

The Prevalence of Intellectual Extremism among Palestinian Youth and Its Relationship to Some Variables

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ABSTRACT

Extremism is a global issue that affects a lot of countries all over the world ever since. Youths are considered the main tool to implement various forms of extremism. This article aims to diagnose intellectual extremism among Palestinian youth. In this article, we analyzed the data obtained from Palestinian youth (18-35 years), from 1 to 31/12/2019. The sample consisted of 600 youth (male and female). Data were collected through an electronic questionnaire. The most important results were that males were generally more extreme than females. There is also a strong relationship between intellectual extremism and many variables 1) the educational level; 2) Scientific specialization; 3) Political or party affiliation; 4) The household income range; 5) The level of father's education; 6) The level of mother's education; 7) The constancy of family relations.

Keywords: *Intellectual Extremism, Religious Extremism, Political Extremism, Social Extremism, Youth*

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth are the future of countries, they are making the impossible possible, particularly they are full of hope and enthusiasm to overcome obstacles to success. Unfortunately, in some cases, the enthusiasm of the youth is exploited and mobilized for extremist thoughts, and then they are used in the unmaking of society.

Extremism can be from a religious, political or social base, and thus, it threatens and wastes all human and material capabilities and wealth of society.

Extremism is a state of opinion intolerance in a way that does not recognize the existence of others, and does not give the opportunity for dialogue with others [1]. Also, it is an exaggeration in adhering to some religious, political, social or economic thoughts, which gives the extremist the sense of having the absolute truth that creates a gap between him and the society he lives in [2]. Extremism is the individual's taking a hard line characterized by no responses to social situations in the environment in which he lives.

Extremism may be positive or negative toward full acceptance or full refusal, and moderation is midway between them [3].

Further, extremism is a cognitive disorder exceeding the limit of moderation and believing exaggeratingly in the wrong political and social thoughts that contradict the prevailing religious and social values which have been identified and accepted by members of society [4].

Intellectual extremism is a cognitive disorder that has many causes, impacts, and has existed forever with deference in its intensity and diversity from time to time [5].

Although extremism exists in many societies the reasons for its spread differ from one society to another.

1.1. Related Work

Fatima El-Sayed noticed that there is a relationship between intellectual extremism and social media apps addiction, and the level of extremism differs according to age and gender [6]. Simi also concluded that childhood trauma may be the start of violent behaviors [7]. While Al-Rawashed said that males have more leaning toward extremism than females [8].

A study on the intellectual extremism of university youth in Egyptian society showed that there is a positive relationship between exposure to domestic violence and the youth's learning to intellectual extremism [9].

Nabila Al-Sharjabi also found that 68.88% of youth who have studied at Taiz University in Yemen have intellectual extremism. However, after the youth underwent a behavioral cognitive therapy program, the study showed that the level of extremism had decreased. This confirms the importance of well diagnosing and suggesting appropriate treatment methods to reduce many problems that society suffers from [4].

1.2. Our Contribution

In this paper, we analyse the data obtained from youths, so that we can diagnose the problem of the extremism among youths more clearly, and identify the most important risk factors that lead to increase this phenomenon among young youths, and then suggest solutions help to reduce this problem.

1.3. Paper Structure

The paper is organized as follows: The second section provides a description of the study sample. After that, levels of intellectual extremism will be examined according to a number of study variables Results and discussion and Conclusion:

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Sample description

The sample consisted of 600 Palestinian youth from both sexes, 48.5% male and 51.5% female, and they are distributed according to geographical regions. The sample belongs to the age group 18-35, and they are from various scientific specialties. The sample also showed that 36.4% of the sample respondents are married, 62.1% single, 1.3% divorced and 0.2% widowed.

The data was collected during the period from 1-31 / 12/2019, according to a form prepared for this purpose.

This paper is a start within a project that the researchers intend to implement to diagnose the reality of Palestinian youth in various aspects for formulating programs that help youth to play their role in serving their society and country.

2.2. The level of intellectual extremism among youths

Three main axes were drawn upon to diagnose youth's intellectual extremism: religious extremism; Political extremism; Social extremism. These three axes are what express intellectual extremism in general.

In the following table, we explain the different levels of extremism, where we note that the most prevalent form of

extremism among youths is social extremism. We note that 53.8% of youths practice social extremism, 51.9% practice political extremism and 46.6% practice religious extremism.

Table 1. Explain the different levels of prevalent form of extremism among youths

Filed	Arithmetic mean	Relative weight
Religious extremism	2.33	46.6%
Political extremism	2.59	51.9%
Social extremism	2.69	53.8%
Intellectual extremism	2.54	50.8%

2.3. Test of extremism levels according to the study variables

The levels of intellectual extremism among youths have been tested according to the gender variable, as we note in table 2. There were statistically significant differences in favour of males; this means males are more extreme than females. We note that the value of sig = 0.009 is less than 0.05. This is consistent with many previous studies, which conclude with the same result

Table 2. Results of (T) test for two independent samples for gender variable.

	Averages		T test value	Sig.
	Male	Female		
Intellectual extremism	2.61	2.47	2.6	0.009

Youth extremism levels were tested according to the variable of political affiliation: As we note from table 3, there are statistically significant differences between youths extremism levels. The Multiple Comparisons Test (LSD) was used to determine which groups are more extreme; Youth belonging to Salafi movement was the most extreme, followed by youths belonging to the Palestinian left-wing, followed by youths belonging to the political Islam, followed by youths belonging to the national trend and finally youths who did not belong to any of the political factions were the less extreme, in other words independents.

Table 3. one-way ANOVA test results for political affiliation variable:

	Averages					F test value	Sig.
	Independents	national trend	political Islam	Salafi	Palestinian left-wing		
Intellectual extremism	2.46	2.61	2.81	3.23	2.93	6.965	000

The levels of extremism were tested according to the variable of the scientific level. The result was that youth who did not complete their university studies were, generally speaking, more extreme than undergraduate

youth Extremism levels have been tested according to the variable of scientific specialization. As shown in table No. 4, it was observed that there are differences between the levels of extremism among youths. The Multiple

Comparisons Test (LSD) was used to determine which category is more extreme. We found that youths who study in the Faculty of Science are more extreme followed by students of Faculty of Medicine. The least extreme is the students of the Faculty of Arts and Music. The following table explains these results.

This, in turn, calls for more in-depth studies to determine the reason why do students of the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Medicine are more extreme than others, and to try to find a solution to this problem.

Table 4. One-way ANOVA test results for the specialty variable

Category	Arithmetic mean	F test value	Sig
Faculty of Medicine	2.67	2.44	0.004
Faculty of Pharmacy	2.35		
Faculty of Engineering	2.42		
Faculty of Science	2.78		
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	2.52		
Faculty of Education	2.42		
Faculty of Law	2.60		
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	2.60		
Faculty of Information	2.68		
Faculty of Sharia	2.47		
Faculty of Nursing	2.37		
Faculty of Art and Music	2.24		

Extremism levels were tested according to the household income variable. We notice from table No. 5 that youths who live in families with low incomes are the most extreme; the more the family income increases, the less the level of extremism among youths.

This generally confirms that the economic situation is a strong indication of the overall social problems, including intellectual extremism among youths.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA test results for the income variable

	Averages					F test value	Sig.
	Less than 300\$	From 300\$-600\$	From 601-900\$	From 901\$ - 1200\$	More than 1200\$		
Intellectual extremism	2.7871	2.5013	2.5043	2.4369	2.4196	6.23	.000

The levels of extremism have been tested according to the variable of the father's education level: We notice that there is an inverse relationship between the level of extremism among youths and the level of their fathers'

education; the higher the level of fathers' education the lower the level of extremism among youths, the following table No. 6 explains the results.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA test results for the father's education variable.

	Averages					F test value	Sig.
	secondary public school	intermediate diploma	BA	master's degree	PhD		
Intellectual extremism	2.5237	2.6954	2.4545	2.3701	2.0832	8.18	.000

The levels of extremism have been tested according to the variable of the mother's level of education: we notice that there is an inverse relationship between the level of extremism among youths and the level of their mothers' education; the higher the level of mothers' education, the lower the level of extremism among youths.

fathers work in the private sector, followed by the youths of worker fathers, followed by youths of the entrepreneur fathers, followed by the youths of government employee fathers and finally the youths of retired fathers.

The levels of intellectual extremism were tested according to the variable of the father's work: there were differences between the levels of extremism among the youths according to the father's work; youths of unemployed fathers are the most extreme, followed by youths whose fathers work in UNRWA, followed by the youths whose

Test the levels of youth extremism according to the variable of nature of family relations: youths who live in strained family relationships are the most extreme; the better the nature of family relations, the lower the level of extremism of youths.

Table 7. One-way ANOVA test results for the nature of family relations.

	Averages				F test value	Sig.
	Strained relationship	acceptable relationship	good relationship	excellent relationship		
Intellectual extremism	2.85	2.60	2.56	2.49	3.36	.01

Tests were also conducted for a number of variables but did not have an impact on the level of extremism among youths. These variables are a place of residence (camp - village - city) or (West Bank - Gaza), marital status, the nature of the work of the mother, status of parents (parents live together, divorced, the father married to more than one wife, widower, deceased parents, ownership of the home.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We have noticed that the level of intellectual extremism among Palestinian youths is generally high, and the most prevalent form of intellectual extremism is social extremism, this is the result of social upbringing that support some thoughts which help to adopt a radical approach. Here, the most influential element is the family and the surrounding environment, as male children in Palestinian society generally suffer from various forms of violence more than female children-whether domestic violence or at schools [10], this may explain the fact that youth males are more extreme than youth females.

We also note that youths belonging to Islamic movements, whether Salafism or political Islam, as well as the party of the Palestinian left-wing are the most extreme, which confirms that those who hold ideological thoughts that believe that they have a monopoly on the truth, whether from a religious or political logic, support youths with more extremist thoughts, and this calls for a review of the approach that these groups or parties are adopted. We also noted that youths who are not affiliated with any political party are the most moderate and the furthest from extremism.

As there was an important result, which is that the higher the level of education of the youth, the lower the level of his intellectual extremism, but we also reached an important result, which is that the university youth who study at the College of Science and the College of Medicine are the most extreme, and perhaps this is due to the nature of practical content they study in these colleges, which is inflexible. This perhaps calls for the enhancement of the scientific content of some enriching subjects that relate to music and art, as we noticed that music and art students are the least extreme, as well as students of the college of Engineering who use drawing as part of their studies have less interest to extremism compared to other scientific colleges.

Also, the bad economic situation increases the level of extremism among youth, the more the family income increases, the less the level of extremism among youths, as the bad economic situation always leads to an increase in

the rate of social problems in general, including intellectual extremism.

Further, one of the most important things that affects levels of intellectual extremism is the surrounding environment, specifically the family. The more youths have grown up in a family with good social relations, the less they have a level of extremism, because they live in a good and healthy family environment, whereas the youths who live in strained family relations are often suffering from problems that are expressed by taking hard-line stance and adopting extremist thoughts.

4. CONCLUSION

1) The phenomenon of intellectual extremism is one of the dangerous phenomena that threaten societies, and wastes its human and natural energies and resources. Therefore, attention must be paid to this phenomenon to eradicate it, or at least reduce it in societies.

2) Focusing on male youth and targeting them with activities and projects that help them get rid of extremist thoughts.

3) Working on enriching the academic scientific specialties, in particular the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Medicine with some enrichment materials that reduce the intensity of extremism among students of these faculties.

4) Spreading the culture of accepting others and respecting the diversity between university's students in particular and youth in general, and working to reduce the impact of ideology, which is trying to apply one idea to society, where we have noticed that youths who adopt Salafism, political Islam, or left-wing thoughts are the most extreme, knowing that this thought that adopts just one viewpoint and does not accept others contradicts with Islamic religion as it contradicts with common sense, and the existence of this type of thinking within the contexts of Salafi thoughts or thoughts of political Islam expresses the intellectual production of some people and how they understand the religion of Islam. It does not reflect the reality and purposes of the religion of Islam, rather contradicts them.

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