PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS IN DESTRUCTIVE AND RADICAL GROUPS

Rasulova Nilufar Tulkunovna
Associate professor (PhD) of the department of "Psychology of religion and pedagogy" of the International islamic academy of Uzbekistan

Abstract: *The article examines the psychological characteristics of individuals involved in destructive and radical groups, with a particular emphasis on their vulnerability to techniques of mind control and thought reform. Personal, socio-psychological, and cognitive factors that predispose individuals to cultic influence are analyzed, along with the motivational mechanisms underlying entry into such organizations. Special attention is given to the processes of psychological transformation of the personality within destructive group dynamics, including the loss of individuality, the formation of guilt and fear, the internalization of absolutist ideology, and the disruption of social ties. The consequences of involvement in and withdrawal from cults are considered, as well as the role of family and sociocultural factors in the development of cult vulnerability.*

Keywords: *destructive cults, radical groups, involved personality, mind control, indoctrination, cognitive dissonance, behavioral control.*

Introduction

In conditions of social instability, value uncertainty, and increasing ideological competition, the problem of individual involvement in destructive and radical groups becomes particularly relevant. Such associations actively employ technologies of psychological influence and manipulation of

consciousness, which renders certain categories of individuals especially vulnerable.

Understanding the psychological mechanisms of involvement and personality transformation in a cultic environment is a necessary prerequisite for the prevention of radicalization and the development of effective psychological assistance programs.

1. Vulnerability and Psychological Predisposition to Cultic Influence

Individuals with reduced adaptive capacities are most susceptible to indoctrination. Maladaptation may be caused by both socio-economic difficulties and individual psychological characteristics of the personality.

The factors of predisposition include:

1.1. Personality Types. The most vulnerable are individuals with histrionic, psychasthenic, dependent, and paranoid personality traits. The paranoid type is characterized by the externalization of responsibility, a tendency to search for an external enemy, and the attribution of personal failures to the actions of others.

1.2. Low Self-Esteem and Neuroticization. Research indicates that involved individuals are characterized by low self-esteem and a pronounced inferiority complex. Elevated levels of neuroticization manifest in emotional instability, social timidity, reduced initiative, and dependence on significant others.

1.3. Psychotraumatic Experience and Family Factors. Involved individuals often come from single-parent, antisocial, or overprotective families. Experienced psychological traumas, losses, divorces, and crisis life events create an emotional vacuum that is compensated for by cult affiliation.

1.4. Cognitive Characteristics.The risk group includes individuals with eidetic perception and a tendency toward confabulation, which increases susceptibility to suggestion and distorted perception of reality.

The key motivation for joining a cult is a pronounced need for belonging and inclusion in a group. A low level of personal identity formation and self-esteem renders the new cultic identification psychologically significant and practically irreversible. Involvement is typically carried out through deception, and consent is of an unconscious nature.

Psychological Changes in the Process of Cultic Influence

1. Loss of Individuality and Will. As a result of systematic pressure, a dependent personality is formed, having lost initiative and the capacity for independent decision-making.

2. Formation of Fear and Guilt. Manipulative techniques employed by leaders are aimed at creating a diffuse sense of guilt and fear, often through the mechanism of "confession," which is subsequently used as an instrument of psychological control.

3. Internalization of Ideology and "Black-and-White" Thinking. There is an internalization of absolutist rhetoric and a specific "newspeak," which leads to polarization of thinking and the rejection of critical analysis.

4. The Phenomenon of "Doubling of the Personality". Under conditions of extreme pressure, a division of the self into autonomous structures emerges, wherein a new partial self is fully subordinate to group norms and functions as a mechanism of psychological survival.

5. Disruption of Social Ties. The cult isolates followers from family, friends, and society, thereby intensifying dependence on intra-group relationships.

Behavioral control as an element of thought reform, according to S. Hassan's model, constitutes a key component of mind control and includes the regulation of an individual's physical reality, time restriction, control over decision-making, suppression of individualism, a system of rewards and punishments, manipulation of sleep and nutrition patterns, and information

load. The purpose of these practices is the formation of complete manageability of the personality.

L. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance explains the persistence of cult affiliation through the individual's стремление to reduce internal psychological discomfort and to avoid information that contradicts the internalized ideology.

Predisposition to cultic influence is formed in the context of authoritarian or manipulative family relationships. Cults often reproduce a model of a pseudo-family structure, relieving the individual of responsibility and offering the illusion of spiritual growth. Limited social contacts, an identity crisis, and the "neurosis of communality" enhance the attractiveness of the cultic environment.

Conclusion

Thus, involvement in destructive and radical groups is the result of a complex interaction of personal, cognitive, family, and sociocultural factors. Practically any individual experiencing a period of temporary maladaptation may become a potential victim of cultic influence.

Awareness of the psychological mechanisms of involvement and the consequences of cultic impact is of fundamental importance for the prevention of radicalization and the rehabilitation of former members of destructive groups.

USED LITERATURE:

1. Rasulova, Nilufar T. "Faith, Knowledge And Freedom Of Belief: Opportunities And Limitations In The Modern World." American Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences, vol. 29, 20 Oct. 2024, pp. 120-123.

2. Tulkunovna, R. N. (2023). SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE FORMATION OF

REPRODUCTIVE FUNCTION IN STUDENTS. In Proceedings of International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies (Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 272-276).

3. Rasulova, N. T. PSYCHOSOMATIC FEATURES OF THE REPRODUCTIVE SPHERE. Международный научно-практический электронный журнал «МОЯ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНАЯ КАРЬЕРА». Выпуск, (34).

4. ЭМОЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ГРАМОТНОСТЬ: ИСКУССТВО ПОНИМАНИЯ СЕБЯ И ОКРУЖАЮЩЕГО. (2025). International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies, 167-170.

5. Романов А. В. Психологические причины вовлечения в деструктивные религиозные культы // Журнал практического психолога. — 2000, № 1-2. — С. 35-39.