

# Modern problems of youth extremism: Social and psychological components

Anton I. Lyzhin  | Anton A. Sharov | Elena G. Lopez |  
Semyon G. Melnikov | Victoria T. Zaynullina

Department of Psychology of Education and Professional Development, Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University (RSVPU), Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation

## Correspondence

Anton I. Lyzhin, Department of Psychology of Education and Professional Development, Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University (RSVPU), Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation.

Email: lyzhin6523@murdoch.in

## Abstract

Nowadays, the global community is confronted by an acute problem of extremism associated with the growing intolerance, aggression and hostility of modern society. The ways extremism manifests among youth, who is perceptive and sensitive to extremism due to age peculiarities, are understudied. The purpose of the study is to identify psychological characteristics, which are preconditions and elements of extremism among young people. The research methods are theoretical and methodological analysis, survey methods, methods of mathematical and statistical data processing. Illegal behaviour, a propensity to take risks appeared to be the prerequisites for display of extremist elements among full-time young employees. The research results can be used for scientific and methodologically assurance of psychological and pedagogic support of students, tactics to prevent extremism among young people.

## KEYWORDS

deviant behaviour, intolerance, socio-psychological attitudes, tolerance, value orientations

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Extremism (from Latin *extremus* – extreme) is one of the global problems of today. It means adherence to extreme views, measures, ideas and values. Various religious, political, and nationalist movements made it into widely spread practice to forcefully resolve a range of acute problems. The open form of extremism poses a threat to the stability of the people around the world since globalisation has turned regional threats into universal ones. The global

uncertainty generated by the coronavirus pandemic, economic crisis and political instability in several regions of the world provoke extremism.

The issue of extremism that is relevant in society and the spread of extremist ideology activate mechanisms for youth identification. They contribute to the development of ideas about extremism, attitude towards it, and sometimes, one's preparedness to take part in extremist actions. The integrated studies reveal that this problem has been relevant in Russia during the last 30 years. Therewith, the efficient role of government institutions, whose work helps to reduce the intensity of extremist tendencies in society, is noticeable (Belyaev & Mingazova, 2019; Nazarov & Suslonov, 2017). Many scholars consider young people's perception of extremism to be one of the main problems that complicate the fight against this socio-psychological phenomenon (Adam-Troian et al., 2021). Meanwhile, there are practically no psychological works dedicated to the comprehensive study of personal ideas about extremism. There are not many psychological studies that analyse the socio-psychological determinants of these ideas (Yusof et al., 2021). Therefore, the fight against youth extremism is impossible without considering the young people's perception of extremism and analysing the socio-psychological determinants of these ideas (Kruglanski et al., 2021; Lakbaev et al., 2017; Puigvert et al., 2020). A comprehensive socio-psychological study of extremism phenomenon will provide the possibility of highlighting the psychological characteristics, which are the prerequisites for the development of extremism. In addition, it will help to develop targeted programs for the prevention of extremism among youth.

An analysis of modern studies dedicated to the research of extremism allows singling out three structural elements of this concept: cognitive (includes certain ideas about the world, about oneself, consciousness, world-view and extremist ideology), emotional (includes both emotions and experiences in relation to opponents and 'enemies' as well as emotions associated with a sense of belonging, identification with the extremist community and sentiments that arise during the extremist activities) and behavioural (various forms of violent influence, destructive actions to spread extremist ideology; Lakbayev et al., 2020; Nadyrshin, 2018).

Many scholars such as Aotaibi (2020) indicate the dominance of the emotional component for extremism, while noting its inextricable connection with the cognitive and behavioural elements. Negative emotions related to 'enemies' (anger, fear, hatred and disgust) form the motivational basis for extremist inclinations. It is no coincidence that 'hate crimes' refer to extremism (Pyrooz et al., 2015). Scholars distinct such feelings in the emotional structure of an extremist love for the idea reflected in the professed ideology; love for oneself as a representor and translator of a given ideology; hatred for the world that contradicts the ideals of an extremist; hatred for everyone who does not share an extremist ideology (Amit et al., 2021; van de Weert & Eijkman, 2020; Zick et al., 2020).

Apart from the above three-element structure of extremism, Russian academia is also represented by an approach that considers extremism as a social phenomenon that exists in four interrelated elements: extremist consciousness, extremist ideology, extremist activity and extremist organisations (totalitarian cults and ultra-nationalist parties). While analysing various aspects of extremism, nowadays scholars actively use concepts such as 'extremist need', 'extremist orientation', 'extremist sentiments', 'extremist identity' and 'extremist attitude'.

## 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign studies covering the impact of the development of Internet technologies and social networks on the spread of extremist and radical views are of particular interest: propaganda as a key method of radicalisation (Fernandez, 2015), the double-natured role of media and Internet technologies in the dissemination of extremist ideas (Singh et al., 2016), methods of confronting radicalisation and extremism (Grizzle et al., 2016), relationship between modern Western society and Islam in the context of extremist trends discussion (Chao, 2015; Graham, 2016), identifying the prerequisites for extremism and offences expressed through social media statements (Bilazarian, 2020; Dobosh, 2020; Harpviken, 2020; Wadhwa & Bhatia, 2016). The studies covering the manifestations of extremism in the education system are particularly relevant (Bowie, 2017; Graham, 2016), as well

as those addressing the development of technologies that can resist this trend (Berezovska & Matelega, 2018; Frau-Meigs & Hibbard, 2016; Maralov & Sitarov, 2019; Pauwels & Schils, 2016).

The manifestation of extremist inclinations directly depends on the level of tolerance since it reflects a person's attitude towards representatives of other ethnic and social groups (minorities, criminals and mentally ill people) and attitudes in the field of intercultural interaction as well the personal attitude towards certain social processes, which largely determine a person's attitude towards the world around them (Hassan et al., 2021; Khaskhanova & Vereshchagina, 2019; Vukčević Marković et al., 2021). The elements of deviant behaviour and extremism are also interrelated. The propensity for aggression and violence, for taking risks, for self-destructive behaviour, fearlessness, violation of the social norms and rules contribute to the youth's involvement in extremist movements, groups and communities alike (Bloom & Staal, 2018, Kruzhkova et al., 2018; Mnaidarova et al., 2017). Thus, deviant behaviour is the basis for extremist inclinations among youth.

The academic literature contains data that directly and indirectly confirm the connection between value orientations and attitudes with manifestations of extremism on the individual conscious and behavioural levels (Aotaibi, 2020). Value orientations are the most important structural elements that determine individual consciousness and behaviour. They reflect the subjective attitude towards the outside world and its orientation, which is emphasised in many studies. Some scholars consider rejection of traditional values and disregard for the norms and rules as a distinctive feature of extremism. They see the desire for power, the need for domination, orientation towards one's personality as distinctive features of extremists (Emmelkamp et al., 2020; Puigvert et al., 2020).

The influence of extremist groups on the Internet presupposes the implementation of a relatively universal algorithm, where only the initial stage of establishing contact with potential influential addressee changes due to specific features of the youth risk group. The next logical move for involvement in an extremist community suggests motivational, affiliate, evaluative, cognitive, emotional and behavioural steps. The impact of value orientations on consciousness and mind is also important (Soldatova & Pogorelov, 2018). Extremism as a socio-psychological phenomenon is associated with the display of aggression but it has its distinctive features and is not limited to aggression. Extremism is a way and a result of the development of human aggression. Therefore, ideological background is an inalienable attribute of aggression displayed by extremists (Pavlović & Wertag, 2021). The authors of this study believe that this element is the basic psychological determinant for the establishment of extremist consciousness and personality behaviour.

### 3 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is based on theoretical methods (analysis of theoretical approaches to extremism; synthesis of the sociological and psychological methodologies, development of a theoretical concept for the research questionnaire; reification of the theoretical model of extremism), methods of obtaining empirical data (express-questionnaire 'Index of Tolerance'; questionnaire 'Diagnostics of socio-psychological personal attitudes in the motivational-need sphere'; questionnaire 'Cultural and value differential'; quiz-questionnaire 'Propensity to deviant behaviour'; questionnaire 'Ideas about extremism among youth'), methods of mathematical statistics (descriptive, comparative, correlation analysis and graphic presentation of the results), methods of data processing and analysis (content analysis, comparative analysis using the Kruskal–Wallis *H*-test, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used for the correlation analysis).

Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University (44 people, the direction of training Vocational training (by industry), Yekaterinburg; the College of Railway Transport of the Ural State University of Railways (43 people, the direction of training is Railway construction, track and track facilities, organisation of transportation and transport management (by type), Yekaterinburg, as well as working young people (36 people, specialists in technical professions (engineers and technologists) became the experimental base of the study. The research was conducted with 123 respondents of 18–25 years old, of whom 86 respondents were boys and 37 respondents were girls.

The case study was carried out on three stages:

- the first stage was the theoretical analysis of the existing methodological approaches in philosophical, psychological and pedagogical academic sources, dissertations on the issue. The problem, purpose and research methods were highlighted, an empirical research plan was composed;
- the second stage included an empirical study, the conclusions obtained from the empirical part of the study were analysed, verified and refined. Then a content analysis of the results of the questionnaire on the representation of extremism in different youth groups was performed;
- the third stage was the empirical part of the study, clarification of the theoretical and practical conclusions, generalisation and classification of the obtained results.

Before researching the presence/absence of certain extremist elements in the selected group of respondents, a study was carried out using a specially developed questionnaire. The basis for the development of the questionnaire was the theoretical analysis of the ideas of scholars from various academic fields about the problem of determinism, manifestations of extremism among youth. The questionnaire comprises five statements. There are two open questions and the remaining three points allow choosing the answer options from the proposed ones (on average, from 3 to 5 positions). The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify modern youth's ideas about extremism. To simplify work with the questionnaire and its processing, two variants of the questionnaire were developed for presentation to the respondents. One was in the format of a Word document and the second one in the form of an automated questionnaire created on the Internet platform 'Google Form', where the data of respondents' answers was automatically formed. The respondents of the study were young men and women from such social groups as senior students studying at the railway college of Ural State Transport University (TVET), students of the Russian State Pedagogical University (HE), as well as a group of working young people of 18–25 years old.

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | Results of the content analysis of the original questionnaire 'Ideas about extremism among youth'

In accordance with the previously described questionnaire 'Ideas about extremism among youth', a theoretical analysis of the ideas of scholars from various academic fields about the problem of determinism and the manifestation of extremism among youth was performed. Table 1 presents the analysis of respondents' answers to the question 'From your perspective, extremism is...'. The maximum number of respondents, namely 23% (of which 14% are university students), answered this open-ended question with the most general, widespread, concise definition of extremism, which may indicate that a quarter of the young people surveyed have the common knowledge about extremism. Interestingly enough, 10% of the respondents (the majority are college students) could not answer the question.

Thus, it can be assumed that every 10th student is not familiar with a concept of 'extremism'. Notably, 5% of students gave the answer 'thrill, adrenaline and emotions' to the question 'Extremism is...'. Most likely, young men and women confuse extremism with extreme, which, in turn, raises concerns. After all, extremism in this age group is perceived as a more so positive phenomenon that evokes the intense interest of young people. Thus, young students misinterpreted extremism completely. The rest of the respondents' answers are negative and reflect their personal opinions about this phenomenon.

Table 1 demonstrates that the majority of the respondents single out such character traits of a person prone to extremist activity as aggression (72 choices), hostility (65 choices), ideological adherence (61 choices), propensity for confrontation (57 choices) and group identity (54 choices). The maximum number of choices belongs to

**TABLE 1** Respondents' opinions regarding the problem of defining the main character traits of a person prone to extremist activity

Character traits	Students of TVET (number of choices)	Students of HE (number of choices)	Working youth (number of choices)	General number of choices
Hostility	16	38	11	65
Aggression	21	37	14	72
Group identity	19	29	6	54
Prone to taking risks	13	27	6	46
Heroism	11	9	1	21
Low self-esteem	3	13	2	18
Emotional unavailability	10	17	5	32
Propensity for confrontation	21	31	5	57
Intolerance	6	24	8	38
Value-based disconnection	11	16	5	32
Appeal to emotions	13	8	2	23
Rigidity	2	2	0	4
Ideological devotion	15	38	8	61

university students. Indeed, the elementary substantive basis of extremist activity is aggressiveness, hostility towards people with different beliefs, rejection of other people and their opinions, group identity as belonging to a certain group of people, ideological adherence as devotion to common idea and goal shared by a group of people. Together with other indicators, 21 people chose the character trait 'heroism' (the majority are students of TVET), which may indicate a certain distorted idea about the essence of a potential extremist. The analysis of respondents' answers to the question 'What feelings, emotions do you experience in relation to extremism (an extremist and extremist activity)' is presented in Table 2.

The largest number of choices on this issue belongs to such characteristics as indignation (52 choices), irritation (44 choices), anxiety (43 choices) and disgust (42 choices). The majority of the young men and women that took part in the survey demonstrate concern towards the problem of extremism. Their position is based on their internal disagreement, protest against the activities of extremists. Extreme, acute manifestations of negative emotions as anger, hatred, or fury were chosen by 28, 30 and 9 people, respectively. Notably, among the respondents, there are those who are indifferent to extremism (22 choices—the majority of answers in the subsample of HE students), express serenity and calmness towards it (13 and 16 choices in the subsamples of TVET and HE students, respectively), and those who feel joy towards extremism (8 choices—the majority of answers in the subgroup of HE students). These disappointing findings suggest that either the interviewed college, university students and working young people do not have the correct idea about extremism, or their answers should be considered as frivolous and comic. The analysis of respondents' answers to the question 'What do you think are the goals of people engaged in extremist activities' is presented in Table 3.

Predominantly university and college students chose such goals of extremist activity as the desire for power (57), the fight for one's rights, ideals (56), the cult of violence (50), being the chosen one and exceptionality of some people in expense of the others (50) and extremism as a means of achieving goals (66). This fact suggests that more

**TABLE 2** Respondents' opinion regarding the problem of defining basic feelings and emotions in relation to extremism (extremist and extremist activity)

Characteristics	Students of TVET (number of choices)	Students of HE (number of choices)	Working youth (number of choices)	General number of choices
Wrath	5	19	4	28
Irritation	11	26	7	44
Hatred	9	17	4	30
Anger	6	13	0	19
Indignation	14	34	4	52
Sorrow	5	9	6	20
Fury	5	3	1	9
Joy	2	6	0	8
Calmness	6	9	1	16
Serenity	4	8	1	13
Disgust	12	24	6	42
Sadness	5	2	1	8
Indifference	5	15	2	22
Anxiety	9	24	10	43
Guilt	0	1	0	1

than half of the interviewed young people see the main motive of people engaged in extremist activities as the desire to single-handedly rule over other people, to persuade them to follow their ideology by using violence as the main method of achieving goals. The characteristic 'display of patriotism, heroism' as the goal of extremist activity was chosen by 14% of the respondents, nine of whom are students of TVET. From this, it can be concluded that extremism is interpreted by them as a form of patriotism and as a useful activity. However, modern studies define patriotism as an important fact in the prevention of extremist manifestations.

The last, fifth question 'In your opinion, the behaviour of the extremist is manifested or expressed in...' is an open question. Consequently, 23% of respondents did not give an answer and the overwhelming majority of the respondents are university students. Among those, who gave answers, 18% (the maximum indicator on this issue) believe that the behaviour of an extremist is expressed in aggression, 10%—in cruel actions against an individual to achieve their own goals, 8%—in violation of social norms and rules. Thus, the respondents believe that a potential, hidden extremist is a person who acts aggressively towards a particular individual and society, violates social norms and rules to achieve their own goals, the questionnaire 'Ideas about extremism among youth' provides the possibility to draw conclusions about the modern youth's ideas about extremism, while touching on such basic elements of this phenomenon as motivational, meaningful, emotional and behavioural. Considering the number of respondents who answered the first question, students of the university turned out to be more aware of extremism, they gave the answer that often coincided with various sources. At the same time, students of TVET, HE and working youth agree that the main features of a potential extremist are aggression and hostility. In addition, students chose group identity and confrontation, while working young people chose ideological adherence.

The emotional element of the attitude towards extremism in the group of college students is manifested mainly in indignation, in the group of university students—in indignation, as well as in disgust, irritation and anxiety, in the group of working youth—mainly in anxiety. The motivational component of extremist activity is based on the need

**TABLE 3** Respondents' opinions regarding the problem of determining the main goals of people engaged in extremist activities

Characteristics	Students of TVET (number of choices)	Students of HE (number of choices)	Working youth (number of choices)	General number of choices
Desire for power	13	35	9	57
Display of patriotism, heroism	9	5	0	14
The elitism and exclusivity of some people over others	18	25	7	50
Fight for one's rights, ideals, and ideology	19	27	10	56
Extremism as a way to achieve one's goals	17	39	10	66
Upholding individuality and identity	10	17	5	32
Extremism as a way to build new society and a new order	12	22	7	41
Cult of violence	13	27	10	50

for power, the struggle for rights and ideals, the cult of violence according to the students of technical vocational education and training, higher education and working young people. The goal is using extremism as a way of achieving one's goals. In general, in the subsamples of students of the railway college, vocational pedagogical university and working young people, the ideas about extremism are rather superficial and not differentiated, some respondents have no understanding of the meaning of this term and the scope of its negative consequences.

## 4.2 | Results of comparative and correlation analysis

Based on the obtained data, the authors have a comparative analysis of statistical data, for which the Kruskal–Wallis  $H$ -test was chosen since the study dealt with cases when the indices of asymmetry and kurtosis in modulus are greater than their standard errors. Comparison data for three subsamples using the Kruskal–Wallis test is presented in Table 4.

Comparative analysis revealed positive highly significant value differences between three subsamples on the 'Money Orientation' scale ( $H = 6.026$ ;  $p = 0.049$ ). This indicator is higher among students of TVET than among university students and young working people. This suggests that college students are more focused on earning money as soon as possible, which is confirmed by the choice of an educational institution: admission after the ninth grade; college education is shorter than university/institute; technical speciality guarantees subsequent employment with a high degree of probability. In addition, among the youth subsamples the scale 'Attitude towards socially desirable responses' tends to differ ( $H = 5.004$ ;  $p = 0.042$ ). Here, in a subsample of college students, the indicators are higher than in the other two groups, with a difference on average ranks of more than 11. This indicates a greater orientation of college students to stretch their answers.

The authors used Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for correlation analysis since the distribution of indicators does not correspond to the normal one. Correlation analysis revealed two positive and three negative highly significant values in the subsample of students of TVET as well as four positive and negative average relationships between the indicators of the methods. 'The Work Orientation' scale has a positive correlation with the 'Propensity for Addictive Behaviour' scale ( $r = 0.486$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ). The more students are oriented towards work, the more dependency on the result of the activity growth. They use all their time to do something sparing no days off, holidays. The indicator 'Acceptance of a female role' has a positive relationship with the scale 'Tolerance as a personality trait' ( $r = 1.000$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ). This suggests that the more girls are aware of their gender identity, the tolerance towards the outside world is manifested more clearly as a stable personality trait. In addition, the indicator 'Acceptance of a female role' has a negative relationship with the scale 'Orientation towards power' of the methodology 'Diagnostics of socio-psychological personal attitudes in the motivational-need sphere' ( $r = 1.000$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ). This suggests that the less college girls accept their female role, the more they seek to influence others and society.

The scale 'Orientation towards altruism' has a negative relationship with the indicator 'Orientation towards social change' ( $r = -0.517$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ). Hence, the less students strive to satisfy the interests of other people in expense of theirs, the more they are open to changes and aspired to the future. In its turn, the scale 'Orientation towards social change' negatively correlates with the indicator 'Tolerance as a personality trait' ( $r = -0.449$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ). This may mean that the more youth is open to change, active, courageous, and risky, the less tolerant attitudes towards the world and people are

**TABLE 4** Comparative analysis results in three subsamples

Variables	H-index	Test significance	Average ranks		
			Students of TVET	Students of EH	Working youth
Orientation towards money	6.026	0.049	48.00	35.61	34.43
Socially preferable answers	5.004	0.042	47.15	35.86	35.77



expressed. The scale 'Orientation towards work' has a positive relationship with the indicators 'Propensity for aggression and violence' ( $r = 0.431$ ;  $p = 0.012$ ) and 'Propensity for delinquent behaviour' ( $r = 0.386$ ;  $p = 0.027$ ). Perhaps, the more students are involved in performing at work, the more they are aggressive, conflicting, uncompromising in relationships with other people. In addition, the scale 'Orientation towards power' (the method of O.F. Potemkina) has a positive relationship with the indicator 'Orientation towards the group—orientation towards oneself' ( $r = 0.414$ ;  $p = 0.017$ ). Therefore, the more students of open-source software are focused on their personality, on independence, the more they see power as the goal of itself.

A negative relationship was established between the orientation towards freedom and ethnic tolerance ( $r = -0.344$ ;  $p = 0.050$ ). Thus, the younger men and women are oriented towards their freedom, the less tolerance they show towards representatives of other ethnic groups. At the same time, the scale 'Social tolerance' has a negative relationship with the scales 'Propensity for aggression and violence' ( $r = -0.352$ ;  $p = 0.045$ ). Hence, if there is a higher tolerance towards various social groups, there is a lower propensity for solving problems through violence; 'Volitional control of emotional reactions' ( $r = -0.355$ ;  $p = 0.042$ )—if there is the lower control of behavioural manifestations of emotions, there is the higher the tolerance towards various social groups (minorities, criminals, etc.). The authors see that TVET students possess a work orientation associated with a tendency to manifest aggressive delinquent behaviour. A high level of orientation towards power is associated with an orientation towards one's personality and not towards a group.

Correlation analysis identified correlations between five negative highly significant values, seven positive average significant values and five negative average significant values in a subsample of HE students. The scale 'Acceptance of a female role' has negative relationships with the indicators of 'Orientation towards work' scale ( $r = -0.815$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Thus, the more female university students accept their gender and social role, the less they consider work as a value and an end goal. The negative correlation with 'Orientation towards the group—towards oneself' scale ( $r = -0.728$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ) means that the less girls realise their gender identity, the more they are oriented towards society and need assistance. The negative correlation with 'Orientation towards altruism' scale ( $r = -0.739$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ) means that the higher the acceptance of female role among the female university students, the lower the propensity for infringement of their interests for the sake of other people. Also, the indicator 'Focus on results' demonstrates a negative relationship with the scale 'Ethnic tolerance' ( $r = -0.777$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) Hence, the more HE students are focused on achieving results at any cost the less tolerant they are towards representatives of other ethnic groups.

The scale 'Orientation towards egoism' has a negative relationship with the indicator 'Tolerance as a personality trait' ( $r = -0.529$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ). Perhaps, the higher the level of self-love, the lower the level of development of personality traits, attitudes and beliefs, which largely determine a person's attitude towards the world around them. A negative relationship was established between the orientation towards freedom and the orientation towards power ( $r = -0.365$ ;  $p = 0.040$ ) that may indicate that the less young people strive to lead other people, the greater the need is for their freedom. There is a negative correlation between orientation towards money and orientation towards each other ( $r = -0.380$ ;  $p = 0.032$ ). It indicates that the greater the desire to increase one's well-being, there is the lower orientation towards interaction and contact with other people (closeness). At the same time, a negative relationship was found between the scale 'Tolerance as a personality trait' and indicators of 'Tendency to addictive behaviour' ( $r = -0.406$ ;  $p = 0.021$ ). Thus, the more the tendency to addictive behaviour is displayed, the less tolerant attitude the respondents demonstrate towards the world around them. The negative correlation with 'Result orientation' ( $r = -0.373$ ;  $p = 0.035$ ) suggests that the higher the need to achieve the result at any cost despite the fuss, hindrances and failures, the lower the level of general tolerance towards the outside world.

At the same time, the 'Power Orientation' scale has a positive relationship with the 'Propensity for Aggression and Violence' scale ( $r = 0.409$ ;  $p = 0.020$ ). Thus, the higher there is the need for power and influence, the higher there is the propensity for solving problems through violence. The positive relationship with 'Propensity for overcoming norms and rules' ( $r = 0.397$ ;  $p = 0.024$ ) means that the stronger is the influence on others, on society, the stronger is the tendency to reject generally accepted norms and values, patterns of behaviour. At the same time,

a positive relationship was established between the propensity for overcoming norms and rules and ethnic tolerance ( $r = 0.370$ ;  $p = 0.037$ ). Thus, if there is a higher level of tolerance in the field of intercultural interaction, there is a higher propensity for rejecting generally accepted norms, rules and values, patterns of behaviour.

Positive relationships were found between the indicator 'Orientation towards egoism' and 'Propensity for addictive behaviour' ( $r = 0.374$ ;  $p = 0.035$ ). Thus, it is explained by the fact that the higher is the focus on oneself, on the satisfaction of one's own needs, the higher is the psychological need for addictive states (withdrawal from reality by changing one's mental state, a tendency to an illusory-compensatory way of solving personal problems). Positive relationships with 'Acceptance of a female role' ( $r = 0.584$ ;  $p = 0.046$ ) means that the higher is the awareness and acceptance of their gender role by female university students, the higher the level of self-love. It turns out that among students of the HE system the level of general tolerance is associated with addictive behaviour and egocentrism. A high level of need for freedom directly correlates with a low need for power. Correlation analysis identified correlations between one positive highly significant value, two negative highly significant values, six average significant values and four negative significant values in a subsample of working youth. A positive correlation was found between the scales 'Acceptance of a female role' and 'Orientation towards egoism' ( $r = 0.944$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). This means that the more girls pay attention to gender characteristics, the more selfish they are in relation to other people. Negative correlations were found between the orientation towards freedom and the orientation towards power ( $r = -0.681$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ).

Thus, the more significant is the need for freedom of action and thought, the less the respondent is oriented towards ruling and leading others. Negative correlations were found with the ethnic tolerance and control of emotional reactions ( $r = -0.818$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The higher is the volitional control of the emotional sphere, the lower is the level of tolerance in the sphere of intercultural interaction. The indicator 'Social tolerance' has a positive relationship with the scales 'Orientation towards social change' ( $r = 0.588$ ;  $p = 0.021$ ). Perhaps, the more a young person is open to changes, the future, and society, the more they showcase tolerant behaviour to various social groups. The positive correlation with 'Inclination to overcome norms and rules' ( $r = 0.547$ ;  $p = 0.035$ ), means that the more youth is inclined to oppose their norms and values to those of a group, the more tolerant they are towards various social groups and processes.

Therewith, the scale 'Propensity for overcoming norms and rules' has a positive relationship with the indicator 'Orientation towards egoism' ( $r = 0.541$ ;  $p = 0.038$ ). Therefore, the more self-oriented the respondent is, the more they are inclined to deny generally accepted norms and values, patterns of behaviour. The scale 'Orientation towards work' has a positive relationship with the indicator 'Propensity to self-injurious and self-destructive behaviour' ( $r = 0.581$ ;  $p = 0.023$ ). The higher the orientation towards work as the main value, the higher the propensity for taking risks and the need for strong sensations. A negative correlation relationship was found between the scales 'Orientation towards freedom' and 'Propensity for addictive behaviour' ( $r = -0.633$ ;  $p = 0.011$ ). In this case, it is possible that the stronger the subject's predisposition to escape from reality by changing the mental state, the weaker the need for independent, free disposal of one's life. In addition, the scale 'Tolerance as a personality trait' has a negative correlation with the scales 'Propensity for addictive behaviour' ( $r = -0.524$ ;  $p = 0.045$ ) and 'Propensity for aggression and violence' ( $r = -0.550$ ;  $p = 0.034$ ). It means that the higher is the person's need for addictive states and the aggressive orientation of the personality in relationships with other people, the lower is the level of general personality tolerance, including personality traits, attitudes and beliefs. Overall, it can be concluded that the level of inclination to deviant behaviour among young working people is associated with the elements of tolerance.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

Nowadays the definition that characterises extremism has been rather abstract such as adherence to extreme views and the use of radical methods to achieve goals. Many scholars point out the inconsistency of this definition, which is unable to identify the essential features of the phenomenon. At the same time, it carries the danger of including

phenomena that are, in fact, not related to manifestations of extremism (Ferrara, 2017). Despite the existing terminological complexities and the vagueness of everyday ideas, extremist practices are a reality. Extremism manifests itself at various levels as a multifaceted complex phenomenon. At the social level extremism can be viewed as a form of social deviation (Näsi et al., 2015). Here, extremism generally becomes an object of philosophical and sociological study.

At the intergroup and interpersonal level extremism is often viewed as a form of conflictual interaction, as a form of struggle for one's rights, and also as a 'hate crime' (Costello et al., 2016). These aspects of the phenomenon are more often analysed in jurisprudence and political science. At the level of the individual as a subject of social relations, extremism is a type of deviant behaviour, a manifestation of an identity crisis. This level of analysis corresponds to the problems of the socio-psychological approach. It is important to identify the socio-psychological determinants of the development and manifestation of extremist consciousness and behaviour. Therewith, despite the disciplinary specificity of approaches to the analysis of extremism, each of the academic disciplines makes its significant contribution to the disclosure and understanding of the essence of this phenomenon.

However, it is an integrated approach that is most productive in the study of such a complex phenomenon as extremism. Psychology in this system is designed to contribute to understanding the essence of the phenomenon and overcome the risen contradiction between the necessity to study the psychological essence of extremism and the lack of research in this area. Most of the conduction studies of this phenomenon belong to sociology, while interdisciplinary research remains insufficiently developed. It provides the possibility to identify not only the attitude towards this problem but the psychological prerequisites for its establishment. In addition, it is an important issue that concerns the relationship between the development of extremism and the Internet: modern communication channels and platforms, weak control and anonymity lead to a radicalisation of the world's perceptions among modern youth (Rekik et al., 2020).

In this study, the authors tried to combine the sociological and psychological approaches in terms of both methods and analysis. The authors of this study identified the psychological elements of extremism: cognitive, emotional and behavioural. The method of content analysis of the questionnaire of ideas about the phenomenon of extremism was also used in the work, the same approach is used in foreign studies (El-Ojeili & Taylor, 2020). Youth is the most sensitive group for the development of extremism (Zheng et al., 2020). That is why this sample was chosen in this study. The obtained results are generally consistent with the results of studies by Yusof et al. (2021), and Aotaibi (2020) in terms of the structure and components of the phenomenon of extremism. They also raise the question of superficial and not differentiated perception of extremism, some have no understanding of the essence of this term and the scope of its negative consequences.

The content of the emotional and behavioural elements of extremism differs into three groups. According to college students, extremism manifests itself mainly in indignation, in a group of university students—in indignation, disgust, irritation and anxiety, in a group of working youth—mainly in anxiety. From the point of view of students in TVET, higher education and working young people, the motivational element of extremist activity is based on the need for power, the struggle for their rights and ideals, the cult of violence, the use of extremism as a way of achieving goals. In the general sample of studying and working youth high average values of the indicators were found in 'Orientation towards each other', 'Orientation towards power', 'Orientation towards altruism', 'Propensity for addictive behaviour', 'Propensity for aggression and violence' and 'Social tolerance'.

## 6 | CONCLUSIONS

Descriptive statistics revealed that the ideas about extremism are rather superficial and not differentiated among the studied groups, some respondents do not understand the essence of this term. Comparative analysis revealed the high indicator on the scale 'Orientation towards money' among college students. The indicator 'Attitude to socially desirable responses' is also higher among TVET students than in other groups. The scale 'Orientation

towards work' has a positive average relationship with the indicators 'Propensity for aggression and violence', 'Propensity for delinquent behaviour'. The scale 'Social tolerance' has a negative average significant value relationship with the scales 'Propensity for aggression and violence'. The following was observed in a subsample of HE students: a high negative correlation of the scale 'Acceptance of a female role' with the indicators 'Orientation towards work', 'Orientation towards altruism'; a high negative correlation of the scale 'Orientation towards the result' with the indicator 'Ethnic tolerance'; high negative connection between the 'Orientation towards egoism' scale with the indicator 'Tolerance as a personality trait'; the average negative correlation of the indicator 'Orientation towards freedom' with the scale 'Orientation towards power'. The following was revealed in a subsample of working youth: a negative highly significant correlation between an orientation towards freedom and an orientation towards power; positive average significant interconnections of the indicator 'Social tolerance' with the scales 'Orientation towards social changes', 'Propensity for overcoming norms and rules'; positive average significant interconnections of 'Orientation towards work' scale with the indicator 'Tendency to self-harm and self-destructive behaviour'.

Thus, the prerequisites for the manifestation of extremism elements among TVET students are a tendency to aggression, violence, an orientation towards power and pronounced egocentrism. For HE students such prerequisites are addictive behaviour, egocentrism and an orientation towards money. For full-time employed young people, the prerequisites for the manifestation of extremism elements appear to be illegal behaviour, a propensity for taking risks, and a need for thrills. The obtained results will provide the possibility to develop more comprehensive and targeted programmes for the prevention of extremism among young people.

## PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1002/jcop.22664>

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

## ORCID

Anton I. Lyzhin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0013-1540>

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