Psychophysiological Reasons for Extremist Behavior.

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ABSTRACT

The article is dealing with the analysis of contemporary scientific approaches to definition of the reasons for the formation of extremist behavior. The authors describe and analyze the main causes of occurrence of this phenomenon based on both its definition and practical application. In practice, the main forms of extremist behavior are peculiar to any society. Extremist behavior of human and social groups is a phenomenon inherent in every historical epoch, perhaps, not amenable to complete eradication. Therefore, the aim of this work is to analyze psychophysiological reasons of extremist behavior as a factor of the extremism escalation in general. Extremist behavior is considered in the article as multifaceted phenomenon whose reasons do not result solely from political, social, economic or other critical situations, but are formed in various spheres of human existence, some of which are psychophysiological factors. Analysis of extremist personality and extremist behavior confirms the fact that young people due to age-related psychological maker and social vulnerability represent the most favorable environment for the cultivation of extremist ideologies: they join in extremist religious organizations, not being able to cope with the problems of everyday life. A distinctive feature of extremist behavior is that it is kind of action that precedes terrorist activity and entails it, as it forms its ideological foundation. At the same time, exactly during this period of the psyche formation, it is possible, perhaps, to exercise a positive influence on the molding of personality in the course of person's attitude development towards tolerance and culture of interethnic communication.
Keywords: extremism, extremist behavior, tolerance, intolerance, binary world perception, social criticism, delinquency, delinquent drift.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society lives in the era of globalization and high information technologies that offer great opportunities for development of both the world community as a whole, and individual social groups. This circumstance creates conditions for the intensification of migration flows. This is a complex and contradictory social process, and therefore, various transnational socio-psychological processes including those, such as a tendency to preserve traditional culture, on the one hand, and a tendency to social inclusion, social inclusiveness, and solidarity with other cultures, on the other hand, co-exist and mutually affect each other within the dynamic globalization of social development [1, p. 43].

Many large countries, including Russia, have always been characterized by complex and diverse ethnic (national) and religious make-up of the population. Coexistence of many cultures and nationalities is a feature of many countries throughout their long history. Multiculturalism in multinational states has always been and still is the source and condition of their development, interethnic communication, and interaction of cultural and historical traditions. But at the same time, in case of insufficient attention, it is also a source of problems and contradictions in inter-ethnic interaction, complicating constructive interpersonal and interethnic interrelations. The historical experience of our country over the last few centuries has shown that successful public and state development is possible only in a spiritual unity based on own cultural, historical, and religious traditions [2, p. 102].

The relevance of studying extremist behavior as a public problem is defined not only by its danger to existing order of things, but also the ability to grow into a criminal phenomenon associated with crime, terrorism, mass riots and the like. And while legal, socio-economic and socio-political dimensions were studied quite thoroughly, personal-psychological component was taken into account insufficiently or not considered at all. Mentioned problems proved that there is a need to focus attention on socio-psychological aspects of formation of extremist behavior.

Extremism (from the Latin – extreme) is the penchant for extreme views of life, especially, activities and measures. These measures include the provocation of riots, civil disobedience, terrorist acts, and guerrilla warfare. The most radical extremists often deny any compromises and negotiations. The rise of extremism is usually accompanied by socio-economic crises, a sharp drop in the living standards of the bulk of the population, a totalitarian political regime with the suppression of the opposition by the authorities, and the persecution of dissidents.

Identifying the psychological determinants of extremism as one of the most dangerous phenomenon of social life, destabilizing the political system and threaten the livelihoods of citizens, it should be emphasized that extremism is an extreme form of intolerance, combined with aggression and violence as methods of expressing intolerance of the other. At that, the cause of extremist, intolerant, and aggressive attitude is a psychological barrier "us-them", and fear of people who are not like you.

Thus, extremist behavior as a type of deviance is a complex social-psychological phenomenon, which tends to self-development. Its appearance is due to a number of socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural and psycho-physiological factors that closely interact with each other.

Extremist behavior is generally understood as the inclination for extremely radical actions and ideas. The problem when studying this topic is that a linear relationship between specific causes and manifestations of extremism are multivalued. Even within the same timeframe the reasons for extremist behavior are differently perceived by the researchers.

Domestic and foreign researchers are looking for the reasons for extremist behavior primarily in socio-economic or political processes and phenomena. "The factors that give rise to extremism in society, - writes V. Shakhov, are: socio-economic crises, deformation of political structures, the fall in living standards of a significant part of the population, the suppression of opposition and dissent by the authorities, national oppression, the ambitions of leaders of political parties and social groups, etc." [3, p. 181]. Bruckner M. and H.P. Gruner believe that there is certain dependence on economic factors: a one- percent decrease in economic development leads to a one-percent increase in support for extreme right-wing and nationalist parties [4].

However, experience has proven that, even the simultaneous influence of socio-economic and political factors does not lead universally to automatic escalation of extremist behavior. "Both in journalism

and scientific literature, - indicates E. Pain, - there are attempts to link directly the rise of extremism to poverty, social deprivation and low cultural level of particular regional, ethnic or religious groups. But, neither historical examples, nor the special studies confirm such concepts [5, p. 84]. Social, economic and political crises don't always cause the extremist behavior. Therefore, these components are not always keys in the emergence of extremism, they may precede the formation of extremist behavior, though do not have to be factors for its occurrence.

An important role in the formation of extremist manifestations has the so-called political and psychological component. As pointed out by T. Garr, "It is people - with all their various ideas, desires and beliefs - should be core of analysis of the conflict" [6, p. 31]. The same opinion, but with the necessity to consider the social background, has been expressed by J. Acton: "Although the oppression can again and again cause furious outbursts of violence ... it is not capable of generating reliable target and identify upgrade paths, if the awareness of the existing evil had not yet teamed up with a new idea of happiness" [7, p. 26]. This approach was summarized by V.I. Vlasov, who makes the conclusion that "inertial processes in themselves can only create the conditions for extremism. Turning extremism into an ideology and political practice, is always the work of individuals and groups of people" [8, p. 88]. Thus, studies indicate a more complex mechanism for the formation of extremist behavior, rather than simple cause-and-effect relationship between certain components of the socio-political life.

Scientists are trying to focus on the multifaceted reasons for the escalation of extremism and extremist behavior. Thus, V. Kuraksa distinguishes several types of factors for the emergence of extremism in society: "The first factor is inhibition of the movement of society towards the interests of the socially disadvantaged social strata or ignoring them... In the second case, this is possible when the internal affluent political and economic circles wish public destabilization... It is also possible a third option, caused by provoking social instability and extremism from the external environment of the national social medium in the absence of adequate counteraction of its manifestations at the state and community level" [9, p. 49].

Since it is difficult to range the causes of escalation of the extremist behavior, scientists try to systematize them through broad generalizations.

According to A.V. Vozzhennikov, extremist behavior "is especially noticeable in societies, embarking on a course of transformation, as well as those communities, which are concentrated in marginal sectors of society" [10, p. 94]. Socio-economic problems of these periods are complicated by conflicts of generations. As noted by I. Senin, "an explosion of extremism that is happening now is due to break of stereotypes, which have formed over the centuries and consecrated culturally" [11, p. 78].

Society stratification factor becomes especially active in times of change, when the gap between rich and poor people increases rapidly, forming a negative attitude of one group to another. A fast and largely rationally unjustified enrichment of individual members of society leads to the dissemination of sentiments of frustration, leading to political and legal nihilism, and, consequently, exclusion of political practice from the acceptable patterns of behavior.

In the escalation of extremist behavior important is the proliferation in society of "black and white" (binary) perception of the world [12]. This characteristic is acceptable in a greater degree for positioning of the extremists in terms of the compromised democracy, whereas in authoritarian societies, usually formed on the basis of permanent external threat, a binary perception of the world is the norm, and therefore may not contain signs of extremist behavior from the perspective of participants involved in this political system (e.g., Nazi Germany). Black-and-white perception of the world is peculiar to today's so-called Western democratic world in relation not only to political extremists, but also to the "potential carriers of extremism" - Islamists, nationalists, etc. However, if the binary worldview is observed in separate groups, in parts of a whole (for example, in a single political system), it can be considered a reason for extremist behavior, since this attitude denies the right of other parts of the whole for its proprietary position and legitimizes the use of all methods to bring self-righteousness. Baeva L. notes that "the formation of the attitude towards aggression against another occurs when a person became accustomed to treat his attitudes and actions uncritically and considers himself far above others." At that, the researcher adds that "the negative stereotypes quickly go down the line and are harder to change ... . At a psychological level, aggression and intolerance are easily understandable than a peaceful attitude and tolerance" [13, p. 22-23].

When analyzing the causes of extremist behavior, Kruglova K. notes that "breeding ground for extremism is the situation, where in the course of development of social and personal emancipation the external liberation is ahead of internal" [14, p. 94].

We note in general that the transition periods are characterized by high expectations from the changes, which, due to the inability of the operational implementation of the set goals, lead to dissatisfaction with reality and cause therefore frustration. "The exclusion that accompanies getting out of frustration often leads to the rejection of the ideas and thoughts, which are shared by social consciousness, as well as accepted social norms, and manifests itself in individual and group consciousness as nihilism" [15, p. 39]. In turn, nihilism, as the negation of the established norms, principles, and laws is a prerequisite for behavior or attitudes, which go beyond the values acceptable in society.

In accordance with the purpose of the study, we will concentrate on the psychophysiological reasons of extremist behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Most researchers [16, 17, 18, 19] concur that one of the main reasons of extremist behavior is the low level of tolerance, which is understood as integrative personal characteristic, reflecting an active social attitude and psychological readiness for positive interaction with people having other views, world outlook, styles of thinking and behavior.

In connection with the above, the collection of empirical material was carried out using the following methods and techniques: observation, survey, and tests ("Tolerance level diagnostics method" ("Intolerance-tolerance" (INTOL)) by L.G. Pochebut, "Self assessment of communicative tolerance" by V.V. Boyko, and verbal projective technique of "Unfinished sentences").

The empirical study was attended by 130 students and teaching staff of the department of general medicine of the Dagestan State Medical Academy.

RESEARCH RESULTS

On the basis of the analysis of answers to "Incomplete sentences" questionnaire we illustrated the structure of the tolerance, which is based on the perceptions of students and their teachers about this psychological phenomenon.

In accordance with the research results, the tolerance structure of students and teachers coincides in terms of content of its components, though differs in terms of ranging of their views. Thus, the most typical is the fact that the students' tolerance structure dominates by components such as nonintrusion of their opinions, their attitudes, and the ability to hear another person and understand him, while in teachers these indicators were ranged ninth and eighth, respectively. The first and second places were given by teachers to tolerance with regard to traits and behavior of people (students ranked this component of tolerance down to sixth place) and the desire to help another person (students ranked this component to eighth place).

Analysis of the results obtained employing INTOL technique has led to the following conclusions. Teachers have shown a higher level of general tolerance (61.7%) than students (48%) that indicates the need for correction of the index of general tolerance in students employing active socio-psychological methods.

"Self assessment of communicative tolerance" by V.V. Boyko gave the opportunity to analyze the level of communicative tolerance of students and teachers. According to the results obtained, among students 35% have a low level of communicative tolerance that hinders effective relationships with peers and teachers, as well as interferes with personal and professional self-determination. The same problems were typical for 24.9% of teachers, who also demonstrated a low level of communicative tolerance. The high level of the specified characteristic was shown by approximately the same number of students and teachers (25.5 and 28.7%, respectively).

In general, the results of the empirical study have shown the availability of overwhelming number of students with low development level of both general and communicative tolerance that may become one of the factors in the formation of extremist behavior in appropriate social conditions.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

First of all, it should be noted that it is necessary to clearly distinguish the trends to extreme behavior, often seen in younger people due to their physiological and socio-psychological features that is generally adequate for this age group, and extremist behavior.

Generally speaking, it should be noted that currently in the world there is a significant increase in the level of extreme behavior among young people that is characterized by the equalization of its manifestations from a gender perspective.

At that, there are no clear boundaries between "extreme" and "extremist" types of behaviors: in the presence of specific circumstances, the first type of behavior may turn into the second one. Whereupon, there are certain psychophysiological features that can lead to both extreme and extremist behavior.

The youth with its tendency to look for simple solutions to difficult straits are prone to extremist manifestations more than other age groups. It is the young people, who more than other age groups, tend to extremes in views, attitudes and behavior, since the representatives of this age category constitute a new and different stage of life, which is of paramount importance for the harmonious development of the individual. It is this period, which is characterized by the process of active formation of social maturity of the individual, who takes the attitude of rejecting the norms and rules of social conduct, expressing egocentric orientation and passive-consumer behavior. We can talk about the system of motives peculiar to the identity of the extremist. For extremists, typical are motives of self-affirmation and power, protest and revenge, self-actualization, the transformation of the world, and selfish motives.

Social practice has clearly shown that the rules, boundaries of personal development and, consequently, choice of certain forms of behavior, are largely dependent on the existence and specific character of socialization of the young man. In law and social psychology, culturological model of delinquent conduct, including extremist behavior, is commonly accepted and has become a de facto axiom. The clash of cultures and subcultures (standards of conduct of certain social groups and strata) as well as gender and age conflicts are considered as a source of delinquency.

The extremist behavior of young people is often attributed to the fact that they are unable to satisfy their own social needs for recognition, trust, and self-assertion by lawful measures. This, in particular, can be interfered by the biological factors of deviations. However, when analyzing extremist behavior, researchers often neglect the factors of acculturation and perception, assimilation of elements of other cultures that can become the basis of social disorganization.

The development of extremist behavior can be divided into several stages, which can be designated as "social criticism", " social exclusion", and "revolt."

The social criticism is influenced by the uncertainty of social status, pessimism of social expectations, and delusiveness of social perspectives. Search of young people for effective means for spiritual and social self-identification stipulate the reproduction of their socio-cultural values, which are alternative to the cultural complex dominating in society. Demonstrative denial of its norms and values leads to marginalization of a part of the young people.

Researchers define this condition of youth as "compelled marginality", when various forms of deviant and antisocial behavior substitute set of values existing in society and behavioral stereotypes based on them. Under these conditions, material security is not recognized as a significant criterion of social statusness, while household minimalism on the contrary becomes an alternative to the established patterns of social behavior [18].

Thus, the social criticism stems from the dissatisfaction of young people with their status in society, contributes to the emergence of outlines and informative features of youth protest.

Uncertain and sometimes marginal status of the individual stratums of the youth is forming its protest against an imaginary hypocrisy and quite sanctimonious morality of the older generation. In addition, the high social status of individuals in society, which is determined, first and foremost, by indicators of their material

well-being becomes the object of criticism. The social criticism is associated with an awareness of young people about the need for social change to raise their current social status. These circumstances, in turn, cause the emergence and dissemination of ideas of intolerance and radicalism, which are further embodied in various types of extremist behavior and extremist practices.

Demonstrative negation of social norms and values or attempts to replace them by own norms and values objectively determine the gradual exclusion of youth from society. The specified stage of social activity of young people is not only a result of their attitude to the existing social reality, but acts as a specific form of adaptation to challenging life conditions. Social exclusion is illusory opportunity to overcome the problems that impede the self-determination of youth and the acquisition of desired social status. However, in real life, the exclusion deprives youth of the ability to obtain the desired stable social status, solidifies and reinforces the uncertain and in many cases marginal status in society that in turn leads to a significant radicalization of consciousness. Extremist behavior in this case is characterized by excessive aggression, increased hostility and confrontation, refusal to compromise in the issues related to the necessity of social change.

Thus, extremist behavior acquires illegal signs and under the action of random factors can be transformed into various forms of extremist activity. The latter circumstance brings social protest into delinquent plane.

At that, delinquent drift in this case is based on the "neutralization" of the moral and legal norms, subjectively determined as inapplicable, irrelevant or unessential. On the contrary, the generality and consistency of common values create the unity of the world image of a man, when the choice, as a form of self-actualization in social space and time is understood by human not only as a purposeful strong-willed act, but also subjectively acceptable delinquency that meets individual experience and social expectations.

Revolt, as the peak stage in the development of extremist behavior, is a result of the impact of the recession socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-political factors. It manifests itself through the dissemination of intolerant content, unmotivated acts of violence against individuals or groups of people, who do not share specific worldviews or prevent extremist activities.

Such destructive tendencies are particularly pronounced in the political sphere, where the most common form of youth extremism is a street protest action. Participation in such activities takes on a symbolic nature that causes emergence of subcultural forms of extremist activity. Excessive elaboration and articulation of the value system of extremist groups, the emergence of specific external attributive signs, slang and the like become significant components of extremist activity. Youth protest, embodied in extremist practice, is irrational and spontaneous, it has poorly informed nature, where violence is a kind of psychological mechanism of self-affirmation in society.

The psychological feeling of hopelessness as well as creative and professional lack of self-fulfillment contributes to the exaltation of protest moods among young people around the imaginary "enemy". This definition refers to individuals with a high social status, social groups or associations of citizens, who advocate views that are incompatible with radical ideology, as well as political and state institutions preventing illegal actions.

It is appropriate to define the specificity of the relationship of individuals with extremist behavior or their groups with society as "latent conformism" or "inverse solidarity", because the trajectory of their behavior depends directly on social changes and transformations.

The promotion of social criticism, protest and nihilistic attitudes among youth is due to socio-economic problems, the crisis of the system of spiritual values, and the political polarization of society that in turn forces young people to search for possibilities of adaptation to these social cataclysms. Overcoming the recessionary tendencies, existing in the society, leads to a decrease in conflictogenic potential of youth radical groups and unactualizes extremist forms of social activity. Besides, this is contributed by the maturing of the young people and gradual acquiring life experience. These circumstances negate the dichotomous thinking and ultimatism, as well as reduce the level of aggression and radicalism amongst the youth.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we can draw the following conclusions.

Extremist behavior, being a multidimensional phenomenon, is not an automatic consequence of certain specific reasons. Moreover, it is incorrect to associate the reasons of extremist behavior only with the occurrence of political, social, economic or other critical situations in the society. Extremist behavior is generated by a complex of factors that are formed in different spheres of human existence, some of which have psychophysiological nature.

The formation and development of extremist behavior in the context of the proclaimed democratic and liberal values is promoted by a binary worldview, which is the complete rejection of any arguments of the opponent not because of their significance, but because of his inclination to the different views, as well as unverified support of all political actions of "own" leaders or political forces.

Maximalism and radicalism of judgments, as well as overly expressive emotional attitude to public cataclysms, peculiar to youth, contributes to the accumulation in youth minds of a significant extreme potential, which is manifested in behavioral practices that deviate from the norms sanctioned and approved by society.

In the context of prophylactic actions to prevent extremist behavior we can identify several lines and principles. First of all, this is study and analysis of the current status of the problem of extremism. It represents a selection of the special measures to influence the factors and conditions that contribute to combating the emergence and dissemination of extremist ideas, beliefs and attitudes, as well as common practices of extremist activities. No less important place in the system of counteraction to extremist behavior is information support aimed at carrying out preventive conversations, as well as the record of the persons inclined to committing illegal actions of an extremist nature and the control over these persons aimed at their rehabilitation.

An important preventive element of extremist behavior is the continuous improvement of the efforts aimed at identification of the reasons and conditions conducive to extremist behavior, because factors that encourage young people to extremist activity, change over time. Accordingly, the reasons and conditions that yesterday led young people to extremist activities today may not be such, given the changed circumstances.

However, extremality, peculiar to youth and capable of transforming into extremist behavior can become constructive, helping to focus public opinion on the existing social problems and offering own ways to solve them. Therefore, youth extremism and radicalism sometimes acts as convincing factor of social innovation as a kind of catalyst for the implementation of the objective needs of the young people towards self-esteem in society, development of sustainable attitudes, life stance and value orientations.

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