

Extremism: A Social Analysis of the Factors Causing the Emergence of Extremism

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Abstract

Extremism is an ideological and behavioral phenomenon through which individuals and groups adopt ideas and beliefs that go beyond the bounds of moderation in thought and practice. Extremism manifests itself when an individual or group rigidly adheres to certain views and beliefs while rejecting opposing viewpoints. Extremism is often based on a rejection of dialogue, discussion, and coexistence with those who are different. Sociologically speaking, an extremist personality is a pattern of thought and behavior that takes shape within a specific social context and is influenced by environmental and cultural factors; it is a personality that feels socially excluded, marginalized, and poorly integrated into society. Psychologically, extremism is understood as a pattern of thought and behavior linked to psychological mechanisms that make the individual more susceptible to adopting radical and exclusionary ideas. Extremism manifests in various forms, it may be ideological, religious, political, or social, and therefore combating it requires joint efforts from all sectors, including educational institutions, the media, and the family, with the aim of fostering a culture of dialogue to reduce the tendency to be drawn into extremist ideas. Accordingly, this article aims to provide a sociological analysis of the phenomenon of extremism by highlighting the social and psychological factors that contribute to individuals joining extremist groups, as well as identifying ways to prevent it.

Keywords: *Extremism, Extremist Personality, Types of Extremism, Social Causes, Prevention Methods.*

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Introduction

Extremism and radicalism are among the complex social issues and phenomena that have increasingly attracted the attention of researchers in the fields of sociology, political science, and psychology, due to their negative repercussions on the stability and cohesion of society. These phenomena reveal the deviation of certain groups and individuals from what is socially accepted, not only at the level of thought or aggressive behavior, but also at the level of social, cultural, economic, and psychological interactions, which intertwine to produce patterns of behavior that reject others and contradict the values of society or the group. Extremists tend to adopt and intensify certain ideas for motives related to social, economic, and even psychological conditions. Sociological studies have produced a range of findings confirming that social factors—whether related to the weakening of social ties, economic and cultural marginalization, social exclusion, the declining role of the family in instilling sound social values, or the fragility of family socialization—generate frustration and a loss of belonging. This is also linked to the impact of digital transformation and new media, and the extent of their contribution to reshaping patterns of collective consciousness, making individuals more vulnerable to the influence of hate speech and incitement.

Extremism is not necessarily religious or ideological; it takes multiple forms, including social and political extremism. The causes leading to deviation from social, cultural, and intellectual balance are also diverse. The extremist personality, as indicated by numerous sociological and psychological studies in explaining extremism from the perspective of influencing factors, is characterized by a sense of social exclusion, weak justice, feelings of injustice, isolation, and conflict. Moreover, some individuals may be drawn to extremist groups for personal reasons such as spiritual emptiness, failure in life, frustration, and identity disturbances.

Within this context, extremism is a phenomenon that threatens the security of both the individual and society, as its effects are multiple and affect all aspects of social life, thereby endangering its stability and development and reinforcing divisions and conflicts among its members. This is due to individuals being exposed to destructive and rigid ideas that hinder their creative capacities and development.

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Based on this, the present article seeks to highlight the various factors contributing to the phenomenon of extremism from a sociological perspective, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, starting from the following questions:

- What is meant by extremism, and what are its main types?
- How do social factors contribute to the development of extremist behavior?
- What is the role of the family and educational institutions in reducing extremism?
- How do media contribute to the prevention of extremism?
- What is the role of development programs in limiting youth involvement in extremist groups?

First: The Concept of Extremism and Related Concepts

1-The Concept of Extremism:

The linguistic concept, as stated in the Muheet al-Muheet dictionary, indicates that someone has gone to extremes, exceeding the bounds of moderation in a matter. The extreme, in this context, is the end or limit of anything. In the Webte dictionary, extremism refers to a significant departure from what is logical, reasonable, or acceptable, such as extremism in opinion, etc (Dima Abdullah Ahmad , 2024, p. 133.)

Extremism is associated with the terms fanaticism and *dogmatism*, meaning intellectual rigidity and cognitive closure. In this sense, extremism is a closed way of thinking characterized by the inability to accept any beliefs that differ from those of the individual or group, or to tolerate them. (Mariam Madour, June 2017, p. 306)

Dr. Al-Kiyali considered extremism a pathological state characterized by exaggeration, narrow-mindedness, blind fanaticism toward an idea, and attempting to support it by all means, including violence. He defined extremism as a state of rigidity, excessive enthusiasm, and narrow adherence to a religious doctrine or idea, which leads to the belittling of the opinions and beliefs of others, and fighting and confronting them and those who hold them. It is a pathological condition at both the individual and collective levels that leads to behaviors characterized by recklessness, extremism, deviation from reason, and disregard for others. Thus, extremism is fanaticism toward a thought, belief, or doctrine and exaggeration in it. (Dima Abdullah Ahmed: Op. cit., p. 133)

This definition presents extremism as a pathological condition rather than merely a difference of opinion or strong adherence to an idea. Rather, it is a deviation from the proper intellectual, doctrinal, and behavioral balance.

Extremism is also defined as the individual's adoption of a position that exceeds the limits of moderation, moving away from what is familiar, and surpassing the intellectual, behavioral, and moral standards established and accepted by members of society. This definition may be the most precise, as it combines the linguistic meaning of extremism (departure from moderation), the field in which this deviation occurs (thought and behavior), and the regulating standard, which is what society accepts. (Alia bint Ahmed bin Musfir Al-Ghamdin, March, Part 1, p. 352.)

According to this view, extremism cannot be reduced merely to strong adherence to an idea; rather, it is embodied in the violation of established customs and standards that regulate social relations and behavior. Extremism is thus a state of deviation from social and intellectual balance.

The adoption of extremist opinions and beliefs is not necessarily harmful. However, when an individual or group uses violence to justify or achieve the changes they desire, this is often referred to as *violent extremism*. (Global Network of Education Agencies, September 2017, p2)

When extremism turns into violent extremism, it refers to individuals or groups committing acts that justify violent attacks.

Thus, extremism is exaggeration, transgression, fanaticism, and intellectual rigidity, where an individual exaggerates in what he thinks about a specific issue, exceeding the limits of his belief regarding what it ought to be and what was originally established for him, becomes fanatical toward his extremism and his distance from the original subject that is clear to the general public, becomes intellectually rigid, and eliminates flexibility in his dialogue and discussion regarding the agreed-upon contents within the framework of religious law and the legal system of the society in which he lives. (Hana Ramadan Ahmed Satohi, December 2022, p. 302.)

Thus, extremism is the departure from moderation and balance in thought, beliefs, and discussions. It aims at affirming a deviant idea over what society has agreed upon, whether in religion, politics, or culture.

According to Al-Youssef, extremism has three levels: (Al-Yusuf, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, (1425 AH), p29, Page3)

The intellectual or cognitive level, represented by the inability to reflect and think.

The emotional level, represented by impulsiveness in behavior.

The behavioral level, represented by the practice of violence against others.

These three levels of extremism in thought, beliefs, and behavior reflect serious risks to the security of both the individual and society, and have severe consequences for societies such as spreading chaos, destruction, and social insecurity.

The “extremist personality” is defined psychologically as a personality characterized by a specific psychological structure that distinguishes it from others, marked by a high degree of fanaticism and rigidity, weak ego strength, conformity, dominance, intellectual rigidity, and aversion to ambiguity. All of these traits together contribute to defining the characteristics of the extremist personality. These characteristics represent a deviation from what is approved by the ideology and culture of society. It is also “that person whose beliefs, emotions, and behavioral patterns are characterized by rigidity, exaggeration, and exceeding the limits of moderation and centrism.” The extremist individual either accepts things in an absolute manner or rejects them absolutely. He defends what he believes in with fear, violence, and aggression, and for him situations and things are either black or white, with no intermediate shades.

2. *The Concept of Fanaticism:*

Al-Shawamra argues that fanaticism is a “negative racist attitude, meaning an attitude that pushes the individual to behave in a hostile manner against an individual or a group belonging to a certain group. It is a hostile attitude toward a person belonging to a group for no reason other than his belonging to that group, which provokes the objection of the holder of the attitude. It is an unjustified attitude or position in which the individual is ready to believe, perceive, feel, and behave in a way that is either supportive or opposed to a specific group or individual.” Meanwhile, “Bergmann” defined it as a prevailing negative attitude toward members of the out-group.

As “Brown” defined it, fanaticism is a judgment or preconceived opinion without providing an appropriate justification. It is a negative prior judgment toward individuals, or toward a race, religion, or any other social role. This judgment is based on ignoring facts that contradict this opinion. (Sadiq Belhaj, June 2024, p 736)

Fanaticism is a social disease that generates hatred and hostility in social and personal relations, as it provides its holder with illusory justifications that cause him to miss the opportunity to solve his problems in a realistic way.

3. The Concept of Racism : Racism is a concept synonymous with the notion of racial fanaticism among psychologists. However, sociologists and anthropologists refer to it as an ideology that asserts the superiority of one race or its exploitation of other races. This ideology includes a framework of beliefs about the biological or cultural inferiority of a given race, and the use of such beliefs to justify unfair treatment of members of that group.

4. The Concept of Ethnocentrism : Ethnocentrism is described as “viewing matters from the perspective that one’s own group is the center of everything, and judging others on the basis that one’s group is the reference point for such judgment. Every group nourishes its pride and ego by boasting that it is superior, glorifying its sacred values, and looking down with contempt on those below it.” (Haniya Imbarak Muhammad, “, December, 2022, p. 07.)

Thus, ethnocentrism is an intellectual, psychological, and cultural tendency that leads the individual to view others through the lens of his own group system. The group thus becomes an absolute reference through which others are evaluated.

5. Incitement: Incitement is a direct or indirect call to commit an act against specific individuals or groups, using one of the forms of publicity, provided that the discourse is directed against individuals or groups, even indirectly, as in the use of metaphors and figurative language.

Incitement includes encouraging or supporting others to carry out various criminal activities, including incitement to crime, calling on individuals to commit crimes, or providing assistance or support to individuals who intend to spread extremist ideas. Incitement can take various forms, whether through spoken words, writing, or social media.

Second: Types of Extremism:

Extremism is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, as it covers many fields and is not limited to one domain but appears in various forms. Its types are as follows:

1. Intellectual Extremism: Intellectual extremism refers to individuals and groups adhering to a set of ideas, beliefs, and approaches regarding various issues, whether political, religious, cultural, or social. The individual believes that his ideas and beliefs are absolutely true and correct, while anything that contradicts them is wrong.

This leads to the creation of a gap between him and members of society and all those who disagree with him, which pushes this person to impose his views on others and attempt to convince them of his ideas through various methods and approaches.

Among the main reasons for adopting extremist thought is the feeling of despair and emptiness prevalent among youth in some societies, due to lack of awareness and understanding of ideal values and the nature of societies, as well as methods of dealing with educational institutions and reform systems, difficult living conditions, and lack of creativity and innovation among individuals, which are factors that improve living conditions in society. (Miran Hassan Hussein, Issue 7, p 939)

Thus, the intellectually extremist person is one who adheres to and is fanatical about ideas and beliefs that do not accept plurality and rejects all who oppose them, excluding the other from dialogue and considering him misguided or an enemy in various domains (cultural, intellectual, educational, religious, political, etc.).

2. Religious Extremism :The relationship between extremism and religion is similar to the relationship between theory and practice. Religion is the theory that includes general and specific determinants of behavior, while extremism is a term used to indicate everything that contradicts moderation and balance, whether by excess or deficiency.

Religious extremism refers to religious fanaticism characterized by false accusations, lying, deception, and unjust exploitation of religions and of those who do not belong to their creed. It is also the way in which some people live their contradictory religious beliefs in their daily lives, or the extremist and sometimes violent practical dimensions of religious beliefs and practices associated with them.

It may also be defined as strict adherence to contradictory religious teachings and misinterpretation of them, and rigid commitment to their rulings. (Sakina Hussein Kazim Taj al-Din, 2023, p. 433)

Thus, the religiously extremist personality adopts specific religious ideas and beliefs, interprets and manipulates them according to personal desire, applies them out of their proper context, and isolates them from the original meaning in which they were revealed.

3. Social Extremism:Social extremism is a personality response that expresses rejection and dissatisfaction toward what actually exists in society. It reflects a set of characteristics typical of the extremist personality such as dominance, weak ego strength, which push the personality toward extreme behavioral patterns such as fanaticism, rigidity, intellectual stagnation, and aversion.

It is also defined as a destructive behavioral tendency or deviation in which principles are distorted and values are reversed, leading to the elimination of the other. Social extremism is considered a violation of existing social values, ranging from mere deviation from dominant thought and ideology to more concrete manifestations such as acts of violence committed by extremist groups.

Thus, the extremist has a closed style of thinking characterized by the inability to accept any beliefs different from those of the individual or group, believing that his belief is absolutely and eternally true, with no room for discussion or evidence. He condemns all disagreement and imposes his belief on others by force and confronts differing opinions with violence.

Social extremism is manifested in the individual's adoption of a rigid and severe stance of disconnection in response to social situations that concern him and exist in his living environment. (Saad Muhammad Hassan, 2014, pp. 633, 634.)

From this perspective, social extremism refers to attitudes, behaviors, and ideologies that deviate from the norms and values accepted by society, adopting rigid and extreme views regarding values and relationships, and forming closed groups that adopt extremist orientations.

4. Political Extremism:Political extremism is a political stance whose supporters do not accept any opportunity for dialogue and do not accept any hint regarding the existence of errors in their understanding. They go to the furthest possible extent in their opinion, tending toward exaggeration to the point of extremism and rigidity in adhering—intellectually or behaviorally—to a set of political or economic ideas. They believe that they possess the absolute truth and that the group to which they belong holds the correct and salvific ideology.

Fourth: The Social Perspective on Extremism – A Sociological Analysis of the Causes of Extremism

Psychologists and sociologists have differed in their assessment of the causes of extremism.

Although the psychological approach is important in clarifying personality and understanding its components, characteristics, and the causes and consequences of its exposure to certain manifestations of incompatibility in its relationship with society, it represents a limited in the study of extremist behavior, as

it attributes behavior to personality and temperamental traits that represent a limited aspect compared to other external factors associated with society and influencing the individual's personality and orientations, which are considered a product of these factors and a mirror reflecting their impact on the individual. Therefore, this explanation is difficult to rely on alone for a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon of extremism within societies. The social or cultural theory holds that tendencies toward intolerance and extremism, as well as the processes are acquired, although the predisposition to extremism exists in the human psyche as a result of environmental and social factors. Extremism, as a psychological orientation, is reinforced by social norms and values that individuals acquire and internalize through their environment, society, and educators, as well as the media and other factors of socialization. As Walf Lintin emphasizes, an individual learns from the culture of his group only what is necessary to play specific roles in his particular social environment and society in general, thereby achieving adaptation and integration. Extremism grows as the individual develops within the civilization in which

this phenomenon is prevalent, whether that extremism is religious, racial, or class-based. The individual learns this through interaction with members of their community, adopting their ideas and opinions by observing their attitudes and orientations, and thus becoming imbued with the prevailing norms of the civilization or culture in which they live. Extremism is therefore acquired through socialization and its institutions, whether intentionally or unintentionally. (Ahmed Abdel-Tif Shatouh, January 2016, pp. 530–531.)

Extremism can be explained through the sociological approach as follows (Amani Al-Sayed Abdul Hamid Hassany, 2009, pp.59, 60)

1-The Generational Gap (Intergenerational Conflict):

Miller describes a subculture as spheres of interest in issues characterized by widespread prevalence and a high degree of emotional intensity or passion; thus, it is possible to develop a conception of youth subcultures—"youth culture"—as a reference group facing common compatibility issues, for which they find no effective solution. Consequently, the fundamental aspect of their existence is that they constitute a set of behaviors and values with symbols that hold meaning for their participants, distinguishing them from others

through their social interaction with others. An individual learns the norms of their subculture through their with others who belong to the same culture. The changes that have befallen societies in their political, economic, social, and cultural structures have led to a divergence between two generations: one representing the older generation that has adapted to these changes, and the other being a generation of youth who have lived under

completely different from those experienced by the older generation. This is a result of young people's openness to other cultures, whether through direct contact—such as travel abroad—or indirectly through modern media, which has brought the world closer together. All these factors, whether combined or individually, are likely to foretell a youth revolution and their rebellion against the experiences of previous generations, which are imposed upon them against their will, as well as attempts to suppress them and limit the opportunities available to them to express their ideas and freedoms—a situation that

in turn increases the likelihood of conflict between the traditional and the new.

In our current era of the digital revolution and social media, the generational gap is widening between a mindset rooted in traditional beliefs and values and a generation of modern values that embraces and adheres to urban and contemporary values, creating difficulties in understanding, dialogue, and exchange. This gap leads to the rejection of the culture and values of the first generation, further undermines coexistence, and fuels extremism and intolerance.

2. *Structural Functionalism:*

Structural functionalism is one of the most realistic trends in sociological thought, due to its association with the systematic analysis of social facts, existing conditions, and the functions performed by the social system at various levels. According to this approach, individuals' behaviors and actions are not random; rather, they are linked to the surrounding social environment.

According to this perspective, the problem of extremism is the final outcome of the interaction of several structural dimensions that have shaped the reality of contemporary society and have consequently determined for its youth frustrated positions and roles that sometimes break their aspirations and sometimes provoke their rejection. This occurs due to the tension they experience and the changes that societies—especially Arab societies since the beginning of the twentieth century—have undergone in value systems, which in turn have led to changes in their social, economic, and political structures.

These transformations have affected the identity determinants of Arab youth, producing what may be called “value confusion,” which has generated a form of social disorder. Individual and self-centered values linked to personal interests have become dominant at the expense of national and collective values associated with the higher interests of society.

Moreover, intellectual contradictions have spread within the cultural environment, marginalizing those who adhere to original societal values and elevating those who advocate new values. All of this has a negative impact on individuals' attitudes within society, taking one of its manifestations in behavioral extremism.

Sociology teaches us that violence and deviance are not phenomena inherent in human beings or in society; rather, they are the result of structural dysfunction. This occurs when existing social structures fail to perform the roles assigned to them. Social structures that encourage violence and increase its intensity can, at the same time, encourage peace when they maintain their proper function. This functional failure of a given social structure and its inability to achieve its original functions have negative effects on society and public opinion in general, both in the short and long term, especially when these negative effects are related to individual delinquency, aggression, or the adoption of extremist thought. (Ashash Nourin, May 10, 2019, p. 338)

Sociologists also point out that the loss of social norms and regulatory mechanisms, and the emergence of new cultures that encourage delinquency, deviance, and violence, are key contributing factors.

In this regard, extremist behavior in sociology is closely linked to the social environment. The factors that lead to extremism are multiple and often interrelated. They can be classified into social factors involving socio-economic and political marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion. The social causes that have led to the emergence of extremism and radicalism in various countries are numerous, and the most important can be summarized as follows: (Islam Tazaza, November 2021, p 12)

1. *Moral Decay:*

In societies where it is legally sanctioned under the guise of freedom, this is one of the causes of extremism and fanaticism. The spread of vice in society, coupled with the silencing of religious scholars and the blocking of avenues for social reform, are all factors contributing to the rise of extremism....

2. *Socialization and Family Breakdown:*

Marital happiness leads to family cohesion, which creates an environment conducive to a child's development and the formation of a well-rounded and balanced personality. Furthermore, harmony and between parents satisfy the child's need for psychological security and emotional well-being, and lead healthy emotional tendencies and parents' positive attitudes toward married life and parenthood to family stability and the psychological well-being of all its members, while marital unhappiness leads to family breakdown, which creates an environment that results in the child's psychologically unhealthy development.

Furthermore, conflicts between parents disturb the family's harmony, leading to patterns of disruptive behavior such as jealousy, selfishness, quarrels, and emotional instability, as well as psychological problems for the couple and deviant behavior (Abdelfattah n, 2020,p. 32).. This is what drives some children to extremism due to a lack of family care or the loss of their families following a breakdown after divorce. (Islam Tazaza: op. cit., p. 12)

From our perspective, the family plays a crucial role in shaping a balanced personality through various channels

such as dialogue with children, spending time with them, and listening to their problems and needs. The sense of emptiness felt an individual within the family and a lack of family security are all factors that contribute to heightened feelings of isolation,

a lack of belonging, alienation, and emptiness. All these feelings may draw an individual toward extremist groups.

3. Spread of Psychological and Intellectual Vacuity:

The emptiness that dominates youth life in the absence of alternatives that allow them to productively fill this void contributes to their involvement in extremist groups. Therefore, intellectual and spiritual emptiness, along with the absence of promising opportunities that fulfill youth aspirations and goals, may lead individuals to join deviant and extremist groups.

Intellectual, emotional, and spiritual emptiness is thus a fertile environment for the growth of extremism, fanaticism, and rejection of others.

4. Reference Group (Peers, Friends, Social Circle)

The reference group plays an important role in shaping attitudes and orientations toward social issues through various means such as shared activities, dialogue, persuasion, and common interests. Friendship groups and peer groups play a major role in protecting individuals from deviation and from being drawn into destructive ideas and deviant principles. The peer group represents a protective layer against deviation from societal values.

Observation of societies shows that righteous companionship has a major impact on human development and on distancing individuals from vice and moral decay. It also plays the same role in protecting individuals from extremism and radicalism. In contrast, bad companionship has a significant impact on moral decline and detachment from good values and ethics, and may also lead individuals toward extremism and radicalization. (Ibid., p. 12.)

5. Weak Social Bonds:

If an individual is in a sound educational environment and lives in a socially, educationally, healthily, and economically secure society, this leads to moderation and psychological stability, resulting in proper behavior. In contrast, the absence of such conditions facilitates the individual's drift toward extremism.

While social pressures play a major role in shaping the psychology of extremists, economic conditions also have a significant impact. Unemployment, declining purchasing power, and poor economic conditions make youth vulnerable to seductive ideas and material temptations used to recruit them into violent acts, in order to escape difficult living conditions. As a result, they easily follow various influences, whether justified or not.

Other causes of extremism mentioned by researchers include:

Economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, poor wealth distribution, and large income inequality between social classes.

Poor public services such as education, health, housing, and electricity.

These factors may lead to individual frustration and collective dissatisfaction, and may push individuals toward extremism and violence due to their inability to meet basic needs and loss of hope in the future. This creates resentment toward society and its institutions and makes them targets for extremist recruitment. Economic and social hardships increase individuals' susceptibility to extremist ideas when they are exploited. (Alia bint Hamad bin Safar al-Ghamdi, March 2023, p. 366)

There is also another dimension in explaining extremism, namely psychological approaches, which interpret extremism through the study of extremist personality, its components and characteristics, as well as the relationship between emotional contradiction and social inclusion. Pennington summarized three psychosocial approaches to explaining extremism and fanaticism: (Shadia Ahmed Abdel-Khalek, June 2021, p. 25)

The individual approach: This approach is based on the personality traits of extremists, whose personalities are characterized by closure, mental rigidity, tension, aggressiveness, and marginality. Among the most important theories of this approach are the authoritarian personality theory and the frustration–aggression theory.

2) *The Interpersonal Approach (Mutual Personal Relations):*

Proponents of this approach focus on rigid beliefs and the value system acquired by the individual through socialization processes, including: rigidity in beliefs and ideas, the shared beliefs of the group to which the individual belongs, shared identity, rigid generalizations, stereotypes, and conformity to dominant values.

3) *The Intergroup Approach:*

Proponents of this approach focus on the impact of the in-group on consolidating extremist attitudes in the individual, especially through two important factors: competition among group members, and class or social category.

In this context, there are many psychological factors related to the internal forces of the human being that affect his behavior, thinking, and emotions. These are a set of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes and characteristics related to the individual's personality, which may cause pathological conditions making the person vulnerable to psychological and social problems and disorders. They cause psychological and functional disturbances whose effects may extend not only to individuals suffering from them but also to society as a whole, starting from the family, to the school, and then to society at large.

Some Psychological Causes and Manifestations of Extremism

The psychological causes of extremism can be summarized as follows. (Adel Al-Sayed Muhammad Ali, March 2025, pp. 531–532)

Inherent destructive psychological drives: Psychoanalytic scholars attribute this to the death instinct and the destructive tendency, and the innate aggressive behavior in humans, as in Freud, Melanie Klein, and others, who link it to excess psychic energy and aggressive drives seeking discharge either toward the self or others.

Weak superego (conscience) and dominance of the lower self (desires): In this case, the individual behaves according to desires or external suggestions from those he perceives as symbols of power, freedom, or ideals. This personality is often formed in individuals who suffer from feelings of inferiority or who were exposed to harsh socialization conditions such as wrong or strict parental upbringing, or those who failed

to achieve self-realization and did not receive adequate psychological compensation. The roots of aggressive and extremist behavior may also lie in the unconscious.

Excessive superego growth and guilt pressure: This is a psychological defense mechanism used by individuals to purify themselves or atone for perceived shortcomings toward themselves, their religious beliefs, or society. Psychologists argue that this is often associated with shame, self-disgust, and depression, and becomes more severe in patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder and severe depression, who experience a strong need for self-criticism and moral purification.

Frustration in achieving goals or desires or reaching desired status: Frustration may lead some individuals to depression, which may sometimes be expressed in extremist forms such as aggression and violence due to feelings of failure or defeat. The more the frustration is related to a vital and direct issue, the stronger and more violent the reaction.

Delusions of grandeur: A mental disorder in which the patient believes he is a great person without any logical or factual basis.

Delusions of persecution: A symptom of mental illness.

Schizoid personalities: A pathological condition characterized by detachment from reality, poor judgment of circumstances, emotional emptiness, and indifference.

Loss or weakness of personal identity: This may push some individuals to seek alternatives, where extremism may provide a clear identity and purpose in life.

Feeling of social exclusion or discrimination based on gender, race, or religion: This may lead to anger and isolation, pushing individuals to seek ways to express this anger and seek revenge.

Attraction to extremist groups in search of belonging and recognition: Especially when individuals suffer from loneliness or social isolation.

Psychological factors such as personality disorders, depression, extreme anger, and emotional instability increase the likelihood of engagement in extremist behaviors.

Psychological emptiness: A sense of emptiness or lack of clear goals may push individuals to join extremist groups that provide them with a sense of purpose, adventure, and heroism, especially when such groups offer an idealistic or “utopian” vision.

General Remark:

In light of the above analysis of extremist behavior, it is important to emphasize that psychological and social causes cannot be separated. The extremist personality is a member of society, and the social pressures it is exposed to influence its behavior and thinking patterns. If the extremist grows up in a reality he rejects and does not accept, this will be reflected in his response to that reality, manifesting in deviant behaviors. The more severe the social exclusion, the stronger the tendency toward extremism and radicalization.

Fifth: The Dangers of Extremism on the Individual and Society

Extremism leads to the development of a negative self-image in the individual, making him feel aggression, inferiority, hatred, contempt, failure, and frustration, and forming a hostile view of reality.

Extremism spreads feelings of hatred and resentment among members of society.

Extremism leads to the rejection of coexistence with others, especially those who differ in principles, beliefs, and ideas.

Extremism contributes to the increase of conflict and competition between different groups and factions in society, and encourages hostility, fragmentation, and aggression.

Extremism leads to the formation of groups, parties, and sects, each with distinct cultural, religious, and ideological characteristics that are difficult to harmonize or coexist.

Extremism is one of the factors that hinders the social and economic development that society aspires to achieve.

Fifth: Means of Prevention of Extremism (Muhammad al-Nasr Hassan, 2015, p. 253.)

Social institutions play a crucial role in achieving social security and protecting youth and future generations from extremism in the context of globalization, open satellite media, and cultural invasion in its various forms—both constructive and destructive. This requires a strong moral structure capable of resisting these successive temptations and destructive intellectual currents. In order to achieve such a strong moral environment, an integrated approach must be adopted among the institutions from which young people derive their morals and values, namely: the family, school, mosque, and media. Ensuring social security and confronting extremism is no longer the exclusive responsibility of security agencies; rather, it has expanded to include all social institutions. Their preventive roles can be outlined as follows:

1. The Role of the Family:

The family plays a fundamental role in building society, as it is the first building block of a cohesive society. Although it is the smallest social institution in terms of structure, it has great importance in preparing individuals for integration and social life. The positive role played by the family in protecting its members from deviant behaviors cannot be replaced by any other institution, especially since it is responsible for shaping the individual's personality and moral system in general.

Preventive education within the family is not limited to monitoring children and following up on their behavior whether in real life or in the virtual world nor is it limited to knowing their friends and companions and the places they frequent. While these aspects are part of parental responsibility, preventive education in the family also includes the following: (Moulay Najim, March 2017, p. 227)

Providing full opportunity for rational dialogue within the family, which helps correct deviations, as the alternative to dialogue is the exchanging of ideas in a secret and uncontrolled manner.

The necessity of integrating the efforts of all active institutions in society to prevent extremism before treating it (educational, functional, religious).

Take the responsibility for reform among all segments of society, as extremism is not only the responsibility of religious scholars and preachers, but of all members of society, including scholars, educators, teachers, employees, academics, and others.

Emphasizing the role of both society and the family both of them play a big role in shaping values and ethics through their influence during childhood and youth, giving proper consideration to education in order to prevent harmful influences on the process of socialization.

Conscious monitoring of children and dedicating more time to following their activities, ensuring they are not drawn into deviant or suspicious trends.

Emphasizing the role of the family in creating a healthy environment where children experience harmony, constructive dialogue, and mutual respect.

2. *The Role of the Educational System:*

Educational policies at the level of educational institutions must address the underlying drivers of extremism through:

Making primary schools a suitable environment for raising generations by eliminating forms of violence and deviant behavior among some students. (Ibid., pp. 223–224.)

Paying attention to teaching national history in all educational institutions, research centers, and scientific and cultural clubs, as it is a practical means of acquiring citizenship skills in a democratic society.

Promoting education on human security and equality as part of peace education, in line with the views of scholars in this field and international orientations such as those of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Emphasizing the role of intellectual and educational institutions, especially universities, in combating extremist thought and intellectual deviation by strengthening their mission and enhancing the ability of professors to eliminate deviant ideas.

Educators stress that education for tolerance is a proposed pedagogical approach for preventing extremism.

Schools should foster openness to others and democratic principles such as dialogue.

Implementing inclusive and equitable educational policies and practices that do not treat individual differences as problems to be corrected but as opportunities to enrich learning. This requires prioritizing not only cognitive skills but also social, emotional, and behavioral skills to promote respect for diversity and responsible engagement.

Restructuring curricula and educational systems to align with labor market requirements, in order to reduce frustration caused by prolonged unemployment after obtaining academic degrees, without compromising educational and cultural components that build awareness and broaden young people's horizons.

3. *The Role of the Media (Monitoring Media and Digital Content):*

Media plays a major role in preventing extremism and protecting society from intellectual and behavioral deviations. Media content plays an important role in combating extremist ideas, all forms of incitement, fanaticism, and intellectual distortions adopted by extremist individuals.

The role of media—both traditional and digital—as a means of prevention and response to threats against social security lies in promoting a culture of dialogue and developing political, economic, social, and educational awareness at both local and global levels among youth. It also strengthens the culture of community service by broadcasting programs that encourage creativity and innovation, enabling young people to develop and invest their capabilities in serving society instead of becoming isolated in deviant groups.

There is also a need to monitor digital content, especially in light of the widespread use of social media platforms.

4. *The Role of Social Justice and Balanced Development (Youth Participation and Empowerment):*

Building a preventive plan at the societal level requires a deep understanding of the types, levels, and causes of extremism. This helps in identifying priorities and needs of vulnerable groups by reshaping strategies and designing programs that address key issues such as violence, marginalized groups, and social exclusion. This includes objectives, outcomes, and outputs, ensuring fair and inclusive access to services and opportunities.

The preventive role of society against extremism includes:

Establishing childcare and support centers in various regions, especially marginalized and disadvantaged areas, to support and train young innovators, particularly youth and women.

Supporting awareness programs on the dangers of violent extremism and partnering with the private sector to communicate counter-narratives and alternative messages against violent extremism.

Designing rapid economic development intervention policies in disadvantaged and marginalized areas to strengthen the role of the state in this field, study economic inequality, and propose strategic policies to address its causes.

Encouraging labor-intensive infrastructure projects to create more job opportunities, improve public services, and invest in infrastructure needed to develop a knowledge- and innovation-based economy as a driver of present and future development.

Emphasizing the importance of justice and equality, which positively enhances societal resilience against violent extremism. This can be achieved through fair tax policies, which are considered a key manifestation of social justice, along with extensive social consultations in national decision-making regarding taxation systems that achieve societal goals.

Conclusion:

Extremism is a multifaceted phenomenon, which calls for the collaboration of various sciences and disciplines to identify its factors and provide effective therapeutic and preventive solutions that limit the onset of intolerance, radicalization, and dogmatism, particularly among adolescents and young people, as they are among the groups most targeted by extremism. This model relies on the adoption of educational programs and curricula that contribute to building a personality that respects differences and cultural diversity. It also emphasizes the role of the media (both traditional and digital) in raising awareness of the dangers of extremism through educational programs that promote the values of tolerance and peace. On the economic level, it is essential to develop programs and plans that emphasize the importance of community service, in addition to fostering a spirit of creativity and innovation among youth, which positively impacts society's resilience against the dangers of extremism. Hence the importance of engaging youth and activating

their role in social and economic development by integrating them into entrepreneurial projects that shield them from idleness, unemployment, and marginalization in economic and social planning programs, thereby protecting them from deviance and various forms of extremism, as they are a productive force whose potential and aspirations should be invested in and directed to serve society.

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