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Subjective Images of Terrorism among Higher Education Students in the Russian Arctic

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Abstract

Young people constitute one of the risk groups most vulnerable to transmission of terrorist ideology and susceptible to entanglement in terrorist activities. This is related to social and psychological characteristics, social status, particular focus of destructive communities on the age group in question as well as increased riskogenics of social environment in general. Identifying subjective images of terrorism in higher education students is relevant since it is necessary to improve preventive actions taken by educational institutions alongside academic, nurturing and leisure activities.

The article provides an overview of research on the subject specified and the results of a sociological survey conducted in two largest higher education institutions in the Arctic region of the Russian Federation. The survey took place from November to December 2021 and involved 3966 bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree students majoring in the following fields: natural sciences, engineering and technical studies, information technologies (IT), social sciences and humanities, psychology and pedagogics, economics and management, medicine. The article indicates certain correlations between an academic major of responding higher education students and knowledge-based, context-dependent, competence-related and affective components constituting the image of terrorism as destructive ideology. The author concludes that higher education institutions shall improve the existing models of preventive actions by paying more attention to individual (group) approach.

Keywords: higher education, public opinion, terrorism, prevention of terrorism ideology.

1. Introduction

In 2017, UNESCO published a guideline for policy makers on the prevention of violent extremism through education (UNESCO, 2017). The guideline aptly notes that "...violent extremism knows no boundaries and affects every society. Young people are, however, most at risk.

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They are the main targets of recruitment strategies and fall victim to extremist violence» (UNESCO, 2017: 2). It is the potential of the education system that allows to develop young people's immunity to propaganda spread by extremists and terrorist groups (Baretto, 2005). In this regard, investment in education is a reliable long-term strategy in a fight against extremism and terrorism (Kristof, WuDunn, 2010), while making education the corner stone of counter-terrorism campaigns is able to ensure security worldwide (Lelo, 2011).

Increasing number of destructive trends operating outside the rules of law and making terrorism one of the ways to achieve the set goals and put pressure upon government institutions determines the importance of research into subjective images of terrorism among certain social groups. Understanding threats posed by any terrorist activities and general awareness of the terrorist problem are fundamental for the development of students' anti-terrorist attitude and their readiness for adequate action in emergency. The research into students' social images of terrorism is relevant due to the number of reasons.

First, young people as a group are most vulnerable to various destructive trends because of their sociopsychological characteristics and special social status (Kruzhkova i dr., 2016; Kurshev, 2022; Taylor, 1994). In this respect, essential aspects are financial insecurity, dependence on other people's opinion, uncompromising estimates and judgments, high online activity, misperception of destructive groups' objectives and mechanisms of manipulative influence, etc.

Secondly, destructive groups affiliated with terrorist activities have been relocating their operations into the virtual space, including social networks and computer games, which are used to recruit young people upholding radical views when it comes to politics, national, religious and social issues (Baykov, 2019; Muryukina, 2017; Stibli, 2010).

Thirdly, in order to put mass, group and individual measures of terrorist ideology prevention among young people into practice, education system as an institution of social engagement shall possess information on the degree of students' awareness of the terrorism problem, as well as on the level of their readiness to counter terrorist activities and ideology. The results of empirical research demonstrate insufficient students' awareness of the extremism and terrorism problem (Evtukh, Kotova, 2021; Valitova, 2020).

Social images of the terrorism problem among students have been the object of numerous studies across the globe since early 21st century. For instance, back in the 2000s a Japanese college conducted a survey among its bachelor's degree students regarding their opinion about the terrorist attacks against New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, and the Indian Parliament attack on December 13, 2001 (Alam, 2003). Although all studies on the subject matter in question are rather similar from the conceptual and methodological points of view, the following different categories lie at their core: images of terrorism, perception of terrorism, attitude towards terrorism, anti-terrorist stance, etc. A number of studies examine two or more interrelated phenomena (terrorism, extremism, interethnic communication, inter-religious conflicts, etc.) providing vast empirical evidence. Table 1 shows examples of studies devoted to the issues of students' social images of terrorism.

Table 1. Examples of research works on students' social images of terrorism

No.	Research site	Research scope	Research method(-s)	Research tools
1	The University of Jordan (Da'san, Alsawalqa, 2021)	400 students	Questionnaire-based survey	Original questionnaire
2	The institute of education and research Punjab University Lahore and University of education (Pakistan) (Ahmad et al., 2018)	267 students	- Questionnaire-based survey - Methods of statistical data processing	Original questionnaire (with the use of the Likert-type scale)
3	The Sun Yat-sen University; the Southern China University of Technology; the Guangzhou University of	500 students	Questionnaire-based survey (with additional in-depth interviews)	Original questionnaire (using the classical Almond and Verba's approach)

	Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (Shen, Liu, 2009)			
4	University of Nevada, Las Vegas (United States) (Mazmanyan, 2020)	9 students	Semi-structured interviewing	Original guide
5	A college in a Japanese city (Alam, 2003)	75 students	Questionnaire-based survey	Original questionnaire
6	Ivanovo State Power Engineering University (Russian Federation) (Lisova, Kryukova, 2021)	133 students	- Questionnaire-based survey - Free association method	Original questionnaire
7	Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Perm branch, Russian Federation) (Evtukh, Kotova, 2021)	170 (2019) and 288 (2021) respondents	Questionnaire-based survey	Original questionnaire
8	Higher education institutions in the Southern and the North Caucasian Federal Districts of the Russian Federation (Valitova, 2020)	4112 students	Questionnaire-based survey	Original questionnaire
9	Russian Open Academy of Transport at the Russian University of Transport Russian State University named after A.N. Kosygin (Russian Federation) (Kirillov, Kirillova, 2018)	212 graduates	Questionnaire-based survey	Original questionnaire
10	Smolensk State Medical University (Russian Federation) (Kiseleva i dr., 2016)	100 students	Questionnaire-based survey	Original questionnaire
11	Mari State University (Russian Federation) (Zimina i dr., 2016)	79 students	Questionnaire-based survey	Test questionnaire "Young people's attitude to terrorism"
12	Higher education institutions in Moscow and Ulan-Ude (Russian Federation) (Batueva, 2011)	190 students	- Questionnaire-based survey - Psychological assessment - Mathematical and statistical analysis	- Original questionnaire - Complex psychological assessment

The overview of studies devoted to subjective images of terrorism among students allows for the following conclusions:

1. The overwhelming majority of studies in question involved a relatively small sample of about 100-200 respondents, which means that the results obtained could basically apply only to a certain educational institution (research base), and that the empirical data is insufficient to be extrapolated to the regional or national level in order to carry out comprehensive statistical analysis.

2. Generalization of research findings demonstrates negative attitude of higher education students towards terrorism, yet the occurrence of responses bearing evidence of positive attitude indicates the necessity of identifying statistical correlations based upon other assessment parameters aiming to put together a holistic understanding of the existing social images of terrorism among students.

3. The studies analyzed are typically focused on knowledge-based and affective components constituting the images of terrorism among students. Researchers fail to pay proper attention to the issues regarding images of scope of the threat to the state and society, efficiency of measures taken by the authorities to counter the terrorist ideology, actions in the event of terror strikes, and effective solutions to stand against any destructive manifestations.

With regard to the above, the research presented is aimed at identification of dissimilarities in subjective images (knowledge-based, context-dependent, competence-related and affective components) of terrorism as a destructive phenomenon among higher education students in the Russian Arctic.

2. Materials and methods

From November 24 to December 16, 2021, a survey was conducted among higher education students of two largest universities in the Arctic region of the Russian Federation: Northern (Arctic) Federal University and Northern State Medical University. The study was carried out in the form of a survey with an original questionnaire as its basic tool.

The survey involved 4071 respondents (bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree students of all study years) with sample bias not exceeding 1.53 %. After sample rejection, 3966 questionnaires were accepted for analysis.

Questionnaire-based survey was held remotely via *LimeSurvey*, which is an online tool for anonymous surveys. The questionnaire included questions intended to determine the following:

a. Self-assessment of terrorism-related knowledge in students (knowledge-based component),

b. Images of scope of the threat to the state and society, efficiency of measures taken by the authorities to counter the terrorist ideology (context-dependent component),

c. Nature of feelings towards terrorists, degree of security in the face of terrorist attacks and level of confidence in the government authorities (affective component),

d. Level of awareness of actions to be taken in the event of terror strikes, ideas of most effective solutions to withstand terrorism (competence-related component).

After self-assessment of terrorism-related knowledge, all respondents were equipped with the definition of terrorism. Such approach derived from the necessity to minimize dissimilarities in the levels of awareness of the issue in question among the respondents. Thereupon, survey participants were to answer questions relating to the context-dependent, emotional, and competence-related aspects of terrorism images.

All questionnaires were divided with consideration for the specifics of the respondents' study programs, which resulted in the introduction of a variable called "Major". With regard to the specified indicator, seven respondent groups were distinguished: natural sciences, engineering and technical studies, information technologies (IT), social sciences and humanities, psychology and pedagogics, economics and management, medicine. The research findings were processed and analyzed via *SPSS.Statistic 17.0* computer program. In order to determine availability/non-availability of two-dimensional correlation between the variables, the author resorted to the "universal" non-parametric Pearson's chi-squared test (χ2) in order to derive contingency tables with ordinal and nominal variables. Applicability of Pearson's χ2 is proved by the fact that no more than 20% of the table cells have expected counts less than 5.

3. Results

78.8 % of respondents estimate their current knowledge of terrorism as good, 19.4 % rate it as superficial and 1.8 % demonstrate lack of any knowledge. It is worth mentioning that female respondents are more aware of the issue in question (79.4 %) than male respondents (77.6 %).

As far as statistical dependence is concerned, it exists when it comes to the respondents' majors (p = 0.000; χ2 = 117.701; df = 12). For instance, higher values of knowledge of terrorism were recorded among the students majoring in psychology and pedagogics (83.3%), social sciences and humanities (83 %), economics and management (82.7 %) (Table 2). Superficial knowledge of

the terrorism problem is more common among the students majoring in natural sciences, whereas medical students more often admit they lack any knowledge of terrorism (5.3 %).

Table 2. Distribution of responses to the question "Do you know what terrorism is?" with regard to the academic major, in % (N = 3966, p = 0.000)

Academic major of the respondent / Possible answers	natural sciences	engineering and technical studies	IT	social sciences and humanities	psychology and pedagogics	economics and management	medicine
Yes, I have good knowledge of it	73.5 %	75.2 %	78.8 %	**83.0 %**	**83.3 %**	**82.7 %**	76.4 %
Yes, I heard about it, but my knowledge is rather superficial	**25.8 %**	23.0 %	20.9 %	16.5 %	16.3 %	16.0 %	18.3 %
No, I don't.	0.7 %	1.8 %	0.3 %	0.5 %	0.4 %	1.3 %	**5.3 %**

Most of the respondents' feelings towards terrorists are fear (64 %), anger (45.3 %), desire to stand against (43.3 %), and weakness (34.1 %). Special emphasis shall be laid upon the existence of students expressing solidarity with terrorists (0.7 % of respondents), willing to join them (0.7 %), and sympathizing with them (0.8 %). The field of respondents' future professional activities with regard to this question is not quite representative: there is no dependence between most of the respondents' academic majors and the type of feelings they have towards terrorists (p > 0.05).

According to the majority of respondents (84.7 %), ideologies of terrorism and violent extremism pose a real threat to the Russian state and society. Students majoring in psychology and pedagogics (67 %) and medicine (65.5 %) express the most concerns about it. Students majoring in information technologies (IT), engineering and technical studies do not tend to express concerns about an existing threat of terrorism and extremism ideology spread in their responses (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of responses to the question "In your opinion, are terrorism and violent extremism ideologies a real threat to the Russian state and society at the moment?" with regard to the academic major, in % (N = 3966, p = 0.000)

Academic major of the respondent / Possible answers	natural sciences	engineering and technical studies	IT	social sciences and humanities	psychology and pedagogics	economics and management	medicine
Yes	62.2 %	58.1 %	55.7 %	64.4 %	**67.0 %**	62.1 %	**65.5 %**
No	9.2 %	**15.0 %**	**15.7 %**	11.3 %	8.3 %	13.2 %	8.7 %
Cannot say	28.6 %	26.9 %	28.5 %	24.4 %	24.7 %	24.7 %	25.7 %

There exists statistical dependence of this aspect from the respondents' academic major: χ^2 value is 42.327 when df = 12, p = 0.000.

47.9 % of respondents demonstrate general sense of security in the face of terrorist attacks: 11.1 % feel secure, 36.8 % inclined towards the "more likely than not" option, 28 % chose "very unlikely", and 10.6 % responded "no". 13.5 % of students were undecided.

Students majoring in psychology and pedagogics showed the most concern about the terrorist threat in the previous question, which is why it makes sense that they feel less secure in the face of terrorist attacks (Table 4). It should be noted that 18.1 % of medical students were at a loss for an

answer to this question. With regard to this question, statistically relevant dependencies become apparent: χ2 value is 128.657 when df = 24, p = 0.000.

Table 4. Distribution of responses to the question "Do you feel secure in the face of terrorist attacks?" with regard to the academic major, in % (N = 3966, p = 0.000)

Possible answers	natural sciences	engineering and technical studies	IT	social sciences and humanities	psychology and pedagogics	economics and management	medicine
Yes, I do	10.6 %	**16.9 %**	12.8 %	9.5 %	7.6 %	12.8 %	8.6 %
More likely than not	**45.6 %**	39 %	38.7 %	35.6 %	33.4 %	40.1 %	33.9 %
Very unlikely	21.9 %	21 %	25.2 %	33.6 %	**34.0 %**	24.2 %	30.2 %
No	10.6 %	9.6 %	10.5 %	11.5 %	**13.2 %**	8.4 %	9.2 %
Cannot say	11.3 %	13.5 %	12.8 %	9.8 %	11.8 %	14.5 %	**18.1 %**

As far as respondents' estimates regarding the level of awareness of their own actions to be taken in the event of terror strikes are concerned, 67 % of respondents claim they are well-aware: 14.6 % of students responded "very well-aware", whereas 52.4 % answered "rather well-aware than not". Medical students demonstrate higher values. 7.1 % of respondents majoring in natural sciences indicate that they do not know anything on the issue in question, while 32.5 % of IT-students admit poor awareness of actions to be taken in the event of terror strikes. It is also worth mentioning that 15.7 % of medical students were undecided about the answer to this question (Table 5).

Table 5. Distribution of responses to the question "How would you estimate your own level of awareness of actions to be taken in the event of terror strikes?" with regard to the academic major, in % (N = 3966, p = 0.000)

Possible answers	natural sciences	engineering and technical studies	IT	social sciences and humanities	psychology and pedagogics	economics and management	medicine
I am very well-aware	13.1 %	14.8 %	10.8 %	9.3 %	11.5 %	13.2 %	**15.5 %**
I am rather well-aware than not	46.6 %	47.1 %	42.6 %	**50.2 %**	45.3 %	**48.9 %**	46.0 %
I am rather ill-informed than well-aware	25.4 %	20.9 %	**32.5 %**	28.0 %	30.2 %	24.7 %	19.4 %
I don't know anything about it	**7.1 %**	4.9 %	4.3 %	4.9 %	4.8 %	2.6 %	3.4 %
Cannot say	7.8 %	12.3 %	9.8 %	7.6 %	8.2 %	10.6 %	**15.7 %**

Statistically relevant dependencies between respondents' academic majors and their answers to the question "How would you estimate your own level of awareness of actions to be taken in the event of terror strikes?" are manifested in the test statistic χ2, which value is 95.632 when df = 24, p = 0.000.

10.3 % of respondents are absolutely confident that government authorities would take all necessary measures to protect citizens from terrorist attacks, whereas 38.2 % believe it is more likely than not, 25.4 % claim it is unlikely, 11.1 % are not at all confident in government protection, and 14.9 % are undecided.

Students majoring in engineering and technical studies along with those majoring in economics and management have quite a high regard for the actions of government authorities taken to ensure security from the acts of terrorism. This might be explained by the fact that students understand some specific features of anti-terrorist security system of facilities/territories, as well as the principles of developing anti-terrorist security passports for buildings, etc. Students majoring in psychology, pedagogics, social sciences and humanities are more critical in respect of assessing government actions designed to protect the citizens (Table 6). Statistically relevant dependencies between respondents' academic majors and their answers to this question are confirmed by $\chi 2$ values (98.344) when df = 24, p = 0.000.

Table 6. Distribution of responses to the question "Are you confident about the fact that government authorities would take all measures necessary to protect you from terrorist attacks?" with regard to the academic major, in % (N = 3966, p = 0.000)

Academic major of the respondent Possible answers	natural sciences	engineering and technical studies	IT	social sciences and humanities	psychology and pedagogics	economics and management	medicine
I am absolutely confident	11.7 %	**14.2 %**	**13.1 %**	9.1 %	6.0 %	**12.3 %**	8.8 %
I believe it is more likely than not	**41 %**	**39.9 %**	37.7 %	36.4 %	35.4 %	**45.4 %**	37.8 %
I believe it is unlikely	20.5 %	21.5 %	27.2 %	**30.7 %**	**30.1 %**	19.8 %	24.3 %
I am not confident at all	10.6 %	9.7 %	**12.8 %**	**12.9 %**	**13.1 %**	8.4 %	10.0 %
Cannot say	**16.2 %**	14.7 %	9.2 %	10.9 %	**15.4 %**	14.1 %	19.1 %

According to 37.9 % of respondents, measures taken within the last 2-3 years did not have any pronounced impact on the pace of the terrorism ideology spread. 19.4 % of respondents chose the "very unlikely" option. However, almost half of the respondents (42.7 %) indicated a decrease in the spread of destructive ideas. The study identified statistically relevant differences in the distribution of responses with regard to the academic majors: $\chi 2$ value is 48.479 when df = 18, p = 0.000 (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of responses to the question "Do you think that measures taken by the Russian Federation government authorities during the last 2-3 years allowed for the decrease of the terrorism ideology spread?" with regard to the academic major, in % (N = 3966, p = 0.000)

Academic major of the respondent Possible answers	natural sciences	engineering and technical studies	IT	social sciences and humanities	psychology and pedagogics	economics and management	medicine
Yes, I think so.	**12.7 %**	11.5 %	11.8 %	8 %	7.6 %	12.3 %	9.1 %
More likely than not	31.1 %	33.2 %	29.5 %	30.4 %	33.2 %	**38.3 %**	34 %
Very unlikely	20.1 %	15.5 %	19 %	**26 %**	21.9 %	13.2 %	18.8 %
No	36.0 %	**39.9 %**	39.7 %	35.6 %	37.3 %	36.1 %	38.1 %

Among the measures to be taken in order to improve efficiency of counter-terrorism efforts, respondents emphasize preventive activities: ensuring employment and enhancing people's life quality (56.8 %), developing federal and regional programs to protect citizens from terrorist threats (48.1 %). Outreach and awareness-raising work with the population ranks lower with the following distribution of responses: building public awareness of violence and terrorism unacceptability (41.5 %); disseminating information about counter-terrorism efforts of the federal and regional authorities on a centralized and regular basis (32.1 %); promoting explanatory work intended to raise people's vigilance in the present-day conditions (30.7 %); making people aware of the true purposes and objectives of religious doctrines (23.4%).

Every fourth respondent (24.6 %) had difficulty defining measures to produce the most tangible results in fighting the spread of terrorism and violent extremism ideologies, whereas 3.9 % of respondents indicated their ignorance of effective ways to counter terrorism. Increased control at the Russian border and at the border of the regions with intense terrorist activities in order to prevent trafficking of terrorist and extremist materials, as well as identification and blocking of websites having terrorist or extremist content across the country are among the most popular measures listed by the respondents as bringing about the most tangible results in fighting the spread of terrorism and violent extremism ideologies (Figure 1).
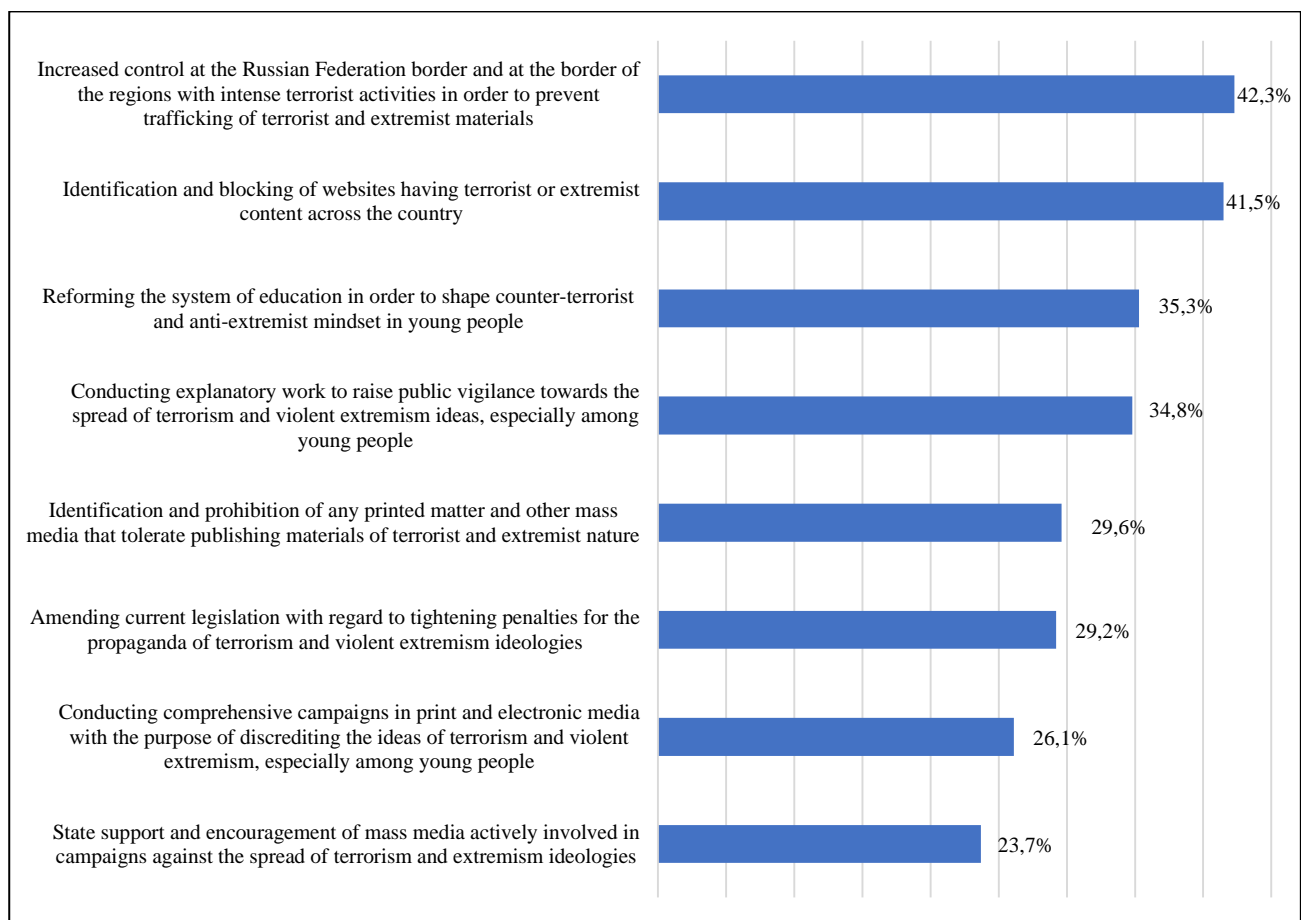

Fig. 1. Distribution of responses to the question "In your opinion, which of the measures given below would produce the most tangible effect in fighting the spread of terrorism and violent extremism ideologies?", in % (N = 3966)

4. Discussion
It is necessary to compare the empirical data obtained with the findings of similar studies devoted to students' social images of terrorism.

The results of research conducted by N.M. Da'san and R.O. Alsawalqa demonstrate that the majority of students consider terrorism an unforgivable crime, while terrorists appear as criminals, or separatist groups, willing to undermine stability and integrity of a certain state. Students indicate poverty and constrained material resources as the main reasons for terrorism (Da'san,

Alsawalqa, 2021). This aspect correlates with the findings of the survey carried out among the university students in the Russian Arctic, where more than a half of respondent (56.8 %) believe that ensuring employment and enhancing people's life quality are critical measures in counter-terrorism policy.

Conclusions drawn within the study by S. Ahmad et al. also show that poverty, other state's interference, wrong interpretation of Islam and social injustice are among the fundamental reasons for terrorism (Ahmad et al., 2018).

The results of a study conducted in Russia among the university students majoring in technical studies (Russian Open Academy of Transport at the Russian University of Transport – hereinafter referred to as ROAT) and humanities (Russian State University named after A.N. Kosygin – hereinafter referred to as RSU) are indicative of students' fragmented knowledge of the terrorism origins. Average scores of tests taken on the issues of counter-terrorism policies are rather low (3.05 at ROAT and 2.95 at RSU), but 89 % of students would like to inquire into the issues specified as they move along the training program. According to 45 % of respondents, terrorists are motivated by religious and ideological considerations. The results of a sociological survey from the Perm branch of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration showcase that terrorism is defined by university students as a threat to public morality and peace – 81.4 % (2021) and 70.49 % (2019) (Evtukh, Kotova, 2021). In accordance with the findings of the research presented in this paper, more than 80 % of respondents admit the existence of a real threat posed by the spread of terrorism and violent extremism ideologies.

Survey conducted among the students of the general medicine department at the Smolensk State Medical University (Russian Federation) demonstrates that 78 % of respondents define terrorism as an existing threat to the development of contemporary society, yet there were not any students denying the terrorist problem out 22 % that were undecided or not sure about their answer. For most of the students, terrorism associates with violence, fear and fanaticism. 49 % define terrorists as people suffering from mental disorders, while 37 % say terrorists commit their crimes knowingly, and 14 % were undecided. 64 % of respondents have fears that they or their relatives might fall victims to terrorists. Interestingly, the research did not reveal any dependence between students' religious views and their attitude towards terrorism. Basically, the research discovers poor students' awareness of the terrorism problem, whereby the existing images of terrorism are mostly shaped under the influence of mass media (Kiseleva i dr., 2016).

Of particular interest is the analysis of those empirical studies, which revealed students' attitude towards terrorism as an unlawful and socially destructive process and determined the structure of terrorism images, while at the same time clarifying the image of a terrorist from the students' point of view.

The results of research conducted by I.S. Zimina et al. (Zimina i dr., 2016) with the use of test questionnaires "Young people's attitude to terrorism" involving responses from 79 Mari State University (Russian Federation) students aged from 17 to 22 in order to look into the structure of future teachers' attitudes towards terrorism lead to the conclusions given below.

First, 95 % of respondents admit the existence of the terrorism problem and are aware of its dangers. 87 % of respondents note that they are not going to sympathize with terrorists under any circumstances, and 90 % of students consider terrorists criminals.

Secondly, students attribute to the image of a terrorist such traits as cruelty, self-interest, irascibility and instability. 74 % of respondents express concerns about the fact that they or their relatives might fall victims to terrorist attacks. Importantly, social distance plays a large part in developing the sense of threat. To be more specific, this refers to the geographic distance from the student's place of stay to the localities where serious terrorist attacks happened.

Thirdly, students believe that the main reason terrorists get involved in unlawful activities is their pursuit of feeling power over other people. Among other reasons are terrorists' commitment to a certain ideology and craving for material well-being. In general, researchers highlight structural irregularity with regard to students' social images of terrorism (Zimina i dr., 2016).

There were studies, which applied multiple interrelated methods. For example, a survey among 190 higher education students from Moscow and Ulan-Ude (Russian Federation) intended to determine sociopsychological and sociodemographic factors constituting an attitude towards terrorism showed that respondents' views on terrorism as a phenomenon is different from their view on certain types of terrorism. Subjective student images of terrorism, justice/injustice are related to peculiarities and modality of attitude towards terrorism, while also depending on the

respondent's region of residence. The image of a terrorist is ambiguous (the question implied an opportunity to choose several response options). For instance, 70.2 % define terrorists as murderers, criminals and kidnappers, 43.6 % claim they are religious fanatics, 16 % describe them as people defending themselves and their land, 14.4 % refer to them as revolutionists, and 13.3 % call them fighters for independence of their motherland. The image of a terrorist is associated with such feelings as anxiety and fear. The overwhelming majority (90 %) of respondents view terrorism as a negative or highly negative phenomenon. However, there are instances of positive (6 %) or neutral (4 %) attitude towards terrorism (Batueva, 2011).

As it appears from the studies outlined, each sample includes respondents indicating their neutral and positive attitudes towards terrorism. These individuals represent a potentially radical group most vulnerable to terrorist ideology, and this vulnerability increases with intensifying social, political, economic and ideological risk factors.

A pilot study among the students of university years 1-4 aged 18-22 held at the Ivanovo State Power Engineering University (Russian Federation) (N = 133) and designed to reveal the specifics of social images and attitudes concerning terrorism and extremism among the student youth in the region demonstrated that terrorism has a negative emotional coloring. Students' social images of terrorism are centered around the concepts of "death", "victims" and "destruction" (Lisova, Kryukova, 2021). The associative array stated above is an indication of fear pointed out by more than a half of respondents in the present research.

Particular attention shall be given to the results of a survey conducted in 2019 in the Southern and the North Caucasian Federal Districts of the Russian Federation involving a rather large multistage stratified sampling (N = 4112, respondent average age − 19). 79 % of respondents in the Southern Federal District and 76.9 % of respondents in the North Caucasian Federal District define terrorism as criminal acts of violence. The researchers conclude that the students possess an adequate yet incomplete understanding of the terrorism phenomenon being barely involved into the prevention efforts, which calls for improving the format of preventive activities.

Thus, the results obtained from the empirical study are quite consistent with the findings of similar surveys of mostly small samples (Ahmad et al., 2018; Batueva, 2011; Da'san, Alsawalqa, 2021; Kiseleva i dr., 2016; Lisova, Kryukova, 2021; Zimina i dr., 2016 et al.). However, the studies analyzed are rather limited due to the following:

a) Insufficient scope of research,

b) Reciting nature of research tools allowing to only observe general subjective images of terrorism among students,

c) Failure to distribute responses with regard to the academic majors of respondents.

Having regard to the last argument, the survey in question provides an important factor responsible for shaping students' subjective images of terrorism, which is their academic major. Statistically important links are distinguished in almost all respects examined: from students' general knowledge of terrorism to the issues of anti-terrorist security and assessing efficiency of measures taken by the authorities to counter terrorism ($p < 0.05$). While gender/age dependence is quite easy to understand and explain, dependence on the specifics of training, hence, future professional activities, requires consideration that is more thorough.

Does it imply that terrorist ideology prevention among students shall differ with regard to the academic major? There is no doubt about that, and this idea can be implemented as part of the so-called target-focused or group prevention model. Alongside this, the importance of general preventive practices shall not be reduced. First, such practices increase awareness of the terrorism problem allowing to decrease the number of students with only superficial knowledge of terrorism while at the same time facilitating development of their anti-terrorist attitude and their readiness for adequate actions in emergency. It is crucial to avoid the "second-hand terrorism" effect arising from excessive awareness and vigilance, which result in the feeling of insecurity and continuous anxiety in students (Comer, Kendall, 2007).

That said, how can one take academic and professional specifics of student training into account as part of the target-focused preventive practices?

First, it is necessary to amend university-wide academic courses with modules on counter-terrorism policies. In addition to the course/module on "Fundamentals of life and safety", it seems appropriate to include the counter-terrorist component into some other courses such as history, law, financial literacy, information technologies, philosophy, etc. This would increase awareness of the terrorism problem and allow for the development of a holistic image of terrorism and adequate

understanding of threats posed by terrorist activities among students. Basically, this would be the first step in overcoming fear of terrorists and developing a desire to stand against them. There could be a single course of lectures for all students, but it would be crucial to give practical classes with regard to the academic major. For instance, students majoring in engineering and technical studies would be interested in the issues of anti-terrorist security of buildings and structures, as well as of developing security passports for different facilities. Alternatively, students majoring in economics and management would look into the legal aspects of counter-terrorism policy.

Secondly, majors provide for preventive activities to be held in different formats with the focus on industry-specific components and regard to future professional activities. For example, IT-students would be interested in digital literacy olympiads where it could be possible and reasonable to introduce tasks dealing with prevention of the spread of illegal content on the web using modern information and communication technologies. Future lawyers would be excited to join public associations of legal volunteers in order to strengthen their competencies. Such activities could combine preventive elements with tasks useful for students' professional development.

Thirdly, it is advisable to organize sociopsychological work with students majoring in different fields in the form of workshops, seminars, games and other types of activities in order to encourage positive self-identities in general and transform the feelings of fear, anger and weakness towards terrorists into constructive counter-terrorist practices in particular. Students demonstrating a proactive approach to life and social activism could constitute a corps of volunteers to create and spread positive content, to search for and identify information contravening the current Russian legislation, to hold events and awareness-raising activities with students in order to inform them about relevant statutory provisions.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the research findings demonstrate that subjective images of terrorism among university students are relatively sporadic. Standing at around 80%, general awareness of the terrorism problem is rather high. At the same time, statistically important correlations with respondents' academic majors are observed in the majority of respects examined: from students' general knowledge of terrorism to the issues of anti-terrorist security and assessing efficiency of measures taken by the authorities to counter terrorism. This fact necessitates development and implementation of the target-focused model of preventive work with students majoring in different fields.

The data obtained correlates with the findings of similar studies. Particular concern is caused by the existence of respondents expressing readiness to join terrorists, as well as by ambiguous views upon the ways of increasing efficiency of counter-terrorism efforts. Taking all the aforesaid into consideration, it is recognized that further research requires broader set of tools, including psychodiagnostic evaluation and qualitative methods.

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