RADICALIZATION AND EXTREMISM AS ADOLESCENT RISKY BEHAVIOURS

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Abstract: Extremism and radicalism are nowadays an urgent problem for many countries, irrespective of their political and socio-economic progress. Manifestations of hatred against groups of different races, nationalities, ethnic or religious groups pose a latent threat to any democratic society and can significantly disrupt the stability of society and the national political system. Extremism appears on the one hand as a product of a democratic society, its part, while on the other hand the lack of democracy acts as a driving mechanism for violent extremism, which can then be understood within the framework of one of the forms of risky behaviour. The paper theoretically analyzes radicalization and extremism as risky behaviours, focusing specifically on young people as a group characterized by expanded risky behaviour, a group endangered by extremism.

Keywords: Aadolescence, Extremism, Radicalization, Risky Behaviour.

1 Adolescents in the context of radicalization and extremism

Radicalization and extremism are currently a socially sensitive issues. For extremist groups, young people become an interesting target group, while being also the most vulnerable group in society. The current generation of young people meets the values and standards presented by extremist groups in the society. It inclines to opinions that criticize and question the values and traditions of society, points out deficiencies and presents its attitudes more radically than the rest of the society. We assume that this phenomenon is related to the new characteristics of the youth.

Growing up is a transition period of human development between periods of adulthood and childhood, and is characterized as the period of the second resistance. According to developmental psychology, it is classified to the periods of puberty and adolescence (Vágnerová, 2004). Adolescence is perceived as a period of rapid physical, mental, socio-cultural and cognitive changes (Ginzberg, 1991), as well as the period of defining own attitudes and promoting changes in an individual's relationship to other people and social institutions (Gestsdottir, Lerner, 2008). Creating a sense of identity and autonomy is characteristic for this period (Ginzberg, 1991). The age limit of adolescence is, according to many authors, very difficult. On the lower end, we can observe the acceleration trend of earlier onset of biological and psychological maturation. The upper limit of transition to adulthood, on the other hand, moves to a higher age. Nevertheless, changes in the physical, mental and social development mean that this phase is a period of increased vulnerability and adaptation (Steinberg, 2005).

Adolescence represents a phase of turbulence and reorganization. For some adolescents, it brings inner separation from primary caregivers and identifying one's own identity, but in parallel it can also lead to a loss of confidence, fear of loneliness and abandonment (Rolling, Corduan, 2018; Ludot, Radjack, Moro, 2016). Adolescents tend to be very sensitive, but also easy to manipulate (Pétiová, 2016). In addition to the above-mentioned formation of self-identity, one the main adolescent's developmental tasks are to create a sense of self-value, to adopt society standards, to become independent of parental authority (Erikson, in: Končeková 2014). Adolescent, according to Končeková (2014), matures into a human personality who is socially matched among adults as their equal partner. Very important is the need for the recognition of adulthood by the surrounding people. Adolescent's self-confidence is growing, he/she shows an interest in political issues and a deeper understanding of public and political life, as well as the struggle for personal autonomy, independence.

However, it is also a period, in which young people are involved in risk behaviours, and to a greater extent than in other developmental stages (e.g. Steinberg, 2006). Lichner and Šlosár (2017) also perceive adolescents as the riskiest group in the developmental perspective and summarize the impacts during the period of adolescence (changes in personality, social impacts of the wider social environment and peers, weakening influence of primary social groups and formal authorities) that are associated with the involvement of adolescents into various forms of risky behaviours.

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (1993) has suggested, already in the 1990s, that risky behaviours of adolescents will be more problematic in the future. It pointed out to the increasingly younger age of adolescents in which risky behaviours occur, but also to more young people vulnerable to experimentation and initiation of risky behaviours. In this context, authors emphasize new forms of risky behaviours currently emerging among adolescents.

2 Radicalization and extremism as a form of risky behaviour

Man is a bio-psycho-social, self- and world-transforming being that exists only in synergy with other beings (in the system of social relationships). Relationships are a prerequisite for social cooperation, which is determined by needs, interests and goals. But human cooperation also produces inequality, a different degree of freedom, social roles, and status, which consequently leads to socially undesirable phenomena. These is also included human intolerance towards everything that is strange and unknown. Causes of this procedure become an obstacle to civic cooperation in a democratic society, resulting in the emergence and deepening of long-standing conflicts.

The vast majority of extreme activities is an immediate reaction to the state of society. The presence of intolerance in society, which is the basis of the ideology of the majority of extremist groups, is often characterized by the emergence of extreme activities (Milo, 2004). Nevertheless, in professional terminology, the term of extremism is often confused with the term of radicalism and it is not distinguished between them. But they are definitely not equivalents.

Generally speaking, the term extremism originates in the Latin term "extremus" and its meaning is "the furthest" or "outermost" position. In this sense, extremism is perceived as any ideology or activity that is directed against the current political system as such and aims to eliminate it and replace it by its own alternative. In contrast, the term radical has its basis in the Latin word "radix", which refers to "root". Radicalism is therefore a process that "goes to the root" (Charvát, 2007). In its epistemological sense, it therefore refers to anchoring yourself in knowledge, opinions, values, and believes to define one's own behaviour (Alava, Frau-Meigs, Hassan, 2017). Although the etymological meaning of these words is different, both terms have become part of the current political and publicistic discourse (Charvát, 2007). According to Khosrokhavar (2014), radicalization is the process by which an individual or group adopts a violent form of action that is directly linked to an extremist ideology of social, religious or political content that undermines the established political, social or cultural order.

However, such definitions are very broad or general, and they are interpreted differently in different cultures and societies. The authors' papers perceive radical engagement and extremist behaviour as one of the forms of risky behaviours. This idea is supported, for example, also by Bačová, Žiaková (2018), who consider extremist behaviour for socially risky behaviour. Miovský (2010) refers to risky behaviour manifestations of racism, xenophobia, intolerance, anti-Semitism, Macek (2003) refers their racial intolerance and discrimination of some groups

based on their belonging to some race, nation, nationality, skin color, ethnic group, origin, gender or religion. Šlosár, Plavnická (2018) draw attention to the risky behaviours that can manifest in the form of expressing radical and extremist opinions and behaviours, as well as Nielsen Sobotková (2014) into extremist behaviour or intolerance.

3 Risk factors of radicalization and extremism in adolescents

Many experts and sciences are trying to decipher this phenomenon, identify predisposing and protective factors, subgroups or profiles of adolescents involved in risky behaviour. Theoretically, the paper analyzes the selected factors that are related in the social context to radicalization and extremism as risky behaviours in adolescent age, as the basis for social work.

Adolescence itself is, by authors such as Rolling and Corduan (2018) or Ludot, Radjack, Moro (2016), indicated as the risk factor of radicalization. One of the most important biological factors, associated with radicalization and extremism, are age and gender, even though the causal relationship is not entirely unambiguous.

In connection with radicalization and extremism, various predisposing factors, such as depressive tendencies or suicidal thoughts (Merari, 2010; Victoroff, 2005), vulnerability (Kruglanski. et al., 2013), feelings of injustice or humiliation (Victoroff et al., 2010), have been pointed out. Other authors insist on the concepts of identity and belonging (McCauley, Scheckter, 2008; McGilloway, Ghosh, Bhui, 2015; Kruglanski et al., 2009). Searching for identity is an important factor for young people entering an extremist group or youth gang (Bjørgo, Carlsson, 2005). During this period, the need for excitement, testing of their own limits and exposure to potentially dangerous situations, appears in young people. Therefore, they engage in more destructive activities such as crime, drug abuse, political extremism or violence (Bartlett, Birdwell, King, 2010).

During this development stage, young people can also encounter difficulties such as financial problems, conflicts with parents, social exclusion, cultural humiliation, feelings of worthlessness, etc., which they must overcome (Sieckelinck, 2017), and they can be considered causes of radicalization and the so-called "push factors" that push adolescents to radical groups (Schmid, 2013).

In adolescence, social interactions become more important than in any other developmental period (Crone, Dahl, 2012). The desire for acceptance and lasting social relationships are the basic needs of every human being (Aydin, Fisher, Frey, 2010). However, during the adolescence, man seeks his/her own position in the world, strives for emancipation from the family environment and independence, on the other hand, it is necessary to identify himself/herself with another, in most cases, a peer group of people. Therefore, as a particularly powerful form of social interaction at a given period, there is a social exclusion or rejection by peers (Williams, 2007), which may adversely affect individual and interpersonal behaviour (Baumeister, 2005; Ayduk, Gyurak, Luerssen, 2008; Twenge, Catanese, Baumeister, 2002), and can lead to antisocial behaviour (Adams, 2011), providing a link to the involvement of adolescents in risky behaviours (Dishion, Owen, 2002; La Greca, 2001; Simons-Morton, 2005). Sampson and Laub (1997) explain that adolescents with a vulnerable or unmet need may engage in risky activities or behaviours in order to obtain recognition of peers or to form an opposing identity to the identity of their "rejecters." These characteristics also include the risk, and among young people, the resulting need to seek excitement, to test their own limits and to exposure to potentially dangerous situations. Therefore, they engage in more destructive activities such as crime, drug abuse, and political extremism. Typical attitudes are also affinities with violence, violent behaviour and attitudes approving violent behaviour. (Bartlett, Birdwell, King, 2010) The question is whether it is possible to limit the growth of these socially undesirable phenomena.

Baumeister, Twenge and Nuss (2002) state that socially excluded people commit more crimes than socially included. Adams et al., (2011) goes on to state that social exclusion is related to radicalization. For young people, who have experienced social exclusion, the invitation to a radicalized group represents a real experience of social inclusion (Taylor, Louis, 2004; Borum, 2010). Young people who have been or feel socially excluded from one group may be tempted to join radicalized and extremist groups and movements (Richmond, 2002). This factor can be evaluated as a risk factor but also as a protective factor. This means that a specific factor can support the process of radicalization, but also protect from it. In this context, Adams et al. (2011) point out that a desire for social inclusion can support the process of radicalization, but it can also encourage positive behaviour, such as increased pro-social behaviour and motivation to form or restore social ties. Based on this, it is necessary to perceive social inclusion as a significant factor in the risky behaviour of adolescents with an emphasis on the process of radicalization.

Peer group may be, in the process of radicalization, and in connection with extremism, also important in another relation. Searching for feelings that reflects the need for diverse, new and complex experiences, encourages an active willingness to accept physical and social risks (Blum et al., 2001). Such perception and behaviour usually does not appear isolated (Connop, King, Boyce, 1999), and it is often associated with the activities of the peer group (Blum et al., 2001). The connection between adolescents and peers, who are involved in risky behaviours, is a strong predictor of own risky behaviour of adolescents (Prinstein, Boergers, Spirito, 2001; Osgood et al., 2013). Jaccard (2005) also states that one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of risky behaviours in adolescents is whether the individual has friends, who are involved in risky behaviours. In the context of the group, therefore, adolescents may find it easier to accept opinions and beliefs of more extreme group members (Silke, 2008). Speaking about the peer group, risky behaviour can also be conditioned by an effort to gain or maintain a higher social status in the group (Hawley, 2003).

An important factor can be, in addition to the peer, family or school environment. Sikkens et al. (2017) states that the (problematic) family situation can affect the process of radicalization. Inappropriate parenting styles are considered risk factors as well (e.g. Jeynes, 2005; Spera, 2005). Čerešník (2017) deals with the question of whether the educational environment does not create the conditions for the adolescent population to produce risky behaviours, and that this behavior is overlooked, respectively tolerated. Arıman (2007), as part of the conducted research, found out that factors of school environment, such as the administrative structure, the teacher-student relationship, school security, are significant in relation to the tendency of students towards violence. Certain characteristics of the school may have a negative impact on the level of risky behaviour (Sutton, Utting, Farrington, 2004). In particular, low expectations from students, incorrectly defined rules and patterns of behaviour, inconsistently applied (Anderson et al., 2001), the question of school security and discipline, clarity of school rules, school satisfaction, bullying and victimization, involvement of schools in sports activities or use of discussions, positive reinforcement of teachers, which can be labeled as the quality of the school environment in the global index (Bhabra, Dinos, Ghate, 2006). On the other hand, well-organized schools with consistent policies of bullying and antisocial behaviour support good relationships with their students, and thus apply a protective influence (Anderson et al., 2001). Therefore, Souwla (2015) believes that quality schools and education are an effective protective factor of radicalization. The process of radicalization takes place on the basis of a simplified view of the world, and education is used to combat the simplified perspective and as a form of prevention of the radicalization process.

Along with the school environment, it is necessary to mention (not) achievement of success in the school, which has numerous additional consequences, even beyond the individual level of

each student (Dornbusch et al., 1996). As Crosnoe (2002) states, students who do not achieve the required learning outcomes are excluded from extracurricular activities that have a positive impact on the development of adolescents, as a result of poor school performance, tense relationships can develop between adolescents and their parents (Repetti, 1996), is associated to perceived social inequality (Needham, Crosnoe, Muller, 2004), adolescent loses self-confidence, reduces effort, and is therefore again likely to fail (Kamal, Bener, 2009). Adolescents, who fail at school, try to improve their position in areas that are not related to their areas of inadequacy (Eccles et al., 1997). More often, such adolescents engage in risky behaviours such as smoking, alcohol use (Byrd, 2005, Honken, Ralston, 2013), or risky sexual behaviour. Such students seek reinforcement from their peers to compensate for the negative academic "feedback" (Honken, Ralston, 2013), and radicalization can be an optimal response to perceived failure (Ferrero, 2002). Harris, Duncan, and Boisjoly (2002) found out that adolescents with high expectations of their future education will perceive greater risks associated with participation in risky behaviours and avoid risks, adolescents with low expectations of their future, on the contrary, do not fully consider risks. To address school success is therefore necessary, in the context of risky behaviours.

Dependence on the radical group can also act as a substitute product and replace the previous dependencies (Ludot, Radjack, Moro, 2016). Several authors also mention the importance of a trigger event as the determining factor. The list of events includes the occurrence of trauma related to a close person (e.g. death, disease, separation) (Bouzar, Martin, 2016; Schuurman, Horgan, 2016), disappointment in love, watching a video that has again caused deep suffering associated with family history (Bazex, Mensat, 2016), experiences of discrimination (Bouzar, Martin, 2016).

Another specific variable is the nihilism of today's youth. This term can be used in various ways. The meaning of the word can be deduced from the term "nihilum" - i.e. "nothing" (failure of "being", its denial). Nihilism rejects the social order, considers valid values as worthless fiction (Brugger, 1994). It is based on the belief that nothing in the world is of absolute value or validity. It concludes that nothing is valid, nothing is of value. It rejects any foundation of truth or good that one would be bound by obedience or loyalty (Sokol, 2010). Since the end of the 18th century, it has been used to designate those teachings that deny a certain system of values, or even more radical, the very existence of objective reality (Rajský, 2009). It represents the will to "nothingness," to denial, to negation, to losing faith, values, it is the faith in the "nothing," in the degradation of life, clinging to egoism (Olšovský, 2011). At the present, it is most often associated with the unfortunate features of modern and, in particular, postmodern society, deprived of hope and happiness, certainty and safety. In common language, it often replaces terms such as depression, apathy, resignation, meaninglessness, skepticism, individualism, indifference, isolation, nostalgia, anxiety, and others. The term can be perceived in a positive and negative sense. In the positive one, it refers to the philosophical destruction of any bias that refers to metaphysically defined existence. In the negative sense, it denotes the destruction of records and certainties of common sense, as well as the loss of the theoretical and ethical principles and norms (Rajský, 2009).

The term nihilism was popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche, who made it the base term of his own theoretical concept, and he understood his own philosophy as overcoming of nihilism with the emphasis on human will and creativity (Anzenbacher, 2010). However, the real history of this concept began with Jacobi's polemic with Ficht and their joint condemnation of Kant's transcendental theory. Nietzsche defined nihilism as a state aimlessness, where there is no answer to the question "why?" and even the highest values are losing price. He denotes this state as a "dreadful guest", who stands at the door and cannot get rid of it. Heidegger goes even deeper, who adds that this guest has already been invisibly wandering around the house a long time ago, and the only thing we can do is to notice him and look him right in the face (Rajský, 2009). Galimberti (2008), a

contemporary Italian psychologist and philosopher, states that nihilism has crept into the soul of the young, penetrated into their thoughts, mixed with their emotions, demolished their perspectives, and so on. The young are not experiencing joy or peace, they are soaked by latent anxiety of meaninglessness tomorrow, despite the market offers of explosive and adrenaline entertainment, by which they fill their present day. According to Benasayag and Schmit (2007), today's adolescents are experiencing deep frustration and hidden sadness, which does not have an individual psychopathological background, but it is a flat reflection of general social helplessness. Instead of a future as a promise, the concept of a future as a threat has come, and if the future has nothing to offer, then the logical setting of a man is to focus on the present, to enjoy today, when tomorrow is without guarantee. This is the reason why assisting professionals struggle with demotivation, isolation, escalation of violence and the increase in drug use in the environment of the youth. Hedonism has become a central value of our contemporary culture. Affluent society that encourages an individual to try to increase his/her standard of living is atomized and radically de-socialized. Galimberti (2008) emphasizes that young people experience loneliness and depression not as their existential developmental crisis, but rather as a cultural crisis that is all the more radical, that it does not provide a promise of overcoming in the adulthood stage. As predicted by Nietzsche, humanity is seized by existential sadness (Rajský, 2009).

The society does not show an interest in young people. A certain interest in the youth is shown by market that offers them entertainment and consumption, but the object of their consumption are not the goods and services, but their own lives instead. These do not represent plans for the future, as it does not make any promises. The youth are experiencing the present with maximum intensity - not because it gives them joy, but because they are looking for a way to forget about the existential loneliness and anxiety. They are flooded with emotional illiteracy - they cannot even express their restlessness. Strong music, drug use, the experiences of group, as well as of individual violence, suppress loneliness. They abandoned traditional values. They suffer from the fact that they do not see the meaning of existence, they are missing the meaning of suffering and life as a whole. Galimberti (2008) describes several symptoms of the nihilism of the youth:

- no interest in school,
- bullying,
- emotional aridity,
- the loss of sense of intimacy,
- attraction to drugs,
- inclination to death,
- indifference, psychopathy, sociopathy,
- ritual violence (Rajský, 2009).

Changing the nature of the society produces a change in the nature of social risks, whose main denominator is loneliness, fear and uncertainty. Social work, in order to optimize the social functioning of individuals, should reflect these changes as the new social risks of the hypermodern age pose new challenging life situations, and thus the change of the clientele of social work (Jašková, Sabolová Fabiánová, 2018). Another threat of the present is the Internet. As society changes, the Internet has revolutionized social interaction, and the number of young people who are spending a considerable amount of time online, is increasing (Hawdon, Oksanen, Räsänen, 2015), it is important to draw attention to the dark side of the online environment. The benefits of the cyberspace, as well as the regular internet users, are also exploited by extremist groups, and they use information and communication technologies and the social media in order to spread extremist ideas and radicalism. According to Awan (2017), the objective of using the Internet is to radicalize, to spread propaganda and ideology among sympathizers around the world online. In this online way, the fundamentals of extremist groups, acquiring of members, advocating violence and creating international communities through websites, blogs, chat rooms, discussion groups, internet communities, online video games, and more, is supported. (Amster, 2009; Burris, Smith, Strahm,

2000; Hawdon, Oksanen, Räsänen, 2015). The main reason for targeting of group of young people by extremist is the fact that they spend more time online and are therefore more likely to encounter online extremist material. It is the most vulnerable group, and young people can react to such material in a different way than people of other age groups (Costello, Hawdon, Cross, 2017).

Open space of the Internet and social networks is abused to spread racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism among young people (Cenkner, 2017). Institute of Human Rights has produced a report for the Council of Europe with an overview of national instruments to fight hate crimes. The report shows that 25% of young people received an e-mail materials containing extremist information about specific groups. 16% of young Internet users wrote online comments that were hateful towards a person or group of people, of which 60% were men.

In relation to the use of the Internet, the so-called Facebocrastination (Meier, Reinecke, Meltzer, 2016) is mentioned too, when in favor of the use of Facebook social network, important tasks are delayed (Junco, 2012; Panek, 2014; Rosen, 2013; Thompson, 2013). We speak of procrastination, when it is about performing an alternative activity to the intended one, but this is not synonymous with inactivity (Schouwenburg, 2004). According to Arem, Williams and Adesin (2011), procrastination refers to self-regulatory failure, which refers to the postponement of the necessary steps to successful and timely completion of tasks, while engaging in activities that are more rewarding. Procrastination is not a new phenomenon, but at present it brings different and more negative connotations (Ferrari, Johnson, McCown, 1995; Steel, Ferrari, 2013). It leads to inefficient time management, reduced performance, inability to regulate negative emotions (Schubert Walker, Stewart, 2000; Ferrari, Díaz-Morales, 2014) and is associated with risky behaviour. The construct of problematic Internet use fills is a factor of the use of the Internet as a means of escape, avoidance and distraction from duties and tasks (Davis, Flett, Besser, 2002). Procrastination is also seen as a maladaptive coping strategy, a form of defensive avoidance that occurs when there is a potential problem, but there is also a certain pessimism towards the availability of its solution (Janis, Mann, 1977; Ferrari, 2011; Steel, 2007; Van Eerde, 2003). Based on this, it is appropriate to examine procrastination as a factor related to various forms of adolescent risky behaviours, as well as to radicalization and extremism.

Conclusion

Monitoring the extent of the problem is clearly crucial to understanding the extent of covered areas, target groups, but it is also important for choosing effective ways to solve the problem. Undoubtedly, social work with the youth plays here an important role. There are several initiatives at local, national and international level that are addressing the issue of extremism. In general, we distinguish those that are more focused on the primary prevention of extremism and so-called intervention programs that are focused on already active members of extremist groups. Their aim is primarily social inclusion (i.e. inclusion, integration) of young people and, as such, the main elements of this process are: active involvement of young people in the community, development and maintenance of young people's social connections with other people, attention to the meaning and the need for belonging, thus making young people less vulnerable to the threat of extremism. As examples we can mention:

- Canadian community program, aimed at providing assistance to the youth that is already an active participant of extremist groups, known under name Youth Alliance Against Gang Violence (www.publicsafety.gc.ca),
- preventive model called the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which is aimed at vulnerable children and youth, providing them appropriate intervention services in order to prevent delinquent behaviour (www.ojjdp.gov),

- training against violence and training competencies called Anti-Gewalt- und Kompetenz-Training, which provides an assistance to young people from the Muslim environment in order to prevent radicalization and integration into extremist groups (www.violence-prevention-network.de),
- BanHate mobile application, which represents an innovative option focused against expressing hatred (www.banhate.com),
- Austrian nationwide line called Counseling Center against Extremism that offers distance counseling, crisis intervention, as well as personal counseling meetings and even various educational activities for the youth focused on introducing the basic concept of extremism, and subsequently changing the perspective on the manifestations of extremism and hatred on social networks, and others (www.beratungsstelleextremismus.at).

However, the presented programs are not currently available in most of the EU Member States, despite their effectiveness. Education and social work with the youth are key areas that can help young people to prevent and to expose extremist ideas, or to provide intervention programs aimed at active members of extremist groups ensuring social reintegration into society.

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