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INFORMATIONAL EXTREMISM AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AS A CATEGORY OF CYBERCRIME

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Abstract

The article identifies the factors that influence informational extremism among young people and contribute to its formation as a category of cybercrime. A study conducted among various categories of young people showed that representatives of extremist communities set themselves the task of extremizing and radicalizing young people using the possibilities of the digital economy. The purpose of the study is to determine the degree of influence of cyber-extremism on the development of informational extremism among young people. The results of the study prove that new technologies contribute to the involvement of a large number of people in extremist activities. Given that young people are interested in the latest technologies and spend a lot of free time in a virtual environment, it is easier for extremists to develop juvenile cyber-extremism. An analysis of the survey results among various categories of the population confirms that the potential for cyber-extremism is very high; in practice, this leads to the spread of extremist ideas among the youth. In the study, the methods and forms of using the latest technologies and the determinants of young people's radicalization were identified. According to a survey among law enforcement officials, extremists widely use gaps in legislation and, using new technologies, involve young people in committing terrorist crimes.

1. Introduction

In recent years, cyber-extremism has become an automated phenomenon, posing the potential threat of a large-scale youth extremist epidemic. The interaction of computers and information resources through social networks makes them attractive targets for committing extremist crimes using the latest technologies.

Informational extremism among young people is becoming a kind of category of digital crime. Digital extremism, in turn, is acting in which new digital technologies are a means of committing a crime; the object of the crime of which is the constitutional order, the political system, and the security of the Russian state through the violation of the normal development of the younger generation.

Cybercrime also promotes cyber-extremism as a means of engaging young people in extremist crimes using new technologies.

Cyber-extremism is aimed at information sabotage, disruption of the normal development of the younger generation, distribution of illegal extremist content, information espionage, and disinformation among the young people.

New digital technologies have become a means of agitating the younger generation to introduce extremist ideas and views. The study, by summarizing the materials of investigative and judicial practice, showed that cyber-extremists work remotely and continuously, which frees the criminal from restrictions in time and space. As known, cyber-extremists are guaranteed screen anonymity. Easily achievable anonymity and weak control on the global Internet make it easy to involve a large number of people in extremist activities.

Communication tools, including encryption, shorthand, and anonymity, allow young people to be involved with their extremist ideas with impunity. Extremists from various countries cooperate, creating communities, and planning crimes using new technologies. The global availability of social media allows extremists to engage young people in extremist activities on a large scale. These opportunities provided by the digital world contribute to the involvement of young people with extremist ideas. Therefore, the problem of preventing informational extremism has become relevant, since the rapid development of the digital economy dictates the need for constant reference to it to comprehend the features of the crime development among young people in a digital society.

2. Problem Statement

Theory and practice have not developed a unified definition of cybercrime. Cybercrime is often referred to as informational and computer crime. It seems that the term "computer crime" should not be used to crimes committed using new digital technologies. Digital crime includes all crimes committed in the context of the development of the digital economy. Extremist crimes are no exception. Digital technologies are also used when young people commit extremist crimes and are involved in extremist activities; this indicates the emergence of a new category of digital crime of informational youth extremism.

Informational extremism among young people is a social phenomenon that has emerged based on elements of hostility and hatred introduced in society towards other nationalities, people of a different

faith, race, a certain social group, and other political and ideological convictions. Thus, informational extremism among young people is extremist crimes committed by young people using digital technologies.

3. Research Questions

The following questions were considered as part of the study:

i. on the basis of what factors it is possible to define informational extremism among young people as a category of cybercrime;

ii. what are the factors that determine informational extremism among young people, as well as measures to prevent crimes in this category of cybercrime.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to study the informational extremism among young people as a new category of digital crime, the factors that determine it, and measures that contribute to the prevention of this type of extremist crime.

5. Research Methods

In this study, the phenomenon of information extremism among young people as a new category of digital crime is considered from the point of view of a sociological approach, according to which this phenomenon is the result of the development of a digital society. The materials of investigative and judicial practice were summarized, materials of criminal cases were analyzed, and content analysis of materials in social networks was carried out. Sociological methods are used: preference is given to testing and surveys among different categories of young people.

6. Findings

Informational extremism among young people is defined as a new category of cybercrime. As the researchers note: "Worldwide, more than 85 % of young people use social networks daily through Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter" (Amit et al., 2021, p. 2).

Informational extremism among young people is a historical phenomenon, a category of crime, which has its structure, geography, dynamics, and trends. The main means of committing this crime are digital technologies.

Like any crime category, informational extremism among young people is determined by certain factors. The key factor is the involvement of young people in extremist activities. As known, extremism is the basis of terrorism. Terrorism rarely exists without extremist ideas, views, and appeals from representatives of terrorist communities. For this reason, extremists are trying to involve young people in their communities, given that any organization or community exists with a continuous renewal of its composition. Therefore, to maintain the viability of the terrorist organization and the terrorist community, their structure and contingent are constantly updated by involving new members.

The virtual involvement of new members among young people is determined by a set of interrelated factors, which are based on: a) the characteristics of the psyche of adolescents, b) the specifics of the youth environment and subculture, the main component of which is the virtual environment and social networks. As practice shows, modern terrorist and extremist organizations always take into account these aspects when involving young people in their networks.

The study results confirm that digital technologies are used for propaganda to involve young people in extremist activities and arouse their desire to participate in an illegal armed formation, including in foreign countries. Due to such propaganda, "in the republics of the North Caucasus, terrorist activities of females are developing in the structure of regional crime" (Ziyadova & Adamova, 2017, p. 223).

The main method to involve minors and young people is recruitment using digital technologies. Extremists and separatists are actively introducing new technologies in the tactics of involving minors and young people in the commission of terrorist and extremist crimes. This opportunity is created, as noted by experts concerned with the suppression of violations in the field of the latest IT capabilities, a combination of digital vulnerabilities, and insufficient control over them.

Subsequently, the involved minors and young people themselves use the possibilities of digital technologies to lure unsuspecting adolescents from dysfunctional families. In this regard, the concept of cyber-extremism among young people has appeared in criminological science.

Young people involved in extremist activities commit murders, attacks on the lives of public figures, and terrorist acts. In recent years, several high-profile detentions of teenagers have taken place in different regions of the Russian Federation at once. According to law enforcement agencies, they planned to stage terrorist attacks on school buildings or law enforcement agencies. In September 2021, a freshman at Perm University staged a mass execution of students. A few months ago, a similar terrorist attack took place in Kazan. Both the Kazan and Perm killers are referred to as "Columbiners," i. e., supporters of the movement that emerged after the mass shooting at the American Columbine School. Even though these acts were performed by individuals, they have hundreds and thousands of online followers. In addition, there are thousands of underground and, to varying degrees, legalized terrorist and extremist organizations around the world, consisting mainly of young people (Shtefan, 2020). Digital technologies make it possible not only to constantly maintain such connections but also to strengthen them, regardless of the distance and even such a factor as offline communication.

In the modern world, social networks are not only a means of communication but also the powerful media, economic, and even political factors in the social space of civilization. At the moment, it can be clearly stated that all people are eyewitnesses of the emergence of a fashion for extremist activity. This is expressed in the broad approval of radical views, behaviors, and the corresponding type of thinking. This phenomenon is not purely Russian. The radicalization of youth through social networks is observed in all countries. In the Russian Federation, it manifests itself in the spread of hostility and hatred towards other nationalities, people of a different faith, race, a social group, and other political and ideological beliefs; in Western countries an increase in the number and quality of protest movements (for example, black lives matter), practically the official struggle for "Western values;" in the Middle East, Central Asia a total Islamization of youth.

According to case studies, informational extremism among young people is a consequence of the development of the digital economy. As practice shows, Internet fame turns into popularity and sometimes brings a certain financial income. For example, in Saratov, law enforcement officers detained members of the M.K.U. group, which promotes massacres. Young people attacked passers-by, filmed fights on video, posted videos on social networks, and sent them to customers. Thus, young people are widely using the achievements of the digital economy. As Zorkin (2020) correctly notes that along with the obvious advantages, new difficulties appear with the development of new information technologies. Therefore, the digital economy is no longer considered a separate industry by scientific doctrine, society, and the state. The digital economy is perceived in a certain way, requiring the use of uniform algorithms and principles for organizing the functioning of the entire system, including in the field of protecting young people from extremist influence.

7. Conclusion

Informational extremism among young people has become a new category of crime that has emerged as a result of the development of the digital society. This phenomenon is a consequence of the virtual involvement of young people by representatives of extremist communities. The circumstances of this actualize the problem of finding effective prevention measures. There is a need for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary study of this phenomenon, its nature, and the establishment of digitalization opportunities in crime prevention among young people.

The success of the digitalization of the system for the prevention of extremist manifestations is determined by the legal basis that forms the regulatory framework for this process. In turn, the creation of legislation itself cannot be divorced from the time and conditions. The modern law-making process is also influenced by the emerging digital civilization. Therefore, the problem of limiting the use of the Internet among young people has been discussed in foreign and domestic literature for a long time (Roache, 2013; Russkevich, 2019; Smith, 2004).

In the system of prevention of information extremism among young people, a complex of operational-search measures and investigative actions is of great importance. The procedure for detecting, fixing, and seizing the means of virtual extremism presents a certain complexity; special methods for solving crimes of this category are used. Forensic expertise plays an important role. The study also showed that virtual extremists take advantage of the shortcomings of laws that do not address crimes committed using new technologies. It is proposed to add to the articles of the Special Part of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation such a sign as "committing a crime using new technologies." "Committing a crime using new technologies" should be recognized as an aggravating circumstance, designating paragraph "k.1" of Part 1 of Article 63 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

In the prevention of informational extremism among young people, anti-extremist propaganda among adolescents plays a significant role. Courses on the safe use of digital technologies should be conducted among schoolchildren, teachers, and parents on online platforms. According to foreign authors, such courses have been developed and are being held in some countries (Amit et al., 2021; Brown, 2019). It is essential to educate parents and teachers to identify signs of school radicalization. It is also possible to organize refresher courses for teachers and educators to implement these activities.

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