Name of Tool | Violent Extremist Risk Assessment 2 Revised (VERA 2R)
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Category | Violence Risk (Awaiting Validation)
Author / Publisher | Pressman and Flockton
Year | 2012

**Description**

- The VERA 2 is a 34-item structured professional judgment (SPJ) tool which aims to assess the risk of violent political extremism. It was revised from the original VERA (Pressman, 2009) on the basis of empirical evidence presented by experts in prison and national security sectors (Khader et al., 2016). This has since been revised into the VERA-2R, which uses more specified dynamic indicators pertinent to the radicalisation process of violent extremism (Pressman and Flockton, 2016).
- It is intended for use with and limited to persons with a history of extremist violence or convictions for terrorist related offences (Pressman, 2009).
- The VERA-2R focuses on terrorism motivated by extreme ideologies (Hart et al., 2017). The items are divided into five categories: (1) beliefs and attitudes (e.g. rejection of society and its values, ideology justifying violence); (2) context and intent (e.g. user of extremist websites, direct contact with violent extremists); (3) history and capability (e.g. early exposure to militant ideology, paramilitary, explosives training); (4) commitment and motivation (e.g. moral imperative, group belonging); (5) protective items (e.g. shift in ideology or vision of enemy, rejection of violence to obtain goals). There are three ratings of low, medium and high; although final decisions are not made based on numerical scoring (Pressman and Flockton, 2016).
- Although there are currently cyber elements within the VERA-2, it has been recommended that these are expanded and strengthened (Khader et al., 2016).
- The VERA-2R can be used by security and intelligence analysts, forensic social workers and police to assess individuals suspected of engaging in violent extremist or terrorist offences.

**Age Appropriateness**

No age range specified

**Assessor Qualifications**

Intended for use by a range of professionals trained in a variety of disciplines. Experience and training in conducting professional assessments. Assessors are required to have undergone training and demonstrate an understanding of the radicalisation process, violent extremism and terrorism.

**Tool Development**

- Items on the VERA were developed using the results of research previously undertaken into radicalisation and terrorism, including discussions with security and intelligence agency.
professionals. Individuals who participate in terrorism and violent extremism differ in terms of their motivations, characteristics and other criminogenic risk factors from those who engage in other forms of criminal activity. The VERA-2 has been developed to provide a structured protocol for assessing the risk of violence in this context (Pressman, 2009).

• The structure of the VERA-2 is based on well accepted empirically validated SPJ tools designed to assess violence risk in adults and adolescents, including the HCR-20 (Webster et al., 1997) and SAVRY (Borum et al., 2006). The items were developed from international research relating to the processes of radicalisation and progression to extremist violence; and with collaboration from law enforcement, intelligence and security and correctional professionals with operational experience with violent extremists (Pressman, 2009).

• There is a difficulty in trying to validate something like the VERA-2R: it is impossible to systematically sample terrorists for research purposes; case history information is likely to be inaccessible for security reasons (Hart et al., 2017). In spite of this, a handful of studies have been carried out on the tool.

• The VERA-2R was said to demonstrate deductive validity when used within a legal system that applies definition adhering to the risk indicators (Pressman and Flockton, 2016).

• Beardsley and Beech (2013) applied the VERA to five case studies of terrorists and used two evaluators to test the tool. It was discovered that the inter-rater reliability was good, with a kappa value of .76.

• Pressman and Flockton (2012) pointed out that the VERA-2R only provides a limited assessment of risk factors; thus, it may be best used alongside another risk assessment instrument like the HCR-20 V3.

**General Notes**

• A two-day standardised training course to require to become an assessor of the VERA-2R (Pressman and Flockton, 2016).

• The VERA-2 is used by national police and intelligence agencies, as well as the criminal justice systems in Europe, Asia, North America and the Pacific Region (Khader et al. 2016). A justice grant has been bestowed on the Netherlands Institute of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology to introduce the use and implementation of VER-2R into the prison and probation services in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Frances, Germany, Sweden, Spain and Slovakia (Pressman and Flockton, 2016).

• The High Risk Terrorist Offenders Implementation Working Group in Australia identified the VERA-2R as the best violent extremism risk assessment tool available. The key advantages of this tool are it generates user-friendly reports and addresses a broad range of factors including mental health and youth ones (Attorney General’s Department, 2017).

• Assessors are required to integrate all known information from available sources including case file and background reports, interviews, intelligence and security assessments, court records, and other observational and behavioral analysis to determine individual item evaluative ratings. The totality of this information is considered in generating a final judgment relating to the risk of extremist violence.

• The VERA 2 has not been developed as a stand-alone formal test or scale. It is intended to be an "add-on" instrument to the battery of general risk assessment approaches used.

• Professionals working with violent extremists in the high security prison setting have reported that the VERA 2 provides empirically grounded, relevant and useful information previously unavailable for the identified population. This assists in decisions relating to security classification, custodial placement reviews, program interventions, progression pathways to lower classification detention and eventual release to the community (Pressman and Flockton, 2012).
• Inter-rater reliability with the VERA-2 has been shown to be significant (p<0.0001), using Kendall’s coefficient of concordance to assess the agreement of multiple raters (greater than 2) on known cases of violent extremists (Pressman, 2009).
• The VERA 2 has been accepted by the Serious Offender Review Council (SORC) in New South Wales, Australia and is currently now in use in NSW, Australia
• A validation study is being conducted by VERA-2 co-author (John Flockton) with convicted extremist violent offenders. There are plans to introduce the VERA-2 into other countries.
• The tool is a restricted-access tool only able to be purchased by individual professionals and multidisciplinary teams carrying out threat assessments (Hart et al., 2017).
• There is a cyber-version of the VERA (CYBERA, looking at imagery, semantic content, virtual social network and individual online activities. It is to be used with individuals who use social media or other online platforms to promote, engage in or support terrorist activities.
• For more information visit the following website:  