

The trend toward extremism and its relationship to forms of social awareness among university students

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Abstract

This study aims to track forms of social awareness among students at Baghdad University, in addition to the significance of differences in forms of social awareness among students at Baghdad University according to gender, specialization, and academic stage. Emile Durkheim (1976) defined the tendency toward extremism as an individual taking a position characterized by extremism, deviating from moderation, departing from the norm, and transgressing the intellectual and behavioral standards and moral values defined and established by members of society. Meanwhile, Shalidan (2006) defined awareness as a state of mind in which a person perceives the world around them, and defined it as a person's perception and understanding of themselves, their external world, and their social

belonging as a result of contemplating the objective world, work, and social action. Awareness is linked to behavior because it leads to practical individual and collective positions. Language also plays an important role in awareness. The researcher adopted Emile Durkheim Scale (1976) for forms of social awareness. The psychometric characteristics of both scales and performed on 400 university students, and the results show tendency toward extremism according to the gender variable and academic stage, there is no statistically significant difference in forms of social awareness according to the variables of gender and specialization, the study concluded that there is a statistically significant inverse correlation between the tendency toward extremism and forms of social awareness, and the

research finally reached a set of recommendations related to the results of the study.

Keywords: extremism, social awareness, university students.

*** Introduction**

Extremism is a phenomenon that preoccupies people in our societies and others, including developed societies, because it has come to threaten not only social peace, public life, and relations between people, but also international peace and security, especially when it moves from ideology and theory to action and implementation. One of the consequences of extremism is the spread of terrorism and violence in the region. After the events of 2003, Iraq witnessed widespread activity by Al-Qaeda and its subsequent branches, including the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and interference with Syria, as ISIS occupied a third of Iraqi territory and established what it called the Islamic Caliphate. It can be said that all extremism stems from radicalism in an idea, opinion, or religion, and no matter how varied and different the causes and goals may be, there must be extremism. Extremism can be religious, sectarian, nationalistic, social, political, or cultural, and the only difference between all these

forms is the justifications that individuals use to eliminate others (Segman, 2017, pp. 13-12). Individuals with extremist tendencies are characterized by many manifestations of disorder, tension, and instability in their personalities. Young people express their extremist tendencies through rejection, rebellion, and revolt against their society and all its values and principles.

*** The problem of the study**

The importance of the current research stems from attempts to highlight the significance of the trend toward extremism and its relationship to levels of social awareness and the relationship between them, as well as the impact this has on individuals. This research is considered pioneering, stemming from the essence of the problems afflicting this region and attempting to reveal the relationship between extremism and levels of social awareness. Levels of social awareness.

*** Hypothesis of the study**

The researcher assumes that university students suffer from a tendency toward extremism, and that there are statistically significant differences in the extremism variable in favor of males over females and the fourth academic stage over the first stage, while there were no

statistically significant differences in the major variable.

As for forms of social awareness, the results showed positive forms of social awareness among university students, and that there were statistically significant differences according to the stage of study variable and no statistically significant differences according to the gender and major variables. People who have a tendency toward extremism feel unable to achieve self-actualization and have lower forms of social awareness

*** Importance of the study**

The current study aims to develop tools to measure the variables of the current research topic in order to contribute to measuring or identifying these phenomena, with a view to diagnosing them and contributing to addressing related intellectual and behavioral issues, also Highlights the spread of extremism and working to build a tolerant, civilized society through Utilizing guidance programs targeting young people to protect them from the tendency towards extremism and the current research explores the best ways to protect individuals, and subsequently families and the social system, and to advance an important segment of society, namely university students,

towards a society that is as free as possible from psychological problems and hostile behaviors.

*** Research questions**

Based on the foregoing the researcher is interested in answering the following questions: -

- 1- Will those with a tendency toward extremism exhibit high levels of social awareness?
- 2- Are those with a high tendency toward extremism less socially aware?
- 3- Are there statistically significant differences in the tendency toward extremism and its relationship to levels of social awareness? According to gender (male and female)?
- 4- Are individuals with high social awareness less radical?

*** Literature review**

Davidov (2015) studied the causes of extremism among young people and the nature of the beliefs that play a role in shaping the ideology of extremist behavior. The sample consisted of 50 specialists in the field of preventing extremism and violence among young people in Moscow. The study relied on a questionnaire, and the results showed that 58% needed specific recommendations and working methods, and 45% needed to know the nature and causes of extremism. It

showed that the media and viewing extremist content were among the most important causes of extremism among young people.

Al-Harbi (2011) conducted a study entitled “Saudi Youth Attitudes towards Intellectual Extremism” on a sample of 442 students from Al-Qassim University. The study found that Saudi university students have a negative attitude towards intellectual extremism in all its manifestations and forms, and that there are no differences in terms of college type, location, gender, monthly income, family size, and GPA. The study found differences in the causes of extremism attributable to college type, monthly income, and family size, while there were no differences attributable to the effect of family residence and student GPA on the causes of intellectual extremism in society.

Hassan (2009) addressed the relation between the domestic violence and its relationship to the tendency toward extremism included a sample of university students and found a positive correlation between domestic violence and the tendency toward extremism. It also pointed to statistically significant differences between those with low socioeconomic and cultural status and those with high socioeconomic

and cultural status, and for those with low socioeconomic and cultural status. The study also showed statistically significant differences between the average male and female tendencies toward extremism, with males scoring higher (Hassan, 2009, p. 210).

Benard (2005) looked at the needs and motivations of young people belonging to extremist groups and the most important factors attracting them to these groups. It applied an extremism scale and another scale for the needs and motivations of extremist groups. The results showed that young people tend to join extremist groups because they fail to belong civil groups in their civil societies or their rejection in civil societies such as secondary schools. Increasing non-extremist awareness and moderate religious information helps young people withdraw from extremist groups.

Wafah ,A. (2002) conducted a similar study of 714 male and female students at Kuwait University, which found that religious intolerance and fanaticism exist in Kuwaiti society, with sectarian intolerance being the most prevalent, followed by tribal intolerance and then religious intolerance in the misinterpretation of religious texts. The study found no differences according to gender,

academic year, or academic specialization.

Shelden and Johanson (1993) studied a sample of 479 male and female students from the University of California. The researchers constructed a social awareness scale consisting of eight forms and 64 items distributed across the eight forms, with eight items for each form, and extracted its psychometric characteristics. The results showed that females are more aware than males in some forms, statistically speaking, Individuals differ in their use of these forms according to their personal system, and Individuals with high social awareness, emotional empathy, and high self-control (Johanson & M, K, Shelden, 1993, p. 320).

Commenting on all of the above studies, the cause of extremism is attributed to the deviation of young people in their early years for several reasons, including immaturity of feelings and thoughts, lack of social communication skills, influence of daydreams, living in a deprived childhood, failure to achieve goals, associating with bad company, and ignorance of other cultures. Social upbringing plays an important role in the trend toward extremism. The research concludes that the reasons that lead to the formation of a

predisposition toward extremism may be intellectual, psychological, social, or educational. Extremism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with many intertwined causes.

*** Functional constructivism**

Social awareness is one of the most important topics addressed by functional constructivism. Talcott Parsons, the pioneer of functional constructivism, believes that society consists of integrated social units or a group of systems that are interconnected in terms of structure and function to achieve harmony and goals. where society is viewed as a social system that shares values and goals that are universal in nature. On this basis, each system performs a function within the framework of building society, and social awareness is based on these relationships and is represented in the form of social culture. As for Auguste Comte believes that sociology is the study of the phenomena of the human mind and the human actions that result from it, and that the essence of the historical process is the development of thought. This is clearly related to the subject of social consciousness. Auguste Comte believes that the collective conscience is the totality of the general beliefs and emotions among

most members of society that form a system with a distinctive character. This confirms the functionalist theory's interest in the subject of consciousness and its connection to the culture of society and the impact of social and cultural norms on the formation of human consciousness (Kamel, 2015).

From this, we can define social consciousness as: an individual's mental image of their social reality, represented by a set of ideas, feelings, and behaviors that express their perception of this reality, which are often derived from this reality, then return to influence the individual's understanding of this reality and shape their response to it.

Thus, "awareness is procedurally determined by studying individuals' knowledge, attitudes, values, practices, and behavior in various situations related to their present and future, in education, work, marriage, political participation, etc. In other words, it is the study of that pattern of perception of social reality in its various aspects, or the intellectual conception and mental image that the researcher has of these aspects of reality as they appear in his response through the imagined situations presented to the researchers through the research tool" (Abeer Amin 2006, p. 33).

*** Methodology**

Based on the nature of the current research problem, its objectives and questions, the following methods were used: -

1- Comparative descriptive survey method: to determine the degree of tendency towards extremism among the research sample.

2- Descriptive correlational method: to determine the relationship between the tendency towards extremism and forms of social awareness among students at the University of Baghdad at 2024.

*** The Questionnaire**

After reviewing the theoretical framework available in previous literature on various types of university students and reviewing some of the measures related to the tendency toward extremism to identify the technical aspects of adopting the measure in light of the researcher's objectives, and the formulation of the scale's statements in its initial form, a preliminary concept of the scale consisting of (46) paragraphs was developed. The psychometric properties of reliability and validity were verified.

For social awareness scale the researcher relied on the 77-item adopted by Emile Durkheim, who defined it as "an individual taking a position characterized by extremism,

departing from moderation and normality, and exceeding the intellectual, behavioral, and moral standards set by members of society), The scale consists of 77 items, each containing five alternatives (applies to a very large extent, applies to a large extent, applies to a moderate extent, applies to a small extent, applies to a very small extent). The respondent must choose one of these alternatives, and weights of (5-1) are given to positive items and (1-5) to negative items.

* Results and discussion

Objective (1): Identifying the trend toward extremism: -

To achieve this objective, the researcher applied the extremism tendency scale to the 400 individuals in the research sample. The results showed that their average score on the scale was 146.8, with a standard deviation of 9.6. When comparing this average with the hypothetical average of the scale, which is 138, and using the t-test for a single sample, it was found that the calculated t-value (-18.3) is statistically significant, since the calculated t-value is higher than the tabulated t-value of 1.96 with a degree of freedom of 399 and a significance level of 0.05, as shown in Table 1.

Table.1. the difference between the sample mean and the hypothesized mean of the extremism tendency scale

Sample size	Arithmetic mean	Hypo-theoretical mean	Std. Deviation	Calculated t-value	Tabulated t-value	Degrees of freedom	Significance level
400	146.8	138	9.6	-18.3	1.96	399	sig

The results of the current study are consistent with those of a study by Salem (2018), which indicated that students suffer from a statistically significant tendency toward extremism.

Objective (2): Identify differences in the tendency toward extremism among university students

* According to gender

Table. 2. The t-test for two independent samples to indicate differences according to the variable of gender

sample	gender	No.	Mean	Std. deviation	Cal. t-test	Tab. t-test	d. freedom	Sig. level
400	male	200	148.2	9.4	8.1	1.96	399	sig
	female	200	145.4	9.8				

* According to academic stage

Table.3 The t-test for two independent samples to indicate differences according to the variable of academic stage

sample	stage	No.	Mean	Std. deviation	Cal. t-test	Tab. t-test	d. freedom	Sig. level
400	1 st	200	150.5	9.8	0.86	1.96	399	sig
	4 th	200	143.1	9.4				

The results in Tables 1, 2, and 3 indicate the following: -

1- There is a statistically significant difference in the tendency toward extremism according to gender, with a calculated t-value of 8.1, which is higher than the tabulated t-value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 399. This is consistent with the 2005 study by

Pinar, which examined young people's tendency toward extremism and aimed to identify their needs and motivations for this tendency. The results showed that young people turn to extremism as a result of their failure to belong to civil groups in their society, because they are rejected in communities such as universities, or because of their inability to achieve self-actualization among their peers.

2- There is no statistically significant difference in the tendency toward extremism according to the variable of specialization, as the calculated t-value was (0.86), which is less than the tabulated t-value of (1.96) at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom of (399), as shown in the study by Al-Khatabi et al. (2014), which showed no statistically significant differences according to the variable of specialization.

3- There is a statistically significant difference in the tendency toward extremism according to the academic stage variable in favor of first-stage students, as the calculated t-value was 16.4, which is greater than the tabulated t-value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 399. The results of the current study are consistent with the results of the study conducted by Al-Madadha (2015),

which showed that there are statistically significant differences between male and female students and different majors in terms of their feelings towards extremism. However, it differed from the study by Salem (2018) and the results of the study by Bani Fayyad (2008), which found that fourth-year students were more prone to extremism.

The researcher explained this result in light of the developmental stage that fourth-year students are going through, which is characterized by independence, where students rely heavily on themselves to determine their future and have greater experience in integrating into the university environment and their ability to make decisions and think for themselves, while first-year students are characterized by their lack of independence and receive greater support from their families and parents, which exposes them to more pressure and reduces their freedom of thought and exploration.

Objective (3): To identify forms of social awareness among university students .

To achieve this objective, the researcher applied a social awareness scale to the 400 individuals in the research sample. The results showed that their average score on the scale was 234.2, with a standard deviation

of 12.4. When comparing this average with the hypothetical average () for the scale, which is 231, and using the t-test for a single sample, it was found that the difference is statistically significant and in favor of the arithmetic mean, since the calculated t-value was higher than the tabulated t-value of 1.96 with a degree of freedom of 399 and a significance level of 0.05. Table 4. Illustrates this.

Table 4. T-test for the difference between the sample mean and the hypothetical mean of the social awareness scale

Sample size	Arithmetic mean	Hypothetical mean	Std. Deviation	Calculated t-value	Tabulated t-value	Degrees of freedom	Significance level
400	234.2	231	12.4	4.62	1.96	399	sig

The results of the current study are consistent with those of a study by Hassan (2018), which showed that the study sample had positive forms of social awareness and perception of social reality in its various aspects, or the intellectual perception and mental image that the researcher has of these aspects of reality as they appear in his response through the imagined situations presented to the researchers through the research tool. This indicates the maturity of the students, especially those in the fourth stage.

Objective (4): Identify differences in forms of social awareness .

* According to gender

Table. 5. The t-test for two independent samples to indicate differences according to the variable of gender

sample	gender	No.	Mean	Std. deviation	Cal. t-test	Tab. t-test	d. freedom	Sig. level
400	male	200	234.1	12.5	-0.42	1.96	399	None sig
	female	200	234.3	12.3				

* According to academic stage

Table.6 The t-test for two independent samples to indicate differences according to the variable of academic stage

sample	stage	No.	Mean	Std. deviation	Cal. t-test	Tab. t-test	d. freedom	Sig. level
400	1 st	200	234.36	12.1	-16.5	1.96	399	sig
	4 th	200	234.04	12.5				

The results in Tables 4, 5, and 6 indicate the following: -

- 1- No statistically significant difference was observed in the forms of social awareness based on gender, as the computed t-value (-0.42) did not exceed the critical t-value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level with 399 degrees of freedom.
- 2- The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in the forms of social awareness with respect to specialization, given that the calculated t-value (0.38) was lower than the critical t-value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level and 399 degrees of freedom.
- 3- A statistically significant difference was identified in the forms of social awareness according to academic stage, as the computed t-value (0.05) was less than the critical value (3.84) at the 0.05 significance level with 399 degrees of freedom.

Objective (5): Identify the correlation between the tendency toward extremism and forms of social awareness among university students.

To achieve this objective, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to calculate the correlation coefficient between the total scores obtained by the sample individuals on the tendency toward extremism scale and forms of social awareness. The results showed that there is a statistically significant inverse correlation between the tendency toward extremism and forms of social awareness, with a calculated correlation value of 0.43, which is higher than Pearson's tabulated correlation coefficient of 0.098 at a level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 399. This result is explained in light of a study (Salem 2018) which explained that individuals develop a tendency towards extremism and think about forms of social awareness when they feel unable to achieve self-actualization among their peers or due to economic and social pressures they suffer from, which exposes them to frustration and, consequently, extremism. The results are consistent with a study by Shaldan (2006), which concluded that the tendency and may seem unfair treatment,

expressing blame or seeking forms of social awareness as justification.

*** Conclusion**

At the end of this study, the concepts of the tendency toward extremism and forms of social awareness were addressed, as they are considered major problems facing many societies, especially among young people, who represent the building blocks of society. An attempt was made to identify the causes of extremism and address deviant ideas. Descriptive research was used to study the variables in order to understand the trend towards extremism and forms of social awareness, with an explanation of the statistical methods used to verify the validity of the hypotheses. The research concluded that university students suffer from a trend towards extremism, and that there are statistically significant differences in the extremism variable in favor of males over females and the fourth academic stage over the first stage, while there were no statistically significant differences in the major variable.

As for forms of social awareness, the results showed the existence of positive forms of social awareness among university students, and that there were statistically significant differences

according to the stage of study variable and no statistically significant differences according to the gender and major variables. People who have a tendency toward extremism feel unable to achieve self-actualization and have lower forms of social awareness.

The research concludes that it is necessary to pay attention to young people, educate them intellectually, and engage them in sports activities that contribute to harnessing their energy and directing it toward useful activities through volunteer campaigns to clean up the environment, visit nursing homes, and many other activities. It also concludes that it is necessary to hold courses and workshops for faculty members to educate them about deviant and extremist ideas and guide them on the proper methods of protecting young people from extremist ideology. Work to provide job opportunities for young people and guide them professionally to prevent them from falling under the influence of frustration and, consequently, extremism.

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