

Monitoring of Political Tolerance as a Tool for Early Warning on Youth Extremism

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: The relevance of the study is determined by the growth of international terrorism and extremism. To prevent (warn of) extremism among young people is a vital task. In this context, this article focuses on the search for new methods for early warning of extremism in the youth environment. **Methods:** The study offers a new approach to prevent the spread of extremism among the youth. Unlike foreign approaches emphasizing complicated statistical methods for analysis of the committed crimes of an extremist nature, the authors propose a method of early diagnosis and prevention of extremism manifestations among young people. In contrast to statistics and sociological surveys monitoring allows accurately tracking the real social processes and coordinate the work of state and social institutions in combating extremism. **Findings:** A hypothesis has been formulated concerning of the relationship between political intolerance and extremist mindsets. To achieve the objectives of the study and verify the hypothesis empirical indicators have been identified which reflect the structure of the social attitude and the time history of students' values and attitudes has been traced. As a result of the study the levels of political tolerance/intolerance have been identified, a comparative analysis of political tolerance indices has been carried out in specific social subgroups of students and intolerant behavior risk groups have been revealed that are associated with socio-demographic characteristics of students. The authors have proposed a method of political tolerance/intolerance monitoring as a tool for early warning of extremism dissemination in the youth environment. **Novelty/Application:** The article findings are of practical value for national regulatory and administrative authorities, the police in terms of improving the work with risk groups and preventing the spread of extremism among the youth.

Keywords: Extremism, Extremism Prevention, Monitoring, Tolerance, Youth Extremism

1. Introduction

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 scientific interest in the topic of combating terrorism has increased around the world. The number of studies published on the subject increased dramatically¹. An active search for new methods of studying extremism and terrorism is observed. Studies by American scientists are mostly focused on the analysis of already committed crimes using sophisticated statistical analysis methods² and the structural modeling methods³. However, the use of statistical methods is arousing criticism and doubts are expressed as to their reliability⁴. European scientists began to study extrem-

ism and terrorism even before September 11, 2001. For example, a socio-philosophical model of extremism was substantiated within modern liberal-democratic system of ethical and political values, according to which extremism acts as a universal antithesis of constitutional order and democracy⁵. It stands to reason that young people are most often bearers of extremist views as it becomes increasingly difficult for them to adapt to the dynamics of the changing reality, to the market requirements, competition and democracy.

It is important to emphasize that young people are not only involved in extremist activity, but with increasing frequency they are becoming victims of extremist crimes.

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According to American researchers in 2000 the average age of the victims Jihad was slightly less than 33 years old⁶. It should also be noted that the long-term data of American studies show that friends and family members of criminals fall more often victims to criminal offenses than strangers⁷.

Spread of youth extremism is one of the most acute problems of modern Russia⁸.

In the present article the authors want to combine sociological and criminological approaches to the study of youth extremism. To this end, the article, first of all, explains what actions of the Russian state contributed to the success in combating extremism and terrorism, and secondly, traces a correlation between the political intolerance and extremism, and thirdly, it justifies the methods of monitoring the political intolerance as a way of preventing extremism among youth.

2. Legal Framework for Countering Extremism in Russia

Extremism has become a real global problem of the modern society. Although the issue of extremism has been widely discussed, there is still no single interpretation of its understanding.

In a sociological framework, extremism refers to political ideologies that oppose the society's core values and principles. For example, exploring the cultural-extremism nexus, Elaine Pressman finds 'extremism' to be a culturally relative term in that extremist beliefs are dependent on the cultural perspective since the person who holds views which are considered to be extreme within one cultural context or time may not be considered to hold extremist beliefs within another cultural context or time. He therefore suggests that "[n]orms and values are intricately bound up in the definition of extremism"⁹.

In liberal democracies, extremism is applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and human rights¹⁰.

In studies of the last decade, much attention is paid to preventive methods for combating extremism among young people. Several interesting directions can be distinguished among the perspective of ideas of prevention and combating youth extremism. Assessment of the essence of extremism, the causes and content of this phenomenon, its types and ethno-psychological, geographical

and other features are analyzed in the works by T. Bjørgo, R.C. Meldrum, T.J. Young, C. Hay, J.L. Flexon, T. Berecz and K. Domina.

In particular, author in¹¹ analyzed value orientations and extremist behavior of young people and proposed preventive measures to work with them. The author argues that since the nature of extremism is dynamic and diverse, it is useless to target a single prevention strategy for all types of extremist behavior; it is much more effective to pick up specific tools suitable for each individual type or aspect.

The report made by¹² gives the analysis of the impact migration exerts on the spread of extremism in the European Union. The work tracks the influence of socio-economic and territorial factors on the spread of extremism among youth.

Parameters of political marginalization of the unemployed and employed young people in Europe are compared in the article of¹³, the authors discuss various aspects – political beliefs, political interests and political extremism.

The works of¹⁴⁻¹⁷ analyze the influence of mass media and social networks on youth extremist sentiments.

Finally it is worth mentioning the studies which emphasize the role of educational institutions and family upbringing as powerful anti-extremist social and ideological factors in the sphere of youth policy. In particular, the UK experience in the development of youth's intolerance attitudes toward extremism and in countering the influence of extremist groups on young people is of interest. The program is based on "cognitive discoveries" that high school and college students make, while developing their own thoughts about effective strategies to prevent violence and extremism in the discussions and debates¹⁸.

Let us proceed to the analysis of the practice of combating extremism in Russia.

British Institute for Economics and Peace published Global Terrorism Index¹⁹. The researchers found that the terrorist threat in the world increased significantly in 2014: The number of terrorist attacks and the number of their victims enlarged. Since 2000, the number of people killed in terrorist attacks has increased nine-fold from 3.329 to 32.658. At the same time, the report authors note that in Russia the situation has improved markedly. Russia made significant progress in the fight against the terrorist threat. And the number of deaths from terrorist attacks is reduced every year. What actions of the Russian

state contributed to the success in combating extremism and terrorism?

In the period of 2002-2015 a new model of law developed in Russia and a new regulatory framework was established to counter crime. Currently extremism is one of the key threats to the national security of the Russian Federation²⁰. Countering extremism is an important task of the state and society. Over the past 15 years, the new legal framework to combat terrorism and extremism was created. In 2002, the Federal Law “On Countering Extremist Activity” was passed which formulated general principles for combating extremism in the Russian Federation,

The Federal law refers the following to the extremist activity (extremism): forcible change of the foundations of the constitutional system and violation of the integrity of the Russian Federation; public justification of terrorism and other terrorist activity; stirring up of social, racial, ethnic or religious discord; propaganda of exceptional nature, superiority or deficiency of persons on the grounds of their social, racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliation or attitude to religion; violation of human and civil rights and freedoms and lawful interests in connection with a person’s social, racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliation or attitude to religion; obstruction of the exercise by citizens of their electoral rights and rights to participate in a referendum or violation of voting secrecy, combined with violence or threat of the use thereof; obstruction of the lawful activities of state authorities, local authorities, electoral commissions, public and religious associations or other organizations, combined with violence or threat of the use thereof; committing of crimes with the motives set out in indent “f” [“e” in the original Russian] of paragraph 1 of article 63 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation; propaganda and public show of Nazi emblems or symbols or of emblems or symbols similar to Nazi emblems or symbols to the point of confusion between the two; public calls inciting the carrying out of the aforementioned actions or mass dissemination of knowingly extremist material, and likewise the production or storage thereof with the aim of mass dissemination; public, knowingly false accusation of an individual holding state office of the Russian Federation or state office of a Russian Federation constituent entity of having committed actions mentioned in the present Article and that constitute offences while discharging their official duties; organization and preparation of the aforementioned actions and also incitement

of others to commit them; funding of the aforementioned actions or any assistance for their organization, preparation and carrying out, including by providing training, printing and material/technical support, telephony or other types of communications links or information services²¹.

In 2006 the Strategy of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation²² was approved and in 2009 the RF “National Security Strategy until 2020” was adopted. Thus, a new legal framework was created to combat extremism and its spread in the community and especially among the youth. However, only legal remedies are insufficient to win the struggle against extremism. It is important to deprive extremism of feeding its resources. First of all this refers to human resources, mostly represented by the young people. It is today’s youth that increasingly becomes the target of extremist organizations, because they not only lack life experience, but is well versed in the advanced technologies which are all included in the arsenal of extremist movements and organizations.

3. Extremism and Intolerance of Young People in Russia

As evidenced by the international studies, the states with an unstable political and economic situation (including Russia) are susceptible to extremist crimes in the first place. These conditions are the causes of extremism outbreak as a universal and cynical tool for solving political and economic disputes, entailing the destabilization of national security. According to the Russian statistics and the majority of experts, over the past ten years the number of extremist crimes is growing in Russia. Whereas 656 extremist crimes were officially registered in 2010, in 2015 their number increased to 1,308²³.

The spread of extremism and its manifestations indicate a lack of social adaptation of the subjects, the development of anti-social mindsets of consciousness causing aggressive behavior patterns. Tolerance is an instrument for ensuring social cohesion, especially among individuals and groups whose values differ.

Tolerance is the capacity of the individual to have mutual understanding and ability to perceive respectfully and to endure the diversity of the modern world, the presence of different points of view, opinions, values, norms of behavior therein. Tolerance implies the construction of a tolerant attitude of the society (groups) to different ideo-

logical theories, moral, religious beliefs, cultural events, to people of different nationalities. However, the phenomenon of tolerance should be better explored “through the back side of tolerance” – via “intolerance”²⁴.

Intolerance (from the *Latin* *intolerantia* – lack of tolerance, impatience, unendurableness, insufferableness, insolence) as a social and cultural phenomenon is complex and heterogeneous. It can be expressed in a wide range – from mild discomfort and irritation, not implemented in the behavior, to various forms of discriminatory behavior, up to the genocide.

While tolerance is underpinned by the willingness to cooperate with people of other cultures, attitudes, beliefs, its opposite – intolerance – is characterized by the rejection of the people of other cultures, attitudes, beliefs. It is often based on the idea that ‘own’ is normal, natural, and the ‘other’ is an abnormal and unnatural.

This results in public calls for aggressive, discriminatory, violent acts against others, ‘not ours’, approval of discriminatory measures and extremist actions against them. In this capacity intolerance is closely intertwined with extremism and radicalism.

Paradoxical as it may sound, but tolerance must have certain limits, beyond which intolerance should occur to the phenomena in which the destructive potential is laid: crime, terrorism, xenophobia and extremism.

At the time, Karl Popper put it as the “paradox of tolerance”: Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them. We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. But we should claim the right to suppress them if necessary even by force”²⁵.

The results of empirical studies in the Russian Federation continue to capture the trend to the growth of social tension, intolerant behavior and negative attitude towards certain national, ethnic and social groups²⁶.

According to the authors of the analytical review prepared by domestic and foreign researchers in 2010, the beginning of the 21st century was marked by increasing violence against individuals and private property in Russia, caused by racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance.

According to Human Rights First, a human rights non-governmental organization, the number of atrocious crimes with violence continues to grow steadily in Russia.

In 2007 there were 667 victims of racist crimes, including 86 murders. By August 2008, 65 people were killed as a result of racist and other attacks. These are young people who commit the most serious crimes motivated by racism. Often, they are determined by the law enforcement agencies rather as minor offenses not entailing serious punishment than as acts of racism. According to some sources, the number of neo-Nazi sympathizers makes 10,000 people, most of them are young men united into 150 extremist organizations. A certain degree of extremist sentiments is inherent in different types of youth movements and may manifest itself in the form of actions provided life situation worsening²⁷.

The main causes of these negative phenomena are well known: they include spiritual and moral transformation of the society, the large decile coefficient of the income gap between the rich and the poor, deformation of the education and upbringing system, growth of distrust to the existing social and political institutions. Institutional life environment of young people is the most exposed to changes, both on positive and negative scale²⁶.

The same characteristics are often cited as determinants of growth of extremist sentiments. It is clear that these negative phenomena will not be eradicated in society in the near future. So, they will still affect the development of intolerance and extremist to any extent.

In this regard, it is important to create a system of measures aimed at countering extremist activity. The Federal Law “On Countering Extremist Activity” directly specifies that in order to counter extremism the federal authorities, state authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation, local self-government shall take, within their competence on a priority basis, preventive, including educational and promotional, measures aimed at the prevention of extremist activity

In this context, the comprehensive system of observations, evaluation and forecast of the changes in the state of political tolerance may serve as a relevant measure for prevention and early warning of extremism among young people in order to identify risk groups having a low level of tolerance mindsets and potentially inclined to support extremist activity. It is about identifying the first signs of extremism onset and prevention of its earliest forms. Monitoring of political tolerance should become a part of the system for preventing the spread of extremism mindsets among young people.

In this study youth is considered as “marginal socio-demographic group which, by virtue of age characteristics,

differs by little social experience, immature value orientations, the boundary location between the group of adults and a group of children (not yet an adult, but no longer a child), and as extreme maximalism and radicalism in judgment. The age of this social group defines a priori the proneness to conflict, extremism and manifestations of intolerant behavior²⁷.

Tolerance in the sociological sense is understood as a social norm which regulates the social interaction of the subjects belonging to different cultures and includes respect for the opponents, their worldviews, orientations, values, attitudes, norms and behavior patterns.

Intolerance in the sociological sense is understood as a deviation from the social norm, which manifests itself in rejection, impatience to people of other cultures, attitudes, beliefs, values, norms and behavior patterns.

Political tolerance is understood as a social norm that regulates the interaction of subjects belonging to different political cultures and includes respect for the political opponent, recognition of the possibility and necessity of the existence of different political forces, political and philosophical systems, orientations, values, attitudes, norms, political behavior models, etc.

Political intolerance can also be defined as a deviation from the norm. But in this case the deviation is rather of socio-cultural nature than of social and legal one. Unlike other areas of public life, intolerance in politics has certain features. Intolerance in politics has often fuzzy or blurred boundaries which may change due to the changes in the alignment of political forces.

Political tolerance in the system of political relations takes the form of institutionalized conflicts, that is, the form of struggle for power according to certain rules (for example, the election institute, the institute of law and judicial system, the institute of parliamentarism, the institution of political party and other).

Political intolerance is not identical to extremism. But it can escalate into extremism under certain conditions. Therefore, monitoring of political tolerance may be considered as a measure of prevention and early warning of extremism spread.

Extremism is a socio-legal and criminogenic-criminal phenomenon. According to Russian legislation, extremism is characterized by assaults aimed at changing the constitutional order, and at stirring up political, ideological, racial, ethnic or religious hatred or enmity with violence or threat of its use, causing property damage, as well as incitement to commit such acts²⁸.

Extremism is a threat to the constitutional order of the Russian Federation and the democratic human rights and freedoms which are expressed in the inner readiness to activity aimed at achieving the set goals by criminal means²⁹.

It is important to note that young people increasingly fall victims to extremist crimes. The regularity is observed in murders on ideological grounds: the majority of the victims were not familiar with the criminals. These were the occasional relations. It can be argued that the increase in social distance is a characteristic feature for ideologically motivated violence. The absence of a personal acquaintance with the potential victim psychologically facilitates for extremists and terrorists to commit crimes on ideological, ethnic or religious grounds³⁰.

Other researchers noted that the extremist crimes, in some ways, are of "random" nature. Random people become their victims³¹.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the empirical study of political tolerance was made by the concept of values as abstract ideas expressing human beliefs about behavior types and preferred goals, as well as the theory of social attitudes associated with the ideas of^{32,33}. According to their views, the social attitude instructs the individual to act in a certain way. In various social situations personal attitudes must manifest themselves in different ways, i.e., situationally, depending on the nature of social distance.

Methodology for identifying the political tolerance mindsets took into account such structural components of the mindset as an object of social attitude; the individual's response to the object (positive or negative) which can occur at three levels- cognitive, affective and behavioral ones. The theory of social attitude assumes that the "Other" must be specified. Based on the positional approach this research investigated the attitudes of young people towards Russian political parties.

Quantitative analysis techniques were used as the empirical methods for studying the values and mindsets of political tolerance. The empirical data were collected in the form of a questionnaire survey. Statistical processing and analysis of primary empirical data were carried out by applying SPSS computer statistical processing program.

4. Extremism and Political Intolerance of Youth: Results of the Empirical Research

As a result of the empirical study carried out in 2014-2015 in the Murmansk region, it was found that the majority

of young people were aware of the importance of political tolerance as a value of modern society, but political tolerance mindsets are formed at a sufficiently low level. In some young people the political tolerance values are declarative in nature, they are not made actual in terms of interaction with a certain “political other” – at the level of mindsets college students are mostly intolerant. Does this mean that this part of young people is prone to extremism? The authors have no unequivocal answer. In our opinion, at present they most likely do not pose a public threat. But in a particular situation and under certain circumstances, the representatives of this group may take part in extremist activity in one form or another.

In the authors’ opinion, the presence of certain intolerant attitudes in the individual’s mind towards particular social or political object cannot be a sign of extremist activity. However, if these separate mindsets take a systematic character and are transformed into clear ideological views, which are based on the ideas of impatience (intolerance) to the fundamental values and principles of the society, socio-political forms of its structure and are expressed in psychological readiness to act by violent (illegal) methods, implementing extremist ideology, then we have the signs of extremist activity.

The available extremist attitudes can be considered a sign of extremist activity. At least, for example, the Terrorism and Extremist Crime Database created in the United States specifies two parameters as their features: first, behavioral, i.e., commitments of an act of violence; and second attitudinal³⁴. The absence of the second feature in a crime is the basis to qualify it as a simple criminal offense.

Table 1. Level of political tolerance as a value

	Frequency	%
low level of political tolerance	7	2.7
medium level of political tolerance	70	26.9
high level of political tolerance	183	70.4
Total	260	100.0

The study was meant to measure the students’ tolerance mindsets concerning the Russian political parties. The methodology covered empirical indicators that reflect the structure of the social attitude consisting of its structural components, such as an object of social attitude, social situation where the object is placed in, the individual’s response to the object (positive or negative),

which can occur at three levels – cognitive, affective and behavioral ones.

Thus, the assessments made by respondents describing the views of the parties as being erroneous, dangerous, and the unwillingness to understand their point of view and ideas were used as empirical indicators of political intolerance at the cognitive level. Empirical indicators of intolerance at the affective level contained concepts that describe the negative emotions of the respondents in relation to the ideas and activities of the political parties, such as hostility, a sense of disrespect. The lack of relevance to the respondent of the party pluralism, focus on the one-party system and evaluation of some parties as unimportant ones refer to the same level of the mindset. Empirical indicators describing the behavioral aspect of the social attitude of the party intolerance can be expressed in the intention to abolish some of the political parties, in the refusal to provide quota places to minority parties in the parliament, in the readiness to deny them the right to exercise their right to vote.

The total frequency analysis of the indicators of political tolerance towards the Russian political parties and the statistical data given in Table 1 showed a mixed response of students. Some empirical indicators demonstrated party intolerance of the majority of students towards the Russian parties. This fact forced to undertake a further in-depth analysis in terms of the identified specific subgroups of empirical indicators and using additional statistical methods.

Index of the students’ political tolerance for the entire sample set at mindset level amounted to 37.6 points. Since the index value on a scale could range from 18 (min) to 72 (max) of points where the interval from 18 to 36 points characterized the low level of party tolerance, the range from 37 to 54 points corresponded to the medium level and from 55 to 72 to the high level, then it turns out that one can talk about the medium level of tolerance among students with regard to the Russian political parties. Frequency analysis revealed the ratio of students’ subgroups demonstrating low, medium and high levels of tolerance which made 43.1%, 51.9% and 5%, respectively (Table 2).

As can be seen, the percentage of students demonstrating the high level of tolerance to the Russian political parties (at the level of social attitude) is very small in comparison with other subgroups. At the same time a relatively numerous subgroup of students was intolerant-minded towards the Russian political parties.

Table 2. Level of political tolerance as a mindset

Tolerance Level	Frequency	%
low	163	43.1
medium	196	51.9
high	19	5.0
Total	378	100.0

As a whole, the average level of political tolerance is characteristic of the youth, which is consistent with the theories of the democratic values formation and development, in general^{35,36} and the results of empirical research into political tolerance, in particular³⁷.

Detailed comparative analysis of the party tolerance index at different levels of social attitude (where 6 is min and 24 is max value) showed that no significant differences are observed here. The tolerance index at the cognitive level of the attitude made up 11.6 points, amounting to 13.3 points at the affective level as and to 14.9 points at the behavioral level, where the range from 6 to 12 points means the low tolerance level, from 13 to 18 - medium and from 19 to 24 - high level (Tables 3-5). Thus, the results of the study led to the conclusion that there is a relationship between the various aspects of tolerance. In this case, the rule works which states that if the individuals exhibit some tolerance at any one of the attitude levels; they are tolerant at other levels as well. Thus, the relationship between different aspects of tolerance is proved, which is consistent with the results of the existing studies²⁶.

Table 3. Students' political tolerance mindset at the cognitive level

Tolerance Level	Frequency	%
low	224	62.7
medium	119	33.3
high	14	3.9
Total	357	100.0

Table 4. Students' political tolerance mindset at the affective level

Tolerance Level	Frequency	%
low	159	43.4
medium	179	48.9
high	28	7.7
Total	366	100.0

Table 5. Students' political tolerance mindset at the behavioral level

Tolerance Level	Frequency	%
low	115	31.2
medium	171	46.3
high	83	22.5
Total	369	100.0

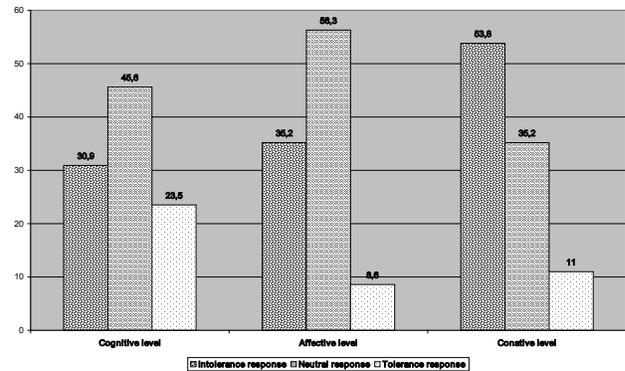


Figure 1. Tolerance/intolerance at 3 levels of students' attitude, in % by groups.

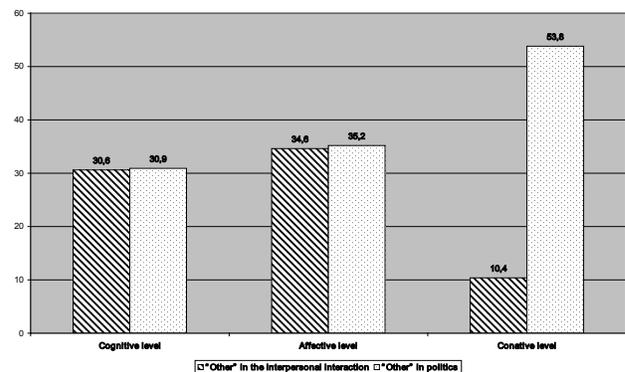


Figure 2. Students' tolerance in the situation of interpersonal communication and in the situation of political competition.

The study found that young people are more intolerant in politics than in the situation of simple interpersonal communication. Comparing the results of measurements on two situations, the authors observe that the number of tolerant persons prevails in the situations of interpersonal communication and the number of intolerant ones – in the situation of political struggle (Figures 1 and 2).

For clarity let us compare the levels of students' tolerance/intolerance in the situation of interpersonal communication and the situation of political competition (Figure 3).

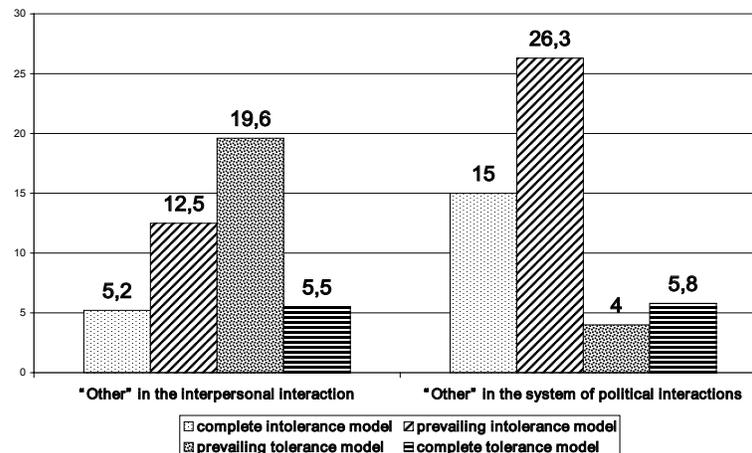


Figure 3. Models of students' political tolerance, in %.

5. Conclusion

The study presents a new approach to the prevention of extremism among youth. The authors propose to use the method of political intolerance monitoring as a means of early diagnosis and prevention of extremism manifestations among young people. In the authors' opinion, the monitoring of political tolerance/intolerance enables to identify risk groups through the identification of political intolerance mindsets and prevent further spread of extremist ideology among young people at the early stages of its development.

The research results confirm the findings of previous studies on the role of socio-economic factors in the development of youth extremism, emphasizing particularly the role of institutions of family and education as effective anti-extremist social and ideological factors in youth upbringing. The research proved that in families with the high level of wealth status tolerant children are brought up more often, while in families with the low level of financial standing, on the contrary, children are intolerant. Our findings are consistent with the opinion of the American scientists about the impact of the family and especially, of the mother's social status on the processes of youth socialization and fostering tolerance towards the other people, and also they confirm the conclusion of British scientists about the role of the institute of education in the development of youth's extremism intolerance mindsets and countering the influence of extremist groups on the youth.

The research results are of practical value for the state government and administration bodies and the police in terms of improving the work with risk groups and preventing the spread of extremism among youth people.

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