<sup>27</sup>.



*One of the key findings of the research is that those exposed to cyberbullying felt prone to engage in “violent behaviour after a while to defend themselves or show violence”*

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27. [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2023-2026/2024/Lei/L14811.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2023-2026/2024/Lei/L14811.htm)







# METHODOLOGY

## WHY TIKTOK?

To examine how social network sites have promoted violence among young people in Brazil in a way that could potentially influence students to perpetrate violent attacks in schools, we used TikTok as an object of investigation. TikTok is considered the most successful Chinese social network site<sup>28</sup>. It was created in September 2016, and it rapidly spread across different countries. In 2023, Brazil was the third country with the largest TikTok audience, standing behind the United States and Indonesia<sup>29</sup>. The number of adolescents and young adults (18-29 years old) using TikTok in Brazil has increased in recent years, reflecting its appeal among young individuals<sup>30</sup>. Whereas at the beginning, young people were mainly attracted by its funny “lipSync-videos”, gradually TikTok became a source of information and a space for discussions, education, sales, and cyberbullying<sup>31</sup>. In terms of gender, the number of men engaging with this social network on a global scale has increased, surpassing the number of women in 2023<sup>32</sup>.

Some scholars have underscored that what makes TikTok different from other social network sites is its unique ability to produce viral videos while using the hashtag #FYP, which means “For You Page”<sup>33</sup>. If the user watches a video with the hashtag until the end, TikTok’s algorithms incorporate their preferences and recommend similar con-

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28. Montag, C., Yang, H., and Elhai, J.D. (2021). On the Psychology of TikTok Use: A First Glimpse From Empirical Findings. *Frontiers in Public Health*.

29. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299807/number-of-monthly-unique-tiktok-users/>

30. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1321856/brazil-tiktok-users-age-group/>

31. Montag, C., Yang, H., and Elhai, J.D. (2021). On the Psychology of TikTok Use: A First Glimpse From Empirical Findings. *Frontiers in Public Health*; Kumar, V.L., Goldstein, M.A. (2020) Cyberbullying and adolescents. *Curr Pediatr Rep*. 8, pp. 86–92.

32. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299785/distribution-tiktok-users-gender/>

33. Fatimatuzzahro, F., & Achmad, Z. A. (2022). What If It Was You (#WIIWY) digital activism on TikTok to fight gender-based violence online and cyberbullying. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, 35(4), 450–465.

tent on the “For You Page” (the landing page) with the intent to maximise the time spent on the platform. Another factor that makes TikTok especially appealing among adolescents is that it presents some creative features that allow them to produce original short videos without much effort. To some scholars, this characteristic of TikTok was crucial to increase its popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic insofar as it provided adolescents with a space to creatively socialise with other individuals<sup>34</sup>. Scholarship focused on the impacts of TikTok on children and adolescents argues that this design may cause addictive behaviour, inducing individuals to spend more time on the social network site, navigating through videos carefully selected to meet their interests<sup>35</sup>. Overall, TikTok satisfies several affective needs, prompting individuals to engage with its videos: it provides a sense of belonging to a social network, it gives individuals the feeling that they are special while receiving great exposure, and it also allows internet users to express themselves in a creative way<sup>36</sup>.

Even though TikTok has been instrumental to young people to build networks and express their identity and creativity, it has produced some negative impacts. Some of them have developed syndromes after watching similar videos for a long period<sup>37</sup>. For example, by using the social network site for a long time, one may unwittingly start imitating gestures seen in viral videos. Additionally, TikTok has facilitated the circulation of rumours, fake news, and conspiracy theories. In Brazil, TikTok was one of the social network sites that facilitated the circulation of conspiracy theories that ended up prompting multiple individuals to attack Congress on January 8th 2022<sup>38</sup>. As far as

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34. Oktarini, N.P.U. et al. (2022). Analysis of the Positive and Negative Impacts of Using Tiktok For Generation Z During Pandemic. *Journal of Digital Law and Policy*, 1(2), pp. 95-100.

35. Kumar, V.L., Goldstein, M.A. (2020) Cyberbullying and adolescents. *Curr Pediatr Rep*. 8, pp. 86-92.

36. Bucknell Bossen, C., Kottasz, R. (2020) Uses and gratifications sought by preadolescent and adolescent TikTok consumers. *Young Cons.* (2020) 21:463-78.29.

37. Oktarini, N.P.U. et al. (2022). Analysis of the Positive and Negative Impacts of Using Tiktok For Generation Z During Pandemic. *Journal of Digital Law and Policy*, 1(2), pp. 95-100.

38. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/09/technology/brazil-riots-jan-6-misinformation-social-media.html>

violence is concerned, TikTok has been used to promote violence in at least five ways:

- ★ some of its videos have been produced and shared with a sexual harassment intent, often endorsing physical gender-based violence<sup>39</sup>;
- ★ some of its videos have facilitated encounters with extremist ideas, serving as a gateway to processes of radicalisation<sup>40</sup>;
- ★ some of its videos have contributed to disseminate hate speech, openly attacking individuals and groups of people based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities<sup>41</sup>;
- ★ some of its videos have repeatedly expressed an intent to harass, threat, and target individuals and groups of people, transforming TikTok into a sort of safe haven to cyberbullying;
- ★ some of its videos have openly endorsed violence, including massacres in schools<sup>42</sup>.

Similar to other social network sites, TikTok has its own Community Guidelines, detailing the type of message that is not acceptable. The document explicitly mentions hate speech and hateful behaviour; violent and hateful organisations and individuals; youth exploitation and abuse; sexual exploitation and gender-based violence; human exploitation; harassment and bullying<sup>43</sup>. Nevertheless, there is evidence that some individuals and groups have managed to circumvent the established norms, using the

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39. Fatimatuzzahro, F., & Achmad, Z. A. (2022). What If It Was You (#WIIWY) digital activism on TikTok to fight gender-based violence online and cyberbullying. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, 35(4), 450–465.

40. Little, O. and Richards, A. (2021). [TikTok's algorithm leads users from transphobic videos to far-right rabbit holes](#). Media Matters;

41. Oktarini, N.P.U. et al. (2022). Analysis of the Positive and Negative Impacts of Using Tiktok For Generation Z During Pandemic. *Journal of Digital Law and Policy*, 1(2), pp. 95-100.

42. Almeida, G.R. e Ramos, D.O. (2023). [Nem acima, nem abaixo do radar: uma análise da produção de conteúdo sobre massacres em escolas brasileiras no Twitter e no TikTok](#). Intercom, PUC-Minas.

43. <https://www.tiktok.com/community-guidelines/en/safety-civility/>

social network site to incite violent action. While analysing some videos shared on TikTok about massacres in schools in Brazil, researchers Gabriela Rodrigues Almeida and Daniela Osvald Ramos noticed some techniques that have often been used to disguise appeals to violence: the use of viral songs in videos showing images of the perpetrator of violent attacks and/or its victims; the creation of fanfiction pieces featuring perpetrators and/or victims of violent attacks; the production of true crime videos, describing heinous crimes and massacres in a way that it may induce internet users to seek for more information and/or take similar action<sup>44</sup>.

Taking into account the growing debate concerning the nexus between TikTok and violence, we used it as an object of investigation to explore how social network sites have promoted violent content in a way that it could influence young Brazilians to perpetrate violent attacks in schools. Since cyberbullying and videos that facilitate encounters with far-right discourses can lead to violent action, we opened up the scope of our analysis and mimicked the engagement of an ordinary user with TikTok to observe which kind of content it would recommend to us.

## **ASSESSING THE PREFERENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRAZIL**

Before engaging with the social network site, we conducted an anonymous survey with young people between 13 and 24 years old based in different regions of Brazil to gain some insights about the content they access on social network sites, especially on TikTok. It was promoted across different social network sites for two months and shared by some teachers with their students. 216 individuals answered the questionnaire. 89 (41.2%) were between 13 and 16 years old. 134 (62%) were women. 136 (63%) described themselves as white. 151 (69.9%) were based in the South East region of Brazil.

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44. Ibid.

Figure 3. Responses to the survey distributed according to age

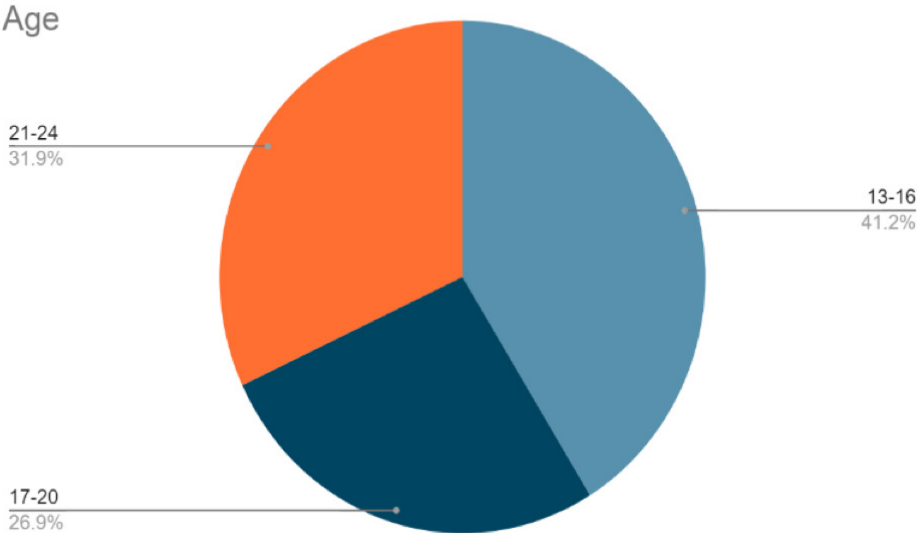
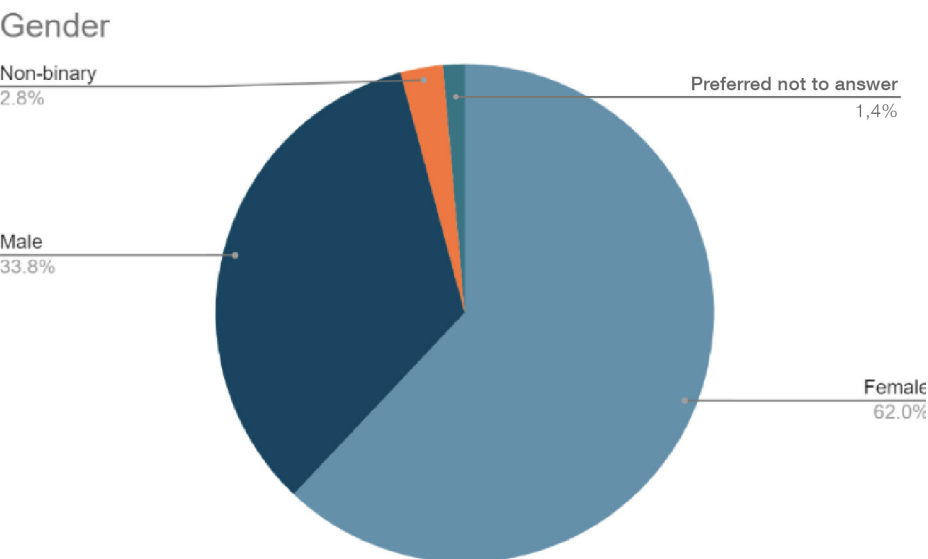
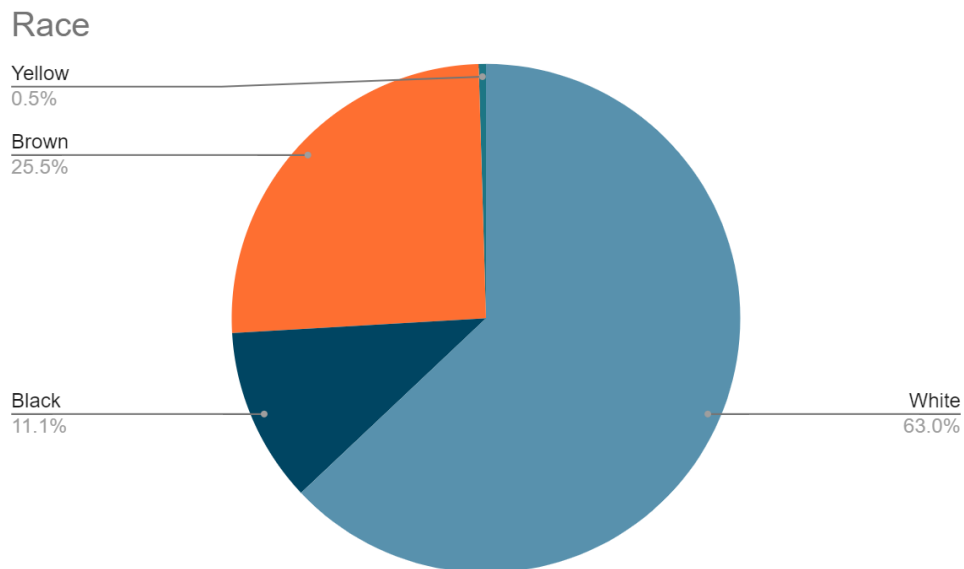


Figure 4. Responses to the survey distributed according to gender<sup>45</sup>

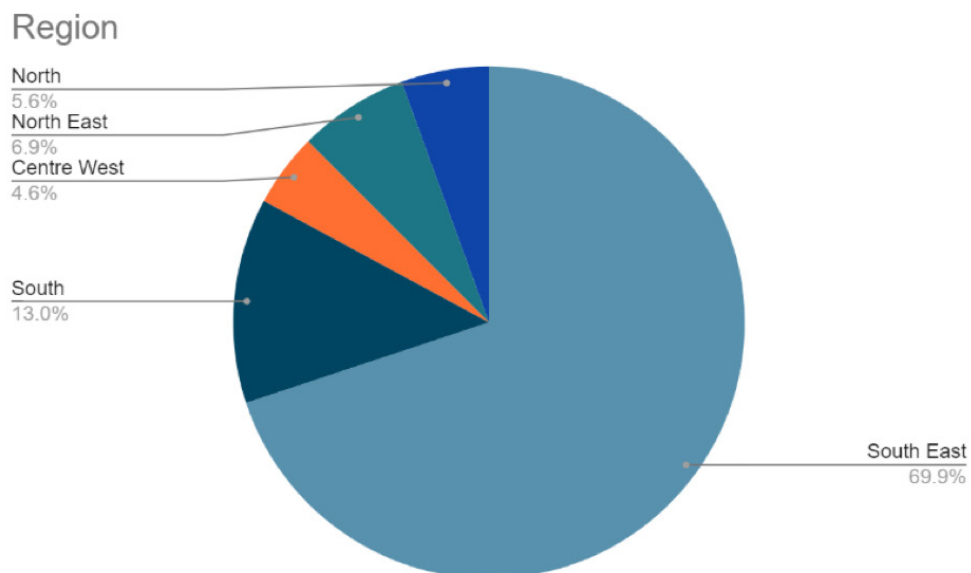


45. 3 (1.4%) participants preferred not to answer this question.

**Figure 5. Responses to the survey distributed according to race**



**Figure 6. Responses to the survey distributed according to region**



The survey consisted of twelve questions. The first four were about age, gender, race, and location. The others focused on young people’s engagement with social network sites, especially TikTok. Table 1 presents an overview of the questions and the given answer options. The final question was open-ended.

**Table 1. Questions exploring Brazilian young people's engagement with social network sites**

What is the social network site that you use most often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ TikTok</li><li>★ WhatsApp</li><li>★ Instagram</li><li>★ Facebook</li><li>★ Snapchat</li><li>★ X (former Twitter)</li><li>★ GAB</li><li>★ Discord</li><li>★ Other</li></ul>
How many hours per day do you spend on the socials?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ Up to 5 hours</li><li>★ Between 5 and 10 hours</li><li>★ Over 10 hours</li></ul>

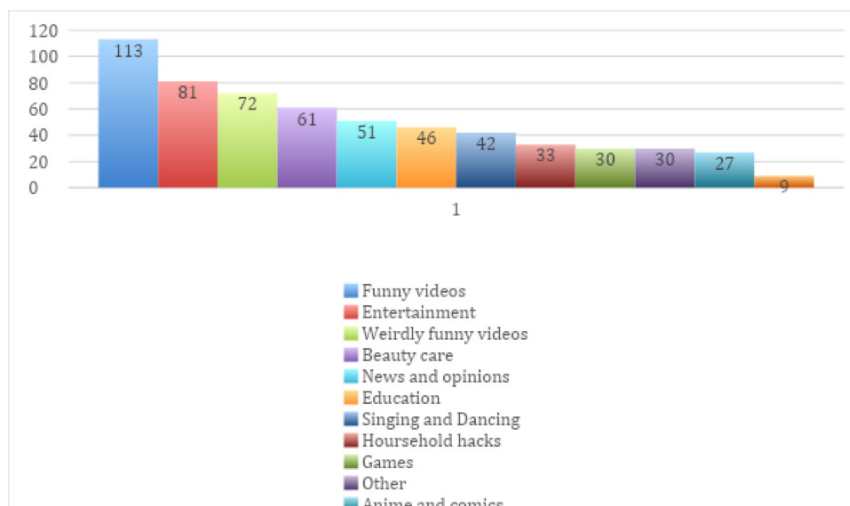
<p>If you have a TikTok account, indicate the three types of video that tend to capture your attention more often.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Funny videos</li> <li>★ Weirdly funny videos</li> <li>★ Entertainment videos</li> <li>★ News and opinions</li> <li>★ Games</li> <li>★ Anime and comics</li> <li>★ Cosplay</li> <li>★ Household hacks</li> <li>★ Singing and Dancing</li> <li>★ Beauty care</li> <li>★ Education</li> <li>★ Other</li> </ul>
<p>Have you ever come across any violent content and/or discriminatory, shaming, disturbing videos in social network sites?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Yes</li> <li>★ No</li> </ul>



<p>If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, on which platform have you found this content?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ TikTok</li> <li>★ WhatsApp</li> <li>★ Instagram</li> <li>★ Facebook</li> <li>★ Snapchat</li> <li>★ Twitter</li> <li>★ GAB</li> <li>★ Discord</li> <li>★ Other</li> </ul>
<p>After accessing this content, have you desired to verbally and/or physically attack another person or a group of individuals based on their physical traits, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Yes</li> <li>★ No</li> </ul>
<p>After accessing this content, have you verbally and/or physically attacked another person or a group of individuals based on their physical traits, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Yes</li> <li>★ No</li> </ul>
<p>What else would you like to tell us?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Open-ended</li> </ul>

The question about the types of videos that tend to capture the attention of the respondents was pivotal to enabling our engagement with TikTok. 188 of the 216 respondents answered this question. As illustrated in Figure 7, funny videos, entertainment videos, and weirdly funny videos were the most chosen types of content. .

Figure 7. TikTok content preferences chosen by the respondents



## ENGAGEMENT WITH TIKTOK

Based on the answers given by the respondents, we opened an account on TikTok and started engaging with the social network site. We used a fictitious name and email account and while asked about content preferences, we added the first five options chosen by the respondents (funny videos, entertainment videos, weirdly funny videos, beauty care, news and opinion). Since we were based in the United Kingdom at the time of data collection, the social network site started recommending content produced in that country. After searching for videos produced in Brazil and engaging with them for one day, the algorithm incorporated our preference for videos in Portuguese language produced in Brazil.

From 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023, we engaged with videos recommended by TikTok, watching until the end and “liking” videos containing harassing, discriminatory, and explicitly violent content. We additionally followed the accounts that shared this type of content. The social network site was accessed twice per day at different times to observe differences in the recommendation system. On each of these occasions, we examined 20 videos. A total of 1,200 videos were analysed during the above-mentioned time frame. The name of the TikTok account that

shared the video, the number of followers, the number of “likes” shown in the video, and information about the content of the video were stored in a password protected Excel file. The names of the TikTok accounts will not be disclosed in this report and they will only be made available to TikTok and legal authorities under formal request.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Time constraints and the number of people involved in the research posed some limitations to this study. Since we only had two months to promote the survey, we did not have enough time to reach a great number of respondents. Another factor that seems to have limited the outreach of our survey was our target audience. Conducting surveys with adolescents can be especially difficult because they may lack interest in participating in surveys. Others may not feel comfortable enough in sharing their views about violence and social network sites. The limited number of respondents (216) prevented us from conducting analysis with statistical relevance, which might have been useful to explore, for instance, how engagement with violent content varies according to Brazilian regions, age, race, and gender. Instead of quantitatively engaging with the data derived from the survey, we prioritised the qualitative analysis of the comments made by the respondents. Moreover, we used the five most chosen TikTok content preferences to inform our engagement with the social network site.

Another important limitation was the number of people involved in the conduction of this study. Since only one researcher was responsible for engaging with TikTok, it was not possible to examine a larger number of videos. At the end of the analysis of 1,200 videos, the researcher presented signs of mental exhaustion due to the violent charge of the material accessed daily. Agitated behaviour, signs of irritability, and repetitive thoughts associated with the viral song used in some videos were

some of the symptoms presented by the researcher who was assisted by a therapist at the time of data collection. If we had more researchers involved in this study, they could have collaboratively examined the videos. Besides reducing the psychological effects, this approach could have allowed a quantitative analysis of the videos based on coding, making a greater contribution to existing scholarship on the nexus between algorithms and violence.

In light of the existing limitations, the findings of this report should be interpreted as an initial step towards a more comprehensive analysis of how social network sites have promoted violent content in a way that could influence young people to perpetrate violent attacks in schools.

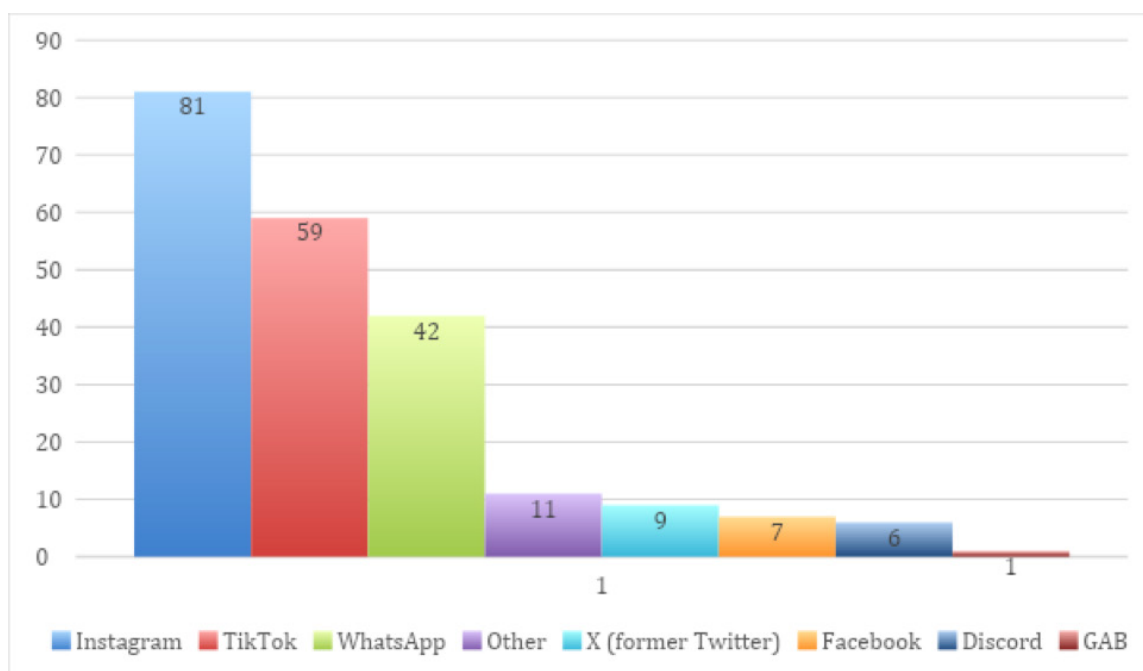


# DATA ANALYSIS

## SURVEY DATA

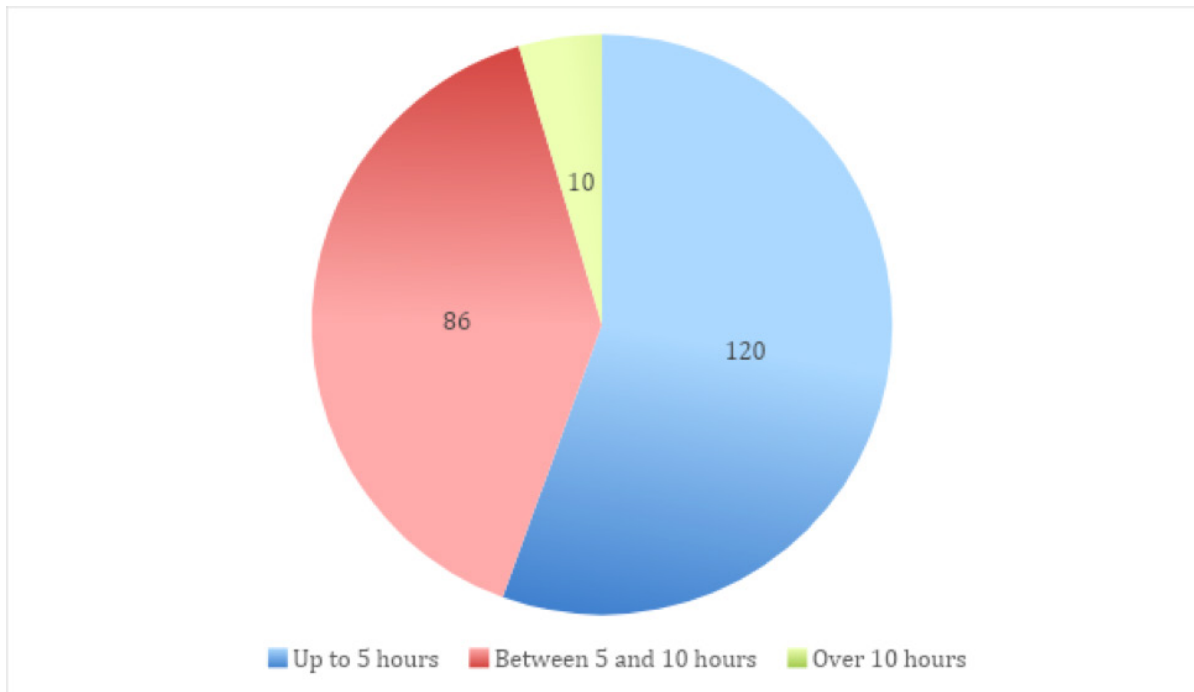
When asked which social network site they use most often, 81 (37.5%) individuals said they use Instagram and 59 (27.3%) said they use TikTok. TikTok was particularly popular among women (42 of the 59 respondents who claimed to use TikTok) and white people (41 of the 59 respondents who claimed to use TikTok). Figure 8 gives an overview of the responses to this question.

*Figure 8. Social network sites used by the respondents on a regular basis*



When asked about how many hours they spend on social network sites per day, 120 (55.6%) individuals said they spend up to 5 hours. The 10 (4.6%) respondents who affirmed that they spend over 10 hours per day were predominantly women (7). Figure 9 gives an overview of the responses to this question.

**Figure 9. How many hours respondents said they spend on the socials**

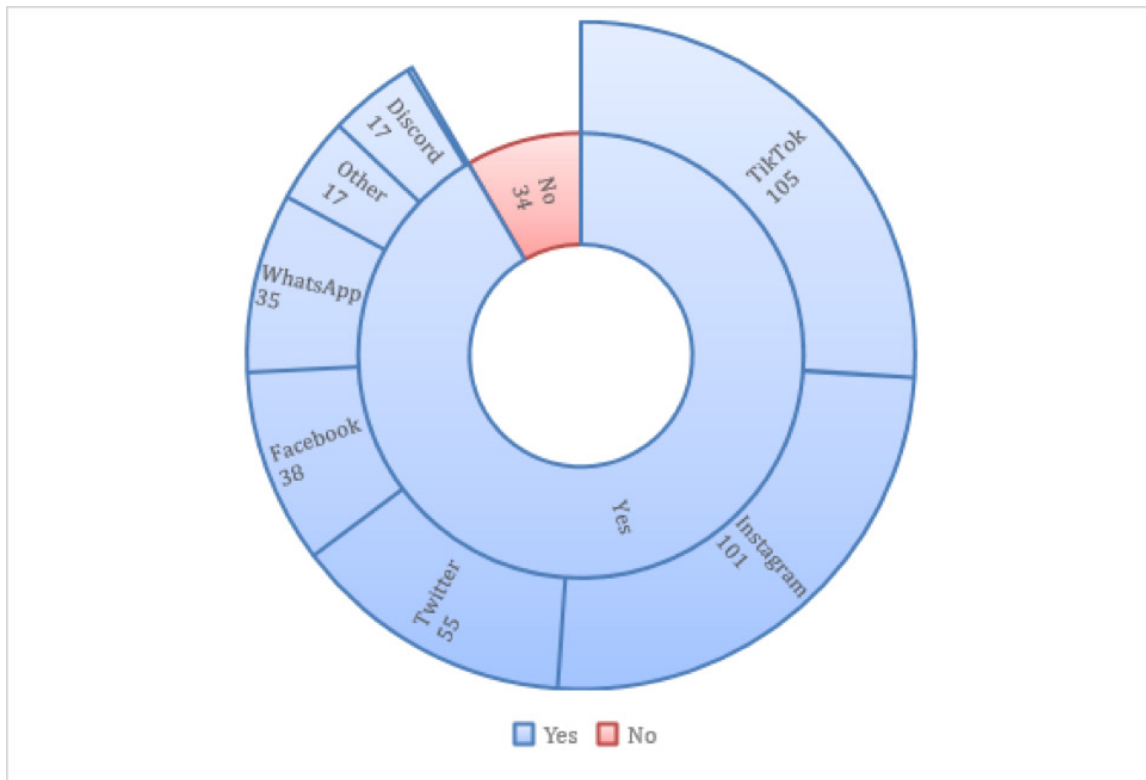


When asked if they have ever found any violent content and/or discriminatory, shaming, or disturbing videos on social network sites, 182 (84.3%) respondents said yes as illustrated in figure 10. TikTok and Instagram were the social network sites in which violent content was considered more accessible. 105 and 101 respondents claimed that they had found this type of content on TikTok and Instagram respectively. 47 of the 105 respondents who found violent content and/or discriminatory, shaming, and disturbing videos on TikTok were 13-16 years old.



*When asked if they have ever found any violent content and/or discriminatory, shaming, or disturbing videos on social network sites, 182 (84.3%) respondents said yes*

**Figure 10. Access to violent content and/or discriminatory, shaming, disturbing videos in social network sites<sup>46</sup>**



159 (73.6%) respondents said that they have not felt any desire to verbally and/or physically attack another person or a group of individuals based on their physical traits, religion, political opinion, and sexual orientation after watching videos containing violent and/or disturbing content. 57 (26.4%) individuals affirmed that these videos somehow prompted them to verbally or physically attack others. 35 of the 57 individuals who expressed some desire to attack other people after watching videos containing violent and/or disturbing content were women. 20 of them were white and mainly based in the South East (18) and South (2) of Brazil. 19 of the 57 individuals who expressed some desire to attack other people after watching videos containing violent and/or disturbing content were men. 12 of them were white and mostly based in the South-East (10) and South (2) of Brazil. One individual was non-binary and two individuals did not disclose their gender.

46. One participant did not answer this question.



183 (84.7%) respondents affirmed that they have not verbally and/or physically attacked another person or a group of individuals based on their physical traits, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation after watching videos containing violent and/or disturbing content. 33 (15.3%) affirmed that they have perpetrated verbal and/or physical attacks. 20 of these individuals were women, 11 were men, and 2 preferred to not disclose their gender. Among the women who answered yes, 13 were white and mainly based in the South-East of Brazil (11).

*26.4% individuals affirmed that these videos somehow prompted them to verbally or physically attack others.*

*(15.3%) affirmed that they have perpetrated verbal and/or physical attacks*

39 (18%) individuals left comments in the open-ended question about what else they would like to share with us about the relationship between social network sites and violence. Two of them highlighted how violent content accessed on these online spaces has influenced their worldview, making them less sensitive to violence.

***“I grew up watching videos of extreme violence on the internet (all of them on the surface web). Although I’ve never harmed any people, these videos have affected the way I see the world and I believe they have desensitised me to all grotesque and disturbing things”***

One of the respondents declared that after watching discriminatory and shaming videos, she felt prone to seek revenge on behalf of the victims.

***“The desire I feel is to take revenge for the person who was attacked/discriminated”***

Many comments expressed a lack of trust in content moderation and in policies aiming at restricting the circulation of violent content, hate speech and/or disinformation on social network sites. Despite reporting the existence of racist posts and fake news, some respondents have declared that they have continued to receive recommendations for similar posts.

***“Reporting videos and accounts with discriminatory, violent or fake content is something I do whenever I come across it, but the Instagram platform continues to advertise many videos”***

Whereas some comments endorsed the need for federal or international regulations to prevent the circulation of violent content on social network sites, one comment expressed a strong opposition to such regulatory frameworks, describing them as censorship and questioning the goal of this study.

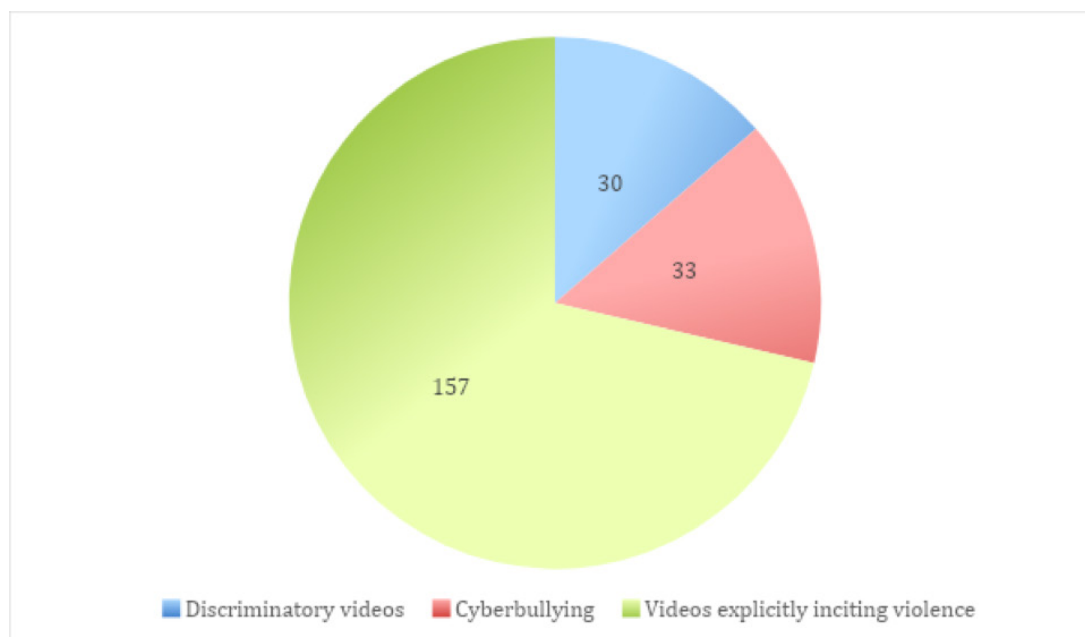
***“I am against censorship. If the purpose of this research is to approve yet another filthy project that aims to democratically apply a dictatorship (not that it isn't already), I ask that you go farming as you will be more useful to society than trying to censor it”***

## **VIDEO ANALYSIS**

From 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023, we engaged with TikTok twice per day to explore how this social network site has promoted violent content in a way that it could potentially influence young people to perpetrate

violent attacks in schools in Brazil. 1,200 videos were examined. Two of them echoed conspiracy theories often found in far-right circles, potentially contributing to radicalisation processes: the conspiracy theory that communists are especially interested in the destruction of Christian identity and the conspiracy theory that advances the belief that children have been kidnapped so that liberal elites can drink their blood to become younger (this conspiracy theory is known as the adrenochrome theory)<sup>47</sup>. 220 (18.3%) of the examined videos promoted violence. As illustrated in Figure 11, a large proportion of these videos explicitly incited the use of violence (157).

**Figure 11. Types of videos promoting violence recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023**



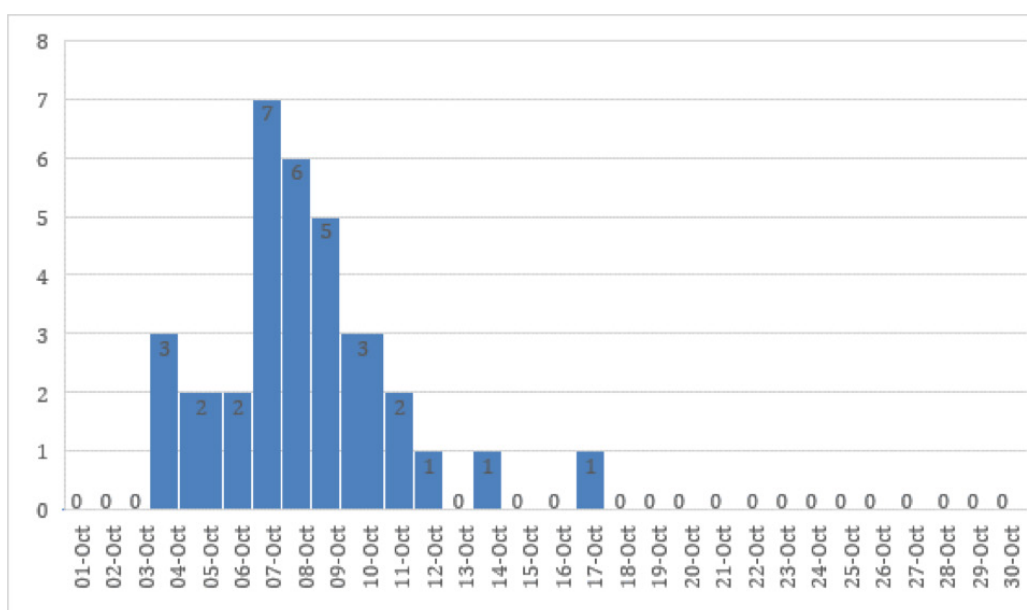
After applying the top five topic preferences chosen by the respondents (funny videos, entertainment videos, weirdly funny videos, beauty videos, news and opinions videos), we noticed that TikTok quickly started recommending several videos with a sexist tone disguised as humour

47. This is one of the central narratives of a conglomerate of conspiracy theories known as QAnon. QAnon exercised great influence over American politics, advancing the belief that Donald Trump was fighting against the liberal elites (represented by the Democrats) that were supposedly behind a child sex trafficking scheme. For more information about this conspiracy theory: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/conormurray/2023/07/15/the-adrenochrome-conspiracy-theory-pushed-by-sound-of-freedom-star-explained/?sh=798ee9755179>

pieces. The first of these videos was recommended on the fourth day of analysis and presented, in the masculine form, a list of words that in the Portuguese language are feminine, replacing the article “a” with “o” at the end of the words. For example: “menstruado”; “lésbico”; “girafo”.

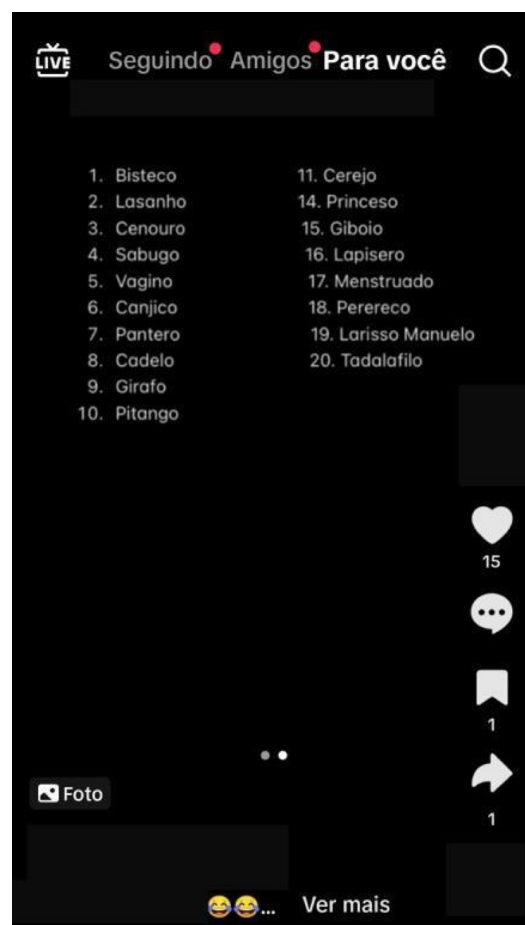
Similar videos were recommended by TikTok for several days. In some cases, men were approached on the street with these words. Although these “jokes” were made with men, we interpreted these videos as a case of cyberbullying directed at women because many of the so-called new words originally referred to parts of the female body and female artists, verbally configuring a repeated and intentional attack on women. Additionally, we were struck by the fact that only men commented on and laughed at the changes as if it was funny to appropriate feminine words. Figure 12 presents a quantitative analysis of these videos, demonstrating their distribution over time.

**Figure 12. Videos constituting cases of cyberbullying recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023**



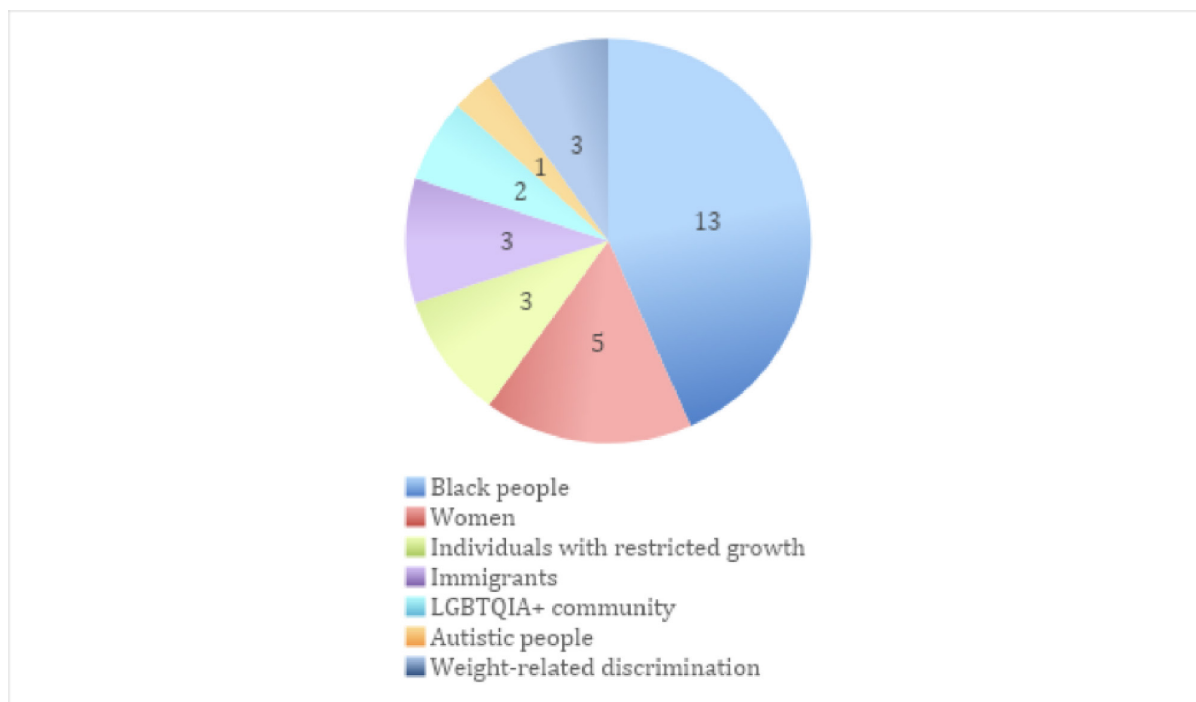
Some of these videos were produced as a podcast, featuring two or three men making the changes and laughing at them. Others were mainly based on text on the screen, featuring the so-called new words. Figure 13 illustrates one of these cases.

*Figure 13. Screenshot of a TikTok video harassing non-binary individuals and women through text on the screen*



Before recommending these videos, TikTok's algorithms promoted violence through discriminatory videos. As detailed in Figure 14, the main victims of discrimination were Black people and women. Videos targeting immigrants, the LGBTQIA+ community, autistic people, and individuals with restricted growth (dwarfism) were also observed as well as videos containing weight-related discrimination.

**Figure 14. Main target of the discriminatory videos recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 2023**

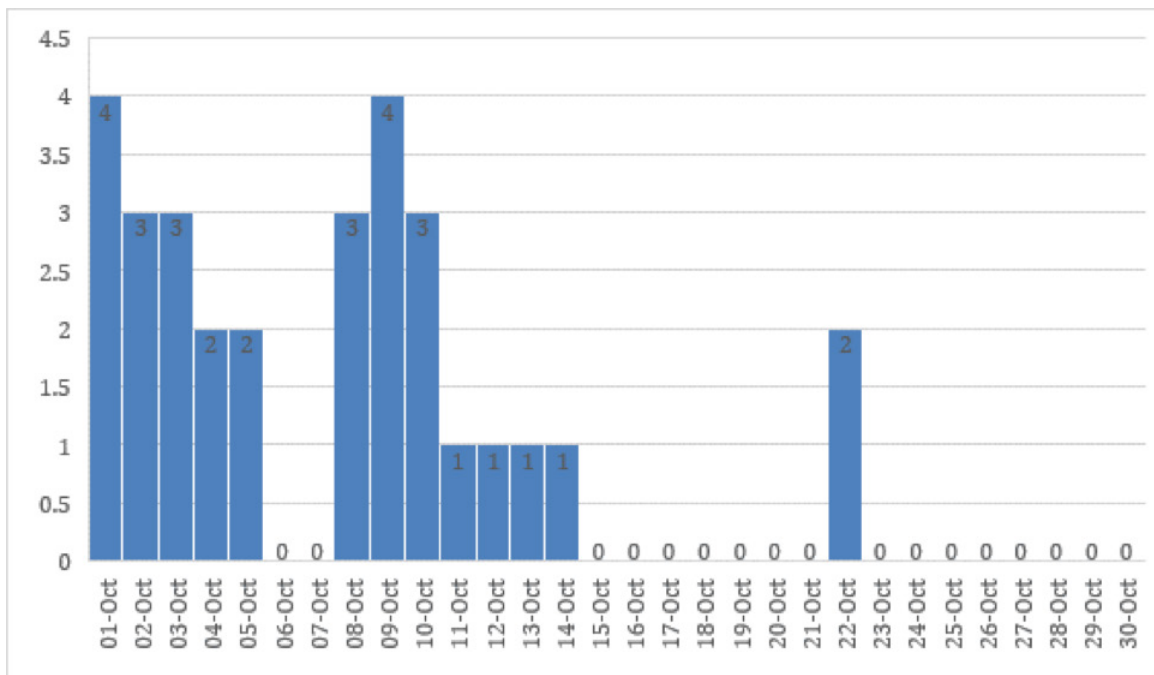


Black people (especially men) were mainly associated with criminality as illustrated in Figure 15, which depicts a Black man allegedly stating that his occupation is breaking into houses, snack bars, bakeries, internet cafes, beauty salons, and garages. Women were mainly represented as lacking intelligence. In one of the videos, two men start laughing at a woman in the street and, when she asks for an explanation, they say she cannot understand the reason for the laughs. An intersectional analysis of this material provides some additional insights insofar as the Black people discriminated against were mainly men and the women featured in the videos were predominantly white, reinforcing the racist and sexist associations “Black men-violence”, “white women-emotional”. The nationality of the immigrants discriminated in three of the examined videos were Chinese and Arabic. Figure 16 presents the distribution of videos inciting violence through discrimination in the examined period.

Figure 15. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok associating Black men with criminality<sup>48</sup>



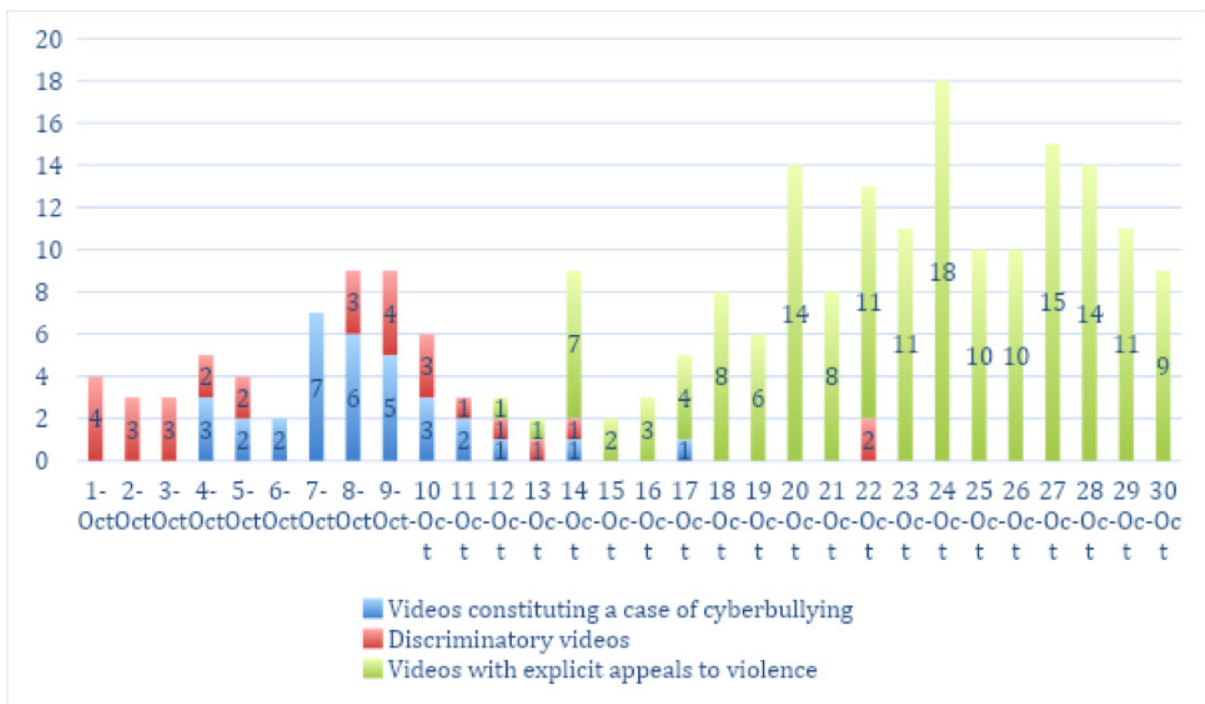
Figure 16. Discriminatory videos recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023



48. In the caption it is written “Mercy” on the top and “truly polyvalent” on the bottom.

After 12 days “liking” the videos above mentioned and following the accounts that shared them, TikTok’s algorithms started recommending videos explicitly inciting violence. Figure 17 shows the distribution of videos promoting violence during the examined period, highlighting how discriminatory and harassing videos were gradually replaced with videos containing explicit appeals to violence.

**Figure 17. Videos identified promoting violence on TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023**



*Discriminatory and harassing videos were gradually replaced with videos containing explicit appeals to violence.*

From 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023, TikTok recommended 157 videos explicitly promoting violence. The main victims in these videos were women and children. The first video making an explicit appeal to violence showed a sequence of pictures of children murdered in disturbing



ways. One of the children is said to have been killed by the mother and eaten by her. Violence targeting children was represented in various ways: through a sequence of images showing the faces of the children murdered with cruelty; through textual and/or verbal descriptions of violent incidents involving children; and through reproductions of security videos. One of the videos shows the moment in which a man arrives in a living room before using a hammer to kill two children. Both verbal and physical attacks against women were represented in some of the videos recommended by TikTok. The cruellest violent attacks were found in videos referring to the website *Portal do Zacarias*<sup>49</sup>. This news website has given access to videos filmed by individuals while torturing their victims before killing them. The main victims of the crimes showcased by the website and mentioned on TikTok were women and children.

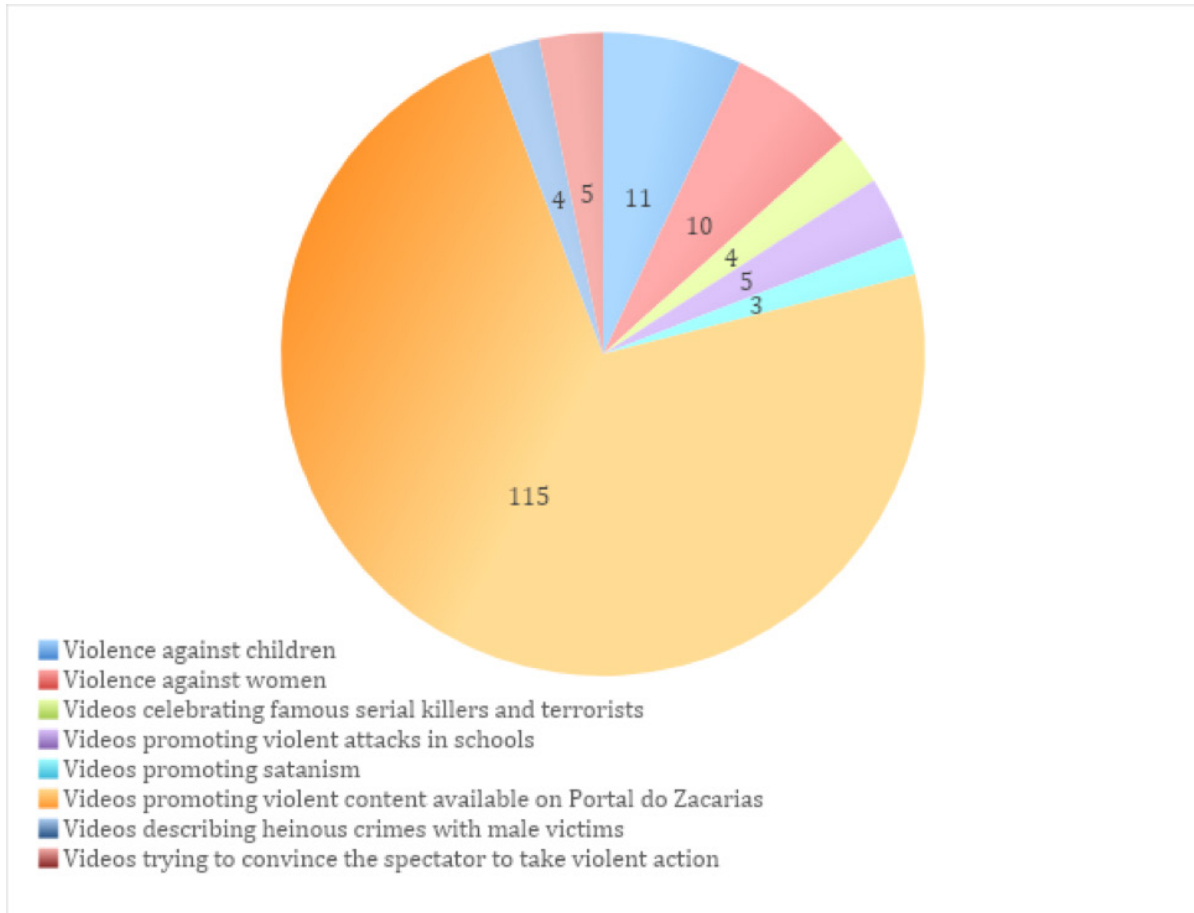
*Violence targeting children was represented in various ways: through a sequence of images showing the faces of the children murdered with cruelty; through textual and/or verbal descriptions of violent incidents involving children; and through reproductions of security videos.*

115 of the 157 videos explicitly promoting violence recommended by TikTok in the examined period referred to material available on the website *Portal do Zacarias*. Figure 18 provides an overview of the types of videos explicitly promoting violence recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023. The number of videos targeting women and children shown in Figure 18 does not include the videos that make explicit reference to *Portal do Zacarias*. A gender analysis of these videos will be conducted in the next pages.

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49. <https://portaldozacarias.com.br/site/>

**Figure 18. Types of videos explicitly promoting violence recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023**



**VIDEOS PROMOTING VIOLENT CONTENT AVAILABLE ON PORTAL DO ZACARIAS**

References to *Portal do Zacarias* were made on TikTok in various ways – possibly aiming at circumventing the existing guardrails to prevent the circulation of violent content. Many of the identified 115 videos featured an individual describing the crimes showcased on the website. Others used footage from the videos synced with the original sound of the victims crying before being killed. Two strategies were especially prominent in the sample: the use of video game simulations as illustrated in Figure 19 and the use of videos showing individuals dancing the viral song associated with the website.

Figure 19. Screenshot of a videogame simulation of a violent crime featured in *Portal do Zacarias* recommended by TikTok<sup>50</sup>



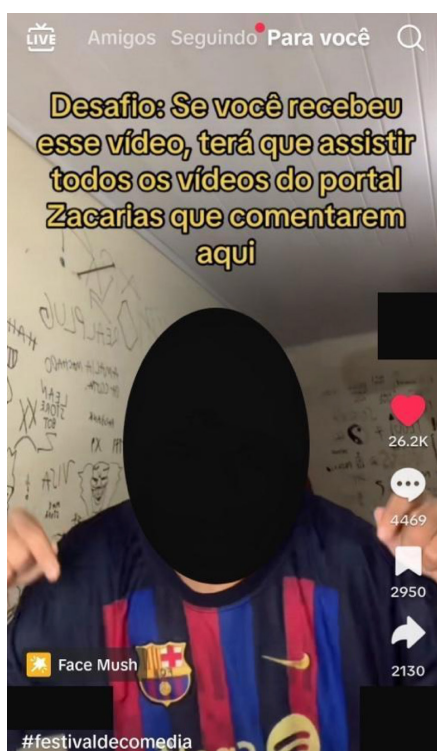
Videos promoting the website through the viral song often featured funny hashtags such as #Festivaldecomedia (Comedy Festival) alongside the hashtag with the name of the website (#PortalZacarias) and hashtags with the title of the videos available on *Portal do Zacarias* (#mangue937, #misspacman, #torneirahumana), suggesting that watching individuals being tortured is fun. Alongside these hashtags, they also added the hashtag #ForYouPage and its variants (#FYP #Foryou) to make the video viral. This entertainment tone was also sustained in videos challenging viewers to watch more videos from *Portal do Zacarias* as illustrated in Figure 20, which presents the challenge through a caption on the screen

50. In the caption it is written that the producer of the video did not found the audio that matches that specific scene. The rest of the video reproduced the original audio of the video uploaded on *Portal do Zacarias*.

and the hashtag #Festivaldecomedia (Comedy Festival). In some videos, internet users expressed pride in watching the videos displayed on *Portal do Zacarias* without being emotionally affected by them. Lack of empathy, in this case, was perceived as a sign of superiority as if those who are not disturbed by the videos were emotionally superior to others.

*Lack of empathy, in this case, was perceived as a sign of superiority as if those who are not disturbed by the videos were emotionally superior to others.*

Figure 20. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok showing an individual challenging the audience to watch more videos from *Portal do Zacarias*<sup>51</sup>



Another technique used by some internet users to circumvent existing guardrails was the usage of artificial intelligence. Two of the examined

51. In the caption it is written "Challenge: if this video was recommended to you, you will have to watch all the videos from *Portal do Zacarias* suggested in the comments".

videos used artificial intelligence to produce deep fakes featuring victims of crimes featured on the website *Portal do Zacarias* describing their own deaths. Figure 21 presents a screenshot of a video in which a woman who was violently killed in Guatemala “provides some details” about her own death.

**Figure 21. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok, showing how artificial intelligence has been used to promote violence<sup>52</sup>**



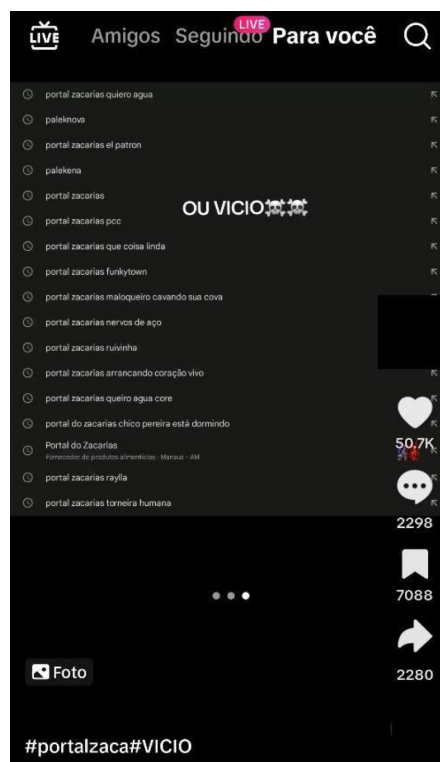
It is worth noticing the usage of numbers within some words to hamper automated moderation. This was another strategy found in several videos explicitly inciting violence.

The other two patterns observed in these videos that are worth mentioning refer to the gender of the victims and their addictive potential. 27 of the 115 videos explicitly promoting violence while referring to the website *Portal do Zacarias* featured women as the tortured victims.

52. The caption says: “I was the victim of one of the most disturbing crimes in...”

Furthermore, in a few videos, internet users seem to notice an addictive engagement with these videos, suggesting that audio-visual material showing people being tortured before being killed may lead to addiction to this sort of content. Figure 22 presents a screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok in which an internet user shows how often they have accessed videos from the website while explicitly using the term addiction in the caption and on the hashtag to refer to their behaviour.

**Figure 22. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok in which an internet user refers to their engagement with violent content as addictive**



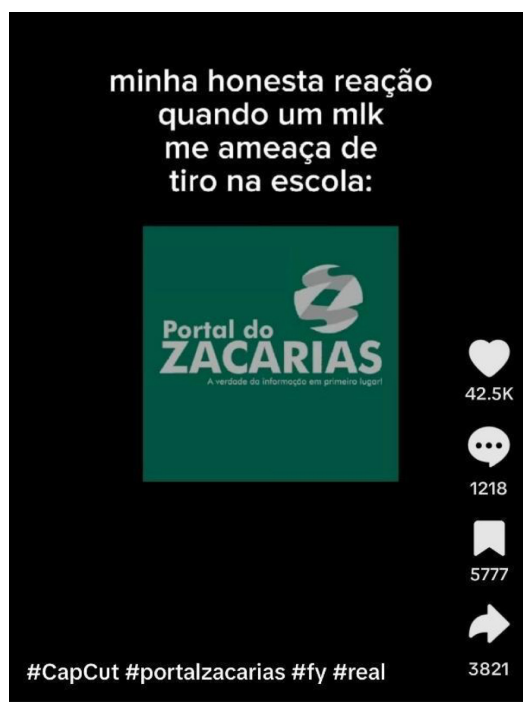
*The other two patterns observed in these videos that are worth mentioning refer to the gender of the victims and their addictive potential.*



## VIDEOS PROMOTING VIOLENT ATTACKS IN SCHOOLS

Two of the five videos promoting violent attacks in schools displayed references to *Portal do Zacarias*. One suggests that the reproduction of its videos at school is a form of entertainment and the second explicitly claims that violence (in the way presented on the website *Portal do Zacarias*: torture followed by death) is a valid way of addressing bullying at school (Figure 23).

Figure 23. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok presenting the violence found on *Portal do Zacarias* as a valid way of addressing bullying cases at school<sup>53</sup>



Another video used illustrations to convey a similar message, suggesting that a boy who used to be a victim of bullying at school brought the group that used to bully him to his community and killed them. A disturbing video presenting a man encouraging students to bring coconut openers to school because they can function as weapons and will not

53. The caption says: "my honest reaction when somebody threatens to shoot me at school" and below it is shown the logo of *Portal do Zacarias*.

draw attention was recommended twice by TikTok. Figure 24 presents the moment in which the man shows the coconut opener after saying “who might suspect that I’m carrying a brass knuckle tap and a coconut opener?”

*Figure 24. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok giving instructions about which types of weapon students should bring to school<sup>54</sup>*



## **VIDEOS TRYING TO CONVINCING THE SPECTATOR TO TAKE VIOLENT ACTION**

Five of the identified videos explicitly promoting violence staged a conversation between the TikTok account owner and the viewer with an intent to convince the viewer to take violent action. In one of these videos, the conversation is staged through captions on the screen, en-

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54. In the caption it is written: “Me: he punched me. School: it is not my problem. Me: in the next day”.



couraging the viewer to become violent after some sort of provocation (Figure 25).

Figure 25. Screenshot of a video recommended by TikTok using caption to incite violence<sup>55</sup>



## VIDEOS CELEBRATING FAMOUS SERIAL KILLERS AND TERRORISTS

Four of the identified videos explicitly promoting violence recommended by TikTok represented serial killers and terrorists as heroes. Some of them displayed a photo of the terrorist known as Jihadi John when he was young followed by a picture widely associated with the terrorist group ISIL<sup>56</sup>, showing him holding a knife moments before beheading one of his victims. Jihadi John was a British citizen who was recruited by ISIL and became famous for beheading ISIL's captives. The sequence of pictures showed in these videos suggests that some boys in the present may become terrorists tomorrow as if terrorists were some sort of

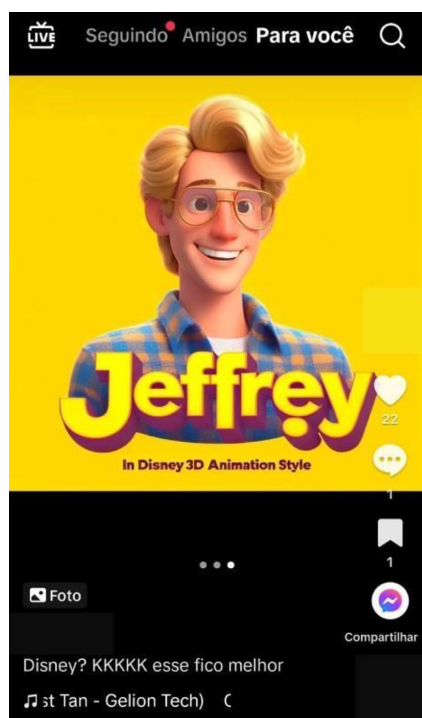
55. In the caption it is written: "People will provoke you until you show your most threatening side and they become victims".

56. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

avengers. This message is especially evidence in the video showing a picture of Jihadi John while young juxtaposed to the logo of *Portal do Zacarias*, suggesting that while watching videos from the website during the childhood, one may become a terrorist in the future.

One of the examined videos presented an AI-generated Disney-like animation poster featuring the American serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer as a hero. This attempt to make violent crimes more appealing to young audiences through Disney-like animation posters was also used in some videos promoting material available on the website *Portal do Zacarias*. Figure 26 presents two posters found in the sample: one representing Jeffrey Dahmer<sup>57</sup> as a hero and one representing the cruel murder of three women showcased by *Portal do Zacarias* as a Disney animation.

**Figure 26. Screenshot of videos recommended by TikTok representing violent crimes and serial killers as posters of Disney animation movies**



57. Jeffrey Dahmer is a famous American serial killer who killed 17 people between 1978 and 1991. His murders involved necrophilia, cannibalism, and the permanent preservation of body parts.

With respect to the number of “likes” obtained by the examined videos, only two videos explicitly promoting violence reached over 1 million “likes”: a video showing pictures of a female victim of one of the videos available on *Portal do Zacarias* (1.8 million); and another video reproducing images of the same victim – in this case, showing that her head is about to be reached by a train (2.2 million).





# THE NEXUS BETWEEN ALGORITHMS AND YOUTH VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL

While mimicking the lived experience of a young internet user with TikTok, it was possible to observe some potential points of connection with recent violent attacks in schools in Brazil, suggesting the need for further research to investigate to what extent social network sites have motivated students to take violent action.

In seven of the recent violent attacks in schools in Brazil, bullying was used as a justification, indicating that the perpetrators of the attacks were victims of bullying<sup>58</sup>. Three of the examined videos recommended by TikTok between in October 2023 explicitly encouraged the use of violence to address bullying in schools. In one of the videos, a man gives advice to students about which weapon they should bring to school. This video not only remains available on the social network site, but it was recommended twice by two different accounts and it received over 60,000 likes<sup>59</sup>.

In two of the recent violent attacks in schools in Brazil, the police discovered that the perpetrator promoted violence on their socials through videogame simulations and explicit references to massacres in schools<sup>60</sup>. Six of the examined videos recommended by TikTok from 01/10/2023 until 30/10/2023 used multiplayer online games such as Roblox and Minecraft to simulate some of the cruel murders featured on Portal do Zacarias. Con-

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58. [National Campaign for the Right to Education: CNN Brasil](#)

59. The video recommended on 26/10/2023 obtained 28.1K “likes” and the video recommended on 27/10/2023 obtained 32.1K “likes”.

60. [National Campaign for the Right to Education: CNN Brasil](#)

sidering that some scholars have already pointed out that these games can function as a gateway to radicalisation processes and facilitate the normalisation of violence<sup>61</sup>, the fact that they have been used to simulate heinous crimes (cases of torture followed by death) is deeply problematic insofar as they may induce students to commit similar crimes.

During the observation period, TikTok did not recommend any video praising massacres in schools. However, it recommended content representing famous serial killers and terrorists as heroes. It is worth noticing the usage of AI-generated Disney-like animation posters to appeal to younger audiences insofar as this strategy may contribute to the desensitization and normalisation of violence among people. If torture and murder are represented in the form of animation-like videos easily accessible on social networks, some children may start perceiving violence as a normal feature of their lives.

In three of the recent violent attacks in schools in Brazil, the perpetrator demonstrated signs of radicalisation, expressing xenophobic ideas on their socials and making explicit references to Nazism<sup>62</sup>. During the observation period, TikTok did not recommend any video mentioning Nazism. However, it did recommend videos with discriminatory content, often targeting immigrants. Three of the observed 30 discriminatory videos targeted immigrants, mainly from China and the Middle East. Similar to TikTok videos showing videogame simulations of violent crimes, discriminatory videos can also operate as a gateway to radicalisation, facilitating encounters with extremist ideas.

Gender seems to be the main point of connection between violent attacks in schools and the forms of violence recommended by social network sites – in this case, TikTok. All the attacks recorded between 2003

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61. [The extreme right among young people in Brazil: attacks in schools and alternatives to a governmental action](#) [translated from Portuguese]; [School Free of Hate - Porvir](#)

62. [National Campaign for the Right to Education: CNN Brasil](#)

and 2022 were perpetrated by white heterosexual men<sup>63</sup> and the majority of the examined videos promoting violence recommended by TikTok between 01/10/2023 and 30/10/2023 featured men having fun with violent acts targeting women. Women were victims of cyberbullying, discrimination, and misogyny. This pattern was especially prominent among videos explicitly promoting violence. Besides showing pictures of the victims and using artificial intelligence “to bring some of them to life” to describe their own deaths, some videos reproduced the original audio of material available on Portal do Zacarias to emphasise the agony of the victims moments before their deaths.

It is noteworthy how some videos presenting women as victims of violence were shared on TikTok as a form of entertainment. In one of them, the killer affirms that he killed his wife for fun. On 14/10/2023, this video had over 782,000 “likes”. Besides contributing to the normalisation of violence against women, many of the examined videos can be considered a step further in the normalisation of violence against children. Alongside women, children constituted the main target of videos explicitly promoting violence recommended by TikTok during the observation period. In one of the videos, a security camera shows a man arriving in a living room minutes before using a hammer to kill two children. In one of the attacks recorded in schools in Brazil in 2023, a man also used a hammer as a weapon. He killed four children in a nursery in Blumenau, Santa

*It is noteworthy how some videos presenting women as victims of violence were shared on TikTok as a form of entertainment.*

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63. [The extreme right among young people in Brazil: attacks in schools and alternatives to a governmental action](#) [translated from Portuguese]

Catarina<sup>64</sup>. Despite difficulties in establishing a correlation between the video and the attack in Brazil, similarities between both suggest that violent content widely available on social network sites can serve as an inspiration for violent attacks in schools in Brazil.

Besides normalising violence towards women and children, videos reproducing material displayed on Portal do Zacarias seem to be especially problematic because they have made some individuals addicted to this type of violence. Some of the examined videos make explicit reference to this type of addiction. Whereas some individuals expressed some concern over their acknowledged addiction-like behaviour, others referred to their lack of empathy as a sign of superiority. It is as if they were brave enough to watch many videos with explicit appeals to violence and carry on with their lives without being impacted by them. While conducting a search on Google for more information about the website Portal do Zacarias, the search engine recommended a summary of a YouTube video that claims that the violent videos featured on the website “can lead to addiction, desensitisation, and a lack of empathy”<sup>65</sup>.

Despite existing evidence that social network sites have exercised some influence over violent action, more needs to be done when it comes to the wide circulation of material promoting violence insofar as algorithmic recommendation systems can entrap some individuals into a cycle that may further desensitize them to torture and murder, especially of women and children. Combining the addictive potential of some videos promoting violence with the addictive-like behaviour exploited by social network sites such as TikTok (inducing internet users to keep engaged with the site)<sup>66</sup>, the constant recommendation of videos promoting violence may end up satisfying some affective needs while simultaneously prompting individuals to reproduce violent actions in real life. The main

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64. <https://g1.globo.com/sc/santa-catarina/noticia/2023/04/05/ataque-creche-blumenau.ghtml>

65. <https://eightify.app/summary/miscellaneous/zacarias-portal-unveiling-the-disturbing-obsession-with-gore>

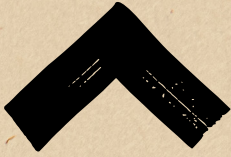
66. Kumar, V.L., Goldstein, M.A. (2020) Cyberbullying and adolescents. *Curr Pediatr Rep.* 8, pp. 86–92.



question that must be asked is: if young people today spend much time on their socials, if social network sites have often been used to promote violence as a valid way of addressing bullying and as a form of entertainment, and if social network sites have exploited an addictive-like behaviour, will students, alone, be capable of rejecting the appeals to violence?



*Despite existing evidence that social network sites have exercised some influence over violent action, more needs to be done when it comes to the wide circulation of material promoting violence insofar as algorithmic recommendation systems can entrap some individuals into a cycle that may further desensitize them to torture and murder, especially of women and children.*



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# EDUCATION FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE AND THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

To understand the potential impacts of violence found on social networks on young people, as well as its causes and consequences, it is necessary to highlight the intrinsic relationship between the formation of the Brazilian social fabric and violence as the main tool for affirming social value, domination and control. To this end, it is necessary to recover the history of the colonization of Latin America, which symbolizes the cornerstone of an essentially discriminatory, oppressive and violent structure, which began with the European occupation of the territory already inhabited by the original peoples, leading to the extermination of millions of indigenous people, which is considered one of the first genocides in history<sup>67</sup>.

Added to this, the trafficking and enslavement of black people and unrestricted sexual violence against black and indigenous women also marked the use of violence as a structuring element of Brazilian society<sup>68</sup>. Violence, then, in its multifaceted aspects, is the guiding thread in the composition of Latin American societies, leading to the formation of States, law, the economy, public policies, individual behaviour and social relations<sup>69</sup>, falling more intensely on certain people and groups, as demonstrated in previous chapters.


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67. Stannard, D. E. (1993). *American holocaust: The conquest of the new world*. Oxford University Press; Barreto, J. (2013). *Human rights from a Third World perspective: Critique, history and international law*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

68. Lugones, M., 2012. Subjetividad esclava, colonialidad de género, marginalidad y opresiones múltiples. *Pensando los feminismos en Bolivia*, pp.129-140; Nascimento, A. (2016). *O genocídio do negro brasileiro: processo de um racismo mascarado*. Editora Perspectiva SA.

69. Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 215-232; Lugones, M., 2012. Subjetividad esclava, colonialidad de género, marginalidad y opresiones múltiples. *Pensando los feminismos en Bolivia*, pp.129-140; Almeida, S., 2019. *Racismo estrutural*. Pólen Produção Editorial LTDA.

In addition to the Brazilian social context, there is robust evidence that violence is transmitted between generations and is contagious in nature, which is why it is even considered part of the public health agenda in some countries<sup>70</sup>. Hundreds of studies indicate that when a child or adolescent witnesses or experiences some sort of violence, whether at home, at school or in their community, the chance of developing violent behaviour increases exponentially. Invariably, for many people, their first experience with violence happens at home, which influences their understanding of the quality of relationships, the display of affection and emotional self-regulation.



*In addition to the Brazilian social context, there is robust evidence that violence is transmitted between generations and is contagious in nature, which is why it is even considered part of the public health agenda in some countries.*

According to Social and Cognitive Learning theories, children and adolescents learn to behave and relate by observing what others do, imitating their patterns and assimilating them as universal<sup>71</sup>. In this sense, the patterns of behaviour and relationships of caregivers are as relevant as the references observed by children and young people in other spaces in which they circulate, such as school and the virtual environment. Researchers Robert Bond and Brad Bushman conducted a study with more than 90,000 young North Americans aged 12 to 18 to investigate the contagious nature of violence<sup>72</sup>. They found that young

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70. Levendosky, A.A. and Graham-Bermann, S.A. 2000. Trauma and Parenting in Battered Women: An Addition to an Ecological Model of Parenting. *Journal of aggression, maltreatment & trauma*. 3(1), pp.25–35; Bond, R.M. and Bushman, B.J. 2017. The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks. *American journal of public health* (1971). 107(2), pp.288–294; Patton, D.U., McGregor, K. and Slutkin, G. 2018. Youth Gun Violence Prevention in a Digital Age. *Pediatrics* (Evanston). 141(4), pp.1.

71. Bond, R.M. and Bushman, B.J. 2017. The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks. *American journal of public health* (1971). 107(2), pp.288–294.

72. Ibid.

people whose friends demonstrated violent behaviour were 48% more likely to be involved in serious fights, 183% more likely to seriously injure someone, and 140% more likely to use firearms if they were involved in conflict.

Concerning the digital environment, what can be seen is that it facilitates the encounter of children and young people with the most varied forms of violence. If previously young people were limited to the forms of violence present in the social context in which they were inserted, what is now clear is that young people are exposed, at any time, to violence of all kinds, capable of going viral and, therefore, more exposed to the assimilation and indiscriminate replication of the negative effects, trauma and contagion of violence as a pattern of behaviour<sup>73</sup>.



*If previously young people were limited to the forms of violence present in the social context in which they were inserted, what is now clear is that young people are exposed, at any time, to violence of all kinds.*


This context is relevant because it situates the experience of digital violence as just one of the layers that reproduce and strengthens a structure already in place, in which violence is the norm, but which has the potential to escalate quickly and influence in a silent and immeasurable way the behaviours and relationships of young Brazilians. It is also important to understand the urgency of thinking about multidisciplinary tools capable of interrupting and preventing violence beyond the field of justice and public security.

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73. Patton, D.U., McGregor, K. and Slutkin, G. 2018. Youth Gun Violence Prevention in a Digital Age. *Pediatrics* (Evanston). 141(4), pp.1.

## EDUCATION FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BRAZIL

It is important to highlight that the school plays an ambivalent role when it comes to confronting violence. This is because the school can be both a safe space for identifying, rescuing, and caring for children and young people who are victims of abuse and violations, as well as the main stage for the perpetuation of various types of violence. This ambivalence affects the entire school community, including educators and students. According to the research, *Because I am a Girl*<sup>74</sup>, published in 2021 by Plan International Brazil, the school was highlighted as the main environment where harassment (32.4%) and gender-based violence (25.4%) occur, signalling a cross-section of important gender for analysing the dynamics of violence.



*Strengthening education for peace and human rights can be an effective tool in confronting violence in its various forms, including that witnessed or experienced in the digital environment.*

In this sense, the Faculty of Public Health at USP published in 2022 the study “Violence against public school teachers and professional burnout” based on interviews with 93 educators from the municipal public school system in São Paulo<sup>75</sup>. Among the highlights, it was found that professionals who experienced emotional exhaustion reported discomfort with students (73%), lack of support from colleagues (67%) and having suffered aggression at school (64%). Faced with this scenario of evident conflict and violence, the school can and should present itself as a space capable of offering tools to confront cycles of violence, facilitating pro-

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74. [Por ser menina \(Because I am a Girl\)](#). Plan International Brasil, 2021.

75. Simões, E.C. and Cardoso, M.R.A., 2022. Violência contra professores da rede pública e esgotamento profissional. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 27, pp.1039-1048.

cesses of reconciliation between all the people involved, which can even reverberate throughout the community.

Strengthening education for peace and human rights can be an effective tool in confronting violence in its various forms, including that witnessed or experienced in the digital environment. Usually, the terms “peace education” and “human rights education” are addressed individually although they are interdependent. Furthermore, it is common to find references to other denominations that invariably tend to address inseparable themes, such as “education for citizenship”, “political education”, “socio-emotional education”, and “education for democracy”.

For this study, we consider the term “education for peace and human rights” to be the set of interventions capable of preventing and interrupting cycles of violence and inequality, promoting and sustaining behaviours and relationships based on non-violence, cooperation, dialogue, and reconciliation. We understand education for peace and human rights as an essential tool for expanding critical thinking and identifying dynamics of power and control that generate, reinforce, and sustain abuses and violations of individual and collective rights.

In this context, education for peace and human rights must encompass, in a multi-disciplinary, intersectional and interdependent manner, the debate on central themes for Brazilian society, such as colonialism, gender, race, ethnicity, class, environment, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, religion, generations, domestic and sexual violence, democracy, socio-emotional skills, conflict resolution, restorative justice, self-knowledge practices, bullying, cyberbullying and hate speech, for example. Naturally, promoting efficient education for peace and human rights does not only depend on the content to be presented but above all on strengthening the skills of educators and the school community itself to create and ensure diverse, inclusive, and respectful spaces for dialogue and exchange of knowledge and reflections, anchored in the logic of

non-violence, trauma-informed and aware of the political and social dynamics applicable to the context.

Historically, education for peace and human rights in Brazil was largely led by civil society organizations and popular educators<sup>76</sup>, although it is expressly included in the guidelines of the National Common Curricular Base and is supported by the National Plan for Education in Human Rights (PNEDH)<sup>77</sup>. Guided by the principle of transversality, the PNEDH proposes that human rights education be considered in Political-Pedagogical Projects, School Regulations, Institutional Development Plans and Pedagogical Course Programs. The PNEDH also addresses the training of educators, the production of material on the topic and the creation of partnerships.

According to the Overview of Human Rights Education in Brazil, produced by the Instituto Aurora<sup>78</sup>, only three Brazilian states (Sao Paulo, Espirito Santo and Alagoas) have an adequate degree of institutionalization of the topic, with their state plan and body in charge of the portfolio. Still, in practice, there is little articulation regarding this agenda in the respective states.

Regarding the effective construction of a culture of peace in Brazil, it cannot be said that the topic has been institutionalized, although there is express mention of the term in some of the national and state guiding plans. This is due to a series of factors, but in particular due to structural violence, which is accentuated by the fact that Brazil is not considered a formal zone of armed conflict, although statistics on the lethality of violence systematically exceed those of countries currently at war<sup>79</sup>. In this sense, a brief search for the hashtag #PAZ on the main social net-

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76. Silva, A.M.M. and Tavares, C., 2013. Educação em direitos humanos no Brasil: contexto, processo de desenvolvimento, conquistas e limites. *Educação. Porto Alegre*, pp.50-58.

77. <https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/navegue-por-temas/educacao-em-direitos-humanos/DIAGRMAOPNEDH.pdf>

78. *Panorama da Educação em Direitos Humanos no Brasil*. Instituto Aurora, 2022.

79. *Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2023*. Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública.



works (searches carried out on Google, Instagram and TikTok on January 30th and February 6th, 2024) tends to recommend content related to self-knowledge practices, meditation, prayers, and other activities associated with individual well-being. The perception of peacebuilding as a collective and political articulation seems to be still little assimilated in Brazil.

*The perception of peacebuilding as a collective and political articulation seems to be still little assimilated in Brazil.*




In the same vein, a considerable portion of society still has little understanding of the meaning of human rights. A survey produced by Ipsos Brasil at the request of UN Women<sup>80</sup> shows that 43% of people interviewed know little about human rights, while 16% know nothing or almost nothing about the topic. Only 8% of people interviewed indicated that they knew a lot about human rights.

These data indicate that the PNEDH's intention to ensure education for peace and human rights in a transversal manner is not sufficient, as there is evidence that most of the society, including educators, still lacks in-depth training on the topic. As important as learning to calculate, read and write is learning to relate to yourself, others, and the environment from a non-violent, decolonial, inclusive and democratic logic. Naturally, the full assimilation of a culture of peace and human rights in education proposes the re-articulation of school dynamics, rethinking not only the curriculum but also its management and governance, the relationships nurtured between the entire school community, the physical space and the degree of participation and dialogue established between young people and educators.

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80. [Percepção Social sobre Direitos Humanos e sobre Mulheres Defensoras de Direitos Humanos](#), Instituto Ipsos para ONU Mulheres Brasil, 2024.

By proposing education for peace and human rights as a potential tool for interrupting cycles of violence and inequality, the intention is to establish a qualified space so that human experiences of conflict, abuse and violations can be shared and understood, not only from an individual perspective, but also from its structuring social implications. It is in this space that we also intend to imagine alternatives to already assimilated violent patterns and dream up possibilities that can be materialized collectively.



*By proposing education for peace and human rights as a potential tool for interrupting cycles of violence and inequality, the intention is to establish a qualified space so that human experiences of conflict, abuse and violations can be shared and understood, not only from an individual perspective, but also from its structuring social implications.*

In this sense, it is possible to establish a connection between education for peace and human rights and confronting violence, with an emphasis on digital violence, to provide young people and educators with the opportunity to develop their critical and affective spaces to recognize and confront violence, as well as a space to openly dialogue about the impact of lived experiences. It is by becoming aware of human rights and non-violence as a possible alternative that people are empowered to identify abuses and violations that must be combated, also reflecting on their behaviours and choices.

Until the completion of this study, little bibliography was found relat-

ing education for peace and human rights with confronting violence in the digital environment, as well as proving the practical effects of this educational approach in reducing violence among young people in Brazil, which suggests the importance of investing human and financial resources to enable academic and empirical research on the topic. Still, it is extremely important to promote and monitor educational initiatives that allow young people and educators to establish a space for safe and compassionate dialogue about the testimony and experience of abuses and violations of rights that spill over digital borders.





# FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated how the use of social networks by young Brazilians can facilitate access to violent content, potentially influencing attacks in schools. Among the findings is the fact that young people noticed that exposure to violent content has contributed to the normalization of violence, especially in its more grotesque forms. One of the participants mentioned that watching violent videos changed his perspective, making him less sensitive to violence..

There is a wide range of recommendations for videos reinforcing gender and racial stereotypes, as well as portraying immigrants, homosexuals, autistic people, and individuals with dwarfism who have been targets of discrimination. Furthermore, the content moderation and hate speech policies of social media platforms do not seem to act effectively, which is accentuated by the use of modified texts, illustrations, video game simulations and artificial intelligence that seek to circumvent restrictions. and continue promoting violence.

Considering that a significant portion of the Brazilian population still knows little or nothing about the meaning of human rights, it is possible to consider that this lack of knowledge compromises the ability of young people to recognize structural violence and the abuses and violations to which they may be subjected in the digital environment. In this sense, investing in the promotion of education for peace and human rights can be an effective tool for confronting violence, with an emphasis on digital violence, providing young people and educators with the opportunity to develop their critical and affective skills to recognize and confront violence.

Finally, it is necessary to invest human and financial resources to facilitate academic and empirical research on the potential impact of education for peace and human rights in combating violence, especially digital violence, against children and adolescents. Therefore, to mitigate the negative impacts of the continuous recommendation of violent content on social network sites especially targeting young people, a comprehensive, whole-of-society response is necessary. Below we present our main recommendations:

## **TO TIKTOK AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

- ★ Actively listen to young users to access their opinions and recommendations about combating digital violence.
- ★ Provide ongoing training to content moderators so they can keep up with strategies recently used to circumvent barriers implemented to prevent the circulation of violent content.
- ★ Offer continued psychological support to employees who work directly and indirectly in moderating violent content, including them in the design of organizational policies and benefits that guarantee safety and mental health.
- ★ Constantly provide training to content moderators, so they can keep track of recent strategies used to circumvent the existing guardrails to prevent the circulation of violent content.
- ★ Add a button to report videos that violate TikTok's Community Guidelines on the bottom of the main screen, so internet users can easily access it and use it more often.
- ★ Implement a transparent way of processing reports of violation, making internet users aware of the measures taken to address their concerns.

- ★ In partnership with researchers, identify accounts that have repeatedly shared videos with explicit appeals to violence and/or shaming, and discriminatory content and adopt appropriate measures to prevent the wide circulation of their videos.
- ★ Actively collaborate with researchers, authorities, and intelligence to investigate accounts that widely disseminate violent content.
- ★ Invest in training creators and influencers, offering workshops and/or support materials to combat digital violence and produce responsible content.

## **TO THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES**

- ★ Hold public hearings and form a youth representation committee that can actively participate in the development of public policies to combat digital violence.
- ★ Implement a federal programme to equip its police officers with knowledge and skills on cybercrime. This programme will not only allow police officers to appropriately monitor and record such crimes, but it will also enable them to provide appropriate assistance to the victims, especially of cyberbullying.
- ★ Expand the number of police stations focused on cybercrime, especially in states that have already recorded attacks in schools.
- ★ Facilitate anonymous reports of cybercrimes and incidences where there is suspicion that someone may take violent action due to their engagement with violent content on the internet.
- ★ Implement a national campaign to raise awareness of the existence of specialised police stations on cybercrime and encourage the pop-

ulation to report cybercrimes and seek help when they suspect that someone within their circles has repeatedly promoted violence on their socials.

- ★ Implement a digital system that would facilitate collaboration among all the specialised police stations on cybercrime and the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (ABIN), so they can efficiently prevent attacks in schools.
- ★ Implement a federal digital literacy programme that would include the subject of Digital Media, Society and Human Rights in the curriculum to equip young people with knowledge and skills to allow them to prevent cyberbullying and prepare them to critically engage with content accessed on social network sites. The subject would cover some key aspects of cyberbullying, online mis/disinformation, online hate speech, and the nexus between algorithms and violence. Brazil could be the first Latin American country to implement such a comprehensive educational programme, leading efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of algorithmic recommendations, especially among youth.
- ★ Implement a training and continuing education program for teachers from public and private schools who express a desire to delve deeper into the topic, guaranteeing adequate remuneration and incentives to enable participation.
- ★ The government would also offer incentives to schools, so they would decide to join the programme.
- ★ Encourage schools to join the program through investments.
- ★ Invest resources for the full implementation and monitoring of the National Human Rights Education Plan, demanding greater attention



from states to state plans and the respective agencies managing the agenda.

- ★ Implement the training of educators and school community employees in a culture of peace and human rights, ensuring adequate remuneration and incentives to enable participation.
- ★ Establish partnerships with civil society organizations that work to combat violence against children and adolescents and promote education for peace and human rights and digital literacy.
- ★ Ban sites that explicitly promote violence or require the removal of content that promotes violence.
- ★ Investigate who are the creators and funders of websites that explicitly promote violence and apply appropriate accountability.

## **To CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

- ★ Actively seek the perception of young people to develop initiatives to combat digital violence.
- ★ Provide support to the victims of cybercrimes, especially cyberbullying.
- ★ Work together with schools, providing psychological assistance to students who have repeatedly accessed violent content on the internet and/or committed (cyber) bullying.
- ★ Work together with schools, assisting students who have been victims of (cyber) bullying. Assistance can be either in the form of psychological assistance to process the effects of (cyber)bullying or assistance to deal with the case of (cyber)bullying - for instance, reporting it to

the police or inviting the parents of the perpetrator to meet the head teacher.

- ★ Develop social media campaigns to raise awareness of the short-term and long-term effects of engaging with violent content on the internet.
- ★ Develop a social media campaign to make young people reflect that violence is not the answer to bullying, equipping them with tools to address the problem.
- ★ Promote digital education and education for peace and human rights, whether through training or the production of written and/or audio-visual content.
- ★ Conduct research to identify educational gaps on local and federal levels in terms of culture of peace, human rights, confronting violence and digital literacy.
- ★ Conduct research exploring the nexus between access to the internet and violence on both local and federal levels.

## **To EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND EDUCATORS**

- ★ Establish participatory processes for listening and considering the opinions and experiences of young people to combat digital violence.
- ★ Implement the teaching of Digital Media, Society and Human Rights subjects following the federal digital literacy program, designating some teachers to participate in training provided by the government and ensuring adequate remuneration and incentives to enable participation.
- ★ Encourage teachers who teach the subject of Digital Media and Society

to transform their classes into interactive and friendly environments in which students are confronted with real-world cases and they are encouraged to reflect on how they can best approach the situation.

- ★ Offer ongoing training to educators in a culture of peace and human rights, ensuring adequate remuneration and incentives to enable participation.
- ★ Develop institutional policies and processes for preventing, identifying, welcoming, addressing and holding accountable abuses and violations that affect the school community.
- ★ Encourage teachers from different disciplines to adapt the educational curriculum to a model that prioritizes human rights and a culture of peace.
- ★ Migrate from a culture of control and surveillance that exists in many schools to a culture of care, in which the entire school community can feel considered and respected.
- ★ Strengthen communication with guardians, especially in secondary school, so they can feel comfortable enough to share concerns over the behaviour of their children.
- ★ Encourage students to organise festivals and cultural events in which they creatively raise awareness of the harms caused by the free circulation of violent content on the internet.
- ★ Work together with civil society organisations to adopt guidelines for promoting a culture of peace and human rights in the school environment and providing training for educators, guardians, and students.
- ★ Work together with civil society organisations to access training

about how to respond in cases in which students have shown signs of radicalisation and/or have bullied other students.

- ★ Work together with civil society organisations to assist students who have been either victims of (cyber) bullying or have bullied other students.
- ★ Work together with civil society organisations to provide support to parents who are worried about the content accessed online by their children.

## **TO THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

- ★ Constantly monitor the content accessed by your children on smartphones and/or laptops.
- ★ Use part of your moments together (for instance, while having dinner) to know more about your children's perceptions of the content they have accessed on social network sites.
- ★ Cultivate a relationship of trust and respect to discuss sensitive and conflicting topics.
- ★ Seek support and/or education to improve the way you communicate with young people.
- ★ Encourage children and adolescents to report posts/videos containing violent, humiliating and/or discriminatory content.
- ★ Seek help if you notice that the child and/or teenager under your responsibility is repeatedly accessing violent content on the internet. The first point of contact should be the school.

- ★ Seek help if you do not know what to do if the child and/or teenager under your responsibility is a victim of (cyber) bullying and/or intimidates other students.

## **TO THE WIDER PUBLIC**

- ★ Report posts/videos containing violent, shaming, and/or discriminatory content.
- ★ While using any social media, avoid watching videos promoting violence until the end. Otherwise, the social network site will start recommending similar content.
- ★ Avoid sharing posts/videos containing violent, shaming, and/or discriminatory content on social network sites. Remember that it may induce some people to perpetrate violent acts and/or it may serve as a gateway to radicalisation processes.





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