Jelena Brkić Šmigoc, Sead Turčalo, Muamer Hirkić, Mirza Buljubašić, Veldin Kadić, Mirza Smajić

PERSONAL, CONTEXTUAL, AND SOCIAL CORRELATES OF POLITICAL RADICALISM AND VIOLENCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

This research aims to identify personal, contextual, and social correlates of political radicalism and violence among adolescents. Research emphasises adolescents, a demographic, identified as potentially risk developmental period for political radicalization due to social identity formation and political socialization. The research employs a comprehensive methodology, utilizing a multi-stage sample of high school students to evaluate individual vulnerabilities and resilience, and broader contextual influences. The findings indicate that family dysfunction, poverty, and peer violence significantly correlate with political radicalism and violence among adolescents, while general self-esteem and cognitive flexibility play less important roles. Supportive social networks and perceptions of threats are crucial factors acting as a buffer against political violence. Interventions aimed at reducing family dysfunction, improving socio-economic conditions, and enhancing social support networks could mitigate the risks of political radicalization and political violence. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to mitigate the risk among youth.

Key words: political radicalization; political violence; individual factors; contextual factors; adolescents

1. INTRODUCTION

The developmental sociopolitical landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina provides a unique backdrop for investigating the socio-psychological factors relation to political behaviors among adolescents. The complex interplay of war legacies, socio-economic challenges, and intricate ethnic relations create a dynamic environment where young people's political attitudes and actions are shaped by many personal, social, and contextual correlates. This study endeavors to unravel the intricate relationships between these several factors and their impact on political radicalism and violence among adolescents.

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior posits that the primary determinants of voluntary behavior are an individual's intention to perform that behavior and their attitude towards it. Previous research has shown correlations between intention and actual behavior ranging from .53 to .90 (Van den Putte 1993; Sheeran 2002, as cited in Marić & Džamonja-Ignjatović 2011). Although intention and behavior are distinct concepts, intention serves as a reliable proximal measure of voluntary behavior (Ajzen 2005, as cited in Marić & Džamonja-Ignjatović 2011).

In this study, radicalization is defined as the process through which individuals or groups adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo and may lead to the justification or use of violence to achieve these goals. This process involves a shift in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors towards greater acceptance of radical ideologies and often includes increased identification with a particular group or cause (Horgan 2008; McCauley & Moskalenko 2008). This operationalization excludes legitimate activism and progressive concerns, focusing solely on the pathways leading to extremism.

Political violence is defined as violence against political leaders and the government by individuals or groups, with the intent to achieve political goals (Kalmoe 2014). Kalmoe's research indicates that individuals with aggressive personality traits are significantly more likely to support political violence, especially when exposed to political messages containing violent metaphors.

However, some researchers argue that the incentives driving attitudes and behaviors towards political violence are often distinct (Khalil 2014). Attitudes towards political radicalization are typically motivated by collective grievances, while actions of political violence are often driven by economic, security-based, and socio-psychological incentives (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).

Focusing on adolescents, this research aims to provide insights into the early stages of political socialization and identify potential pathways leading to both constructive political engagement and extremist behaviors. Theories of political socialization and development emphasize the importance of this developmental stage in shaping social identity and political behavior (Erikson 1968; Krosnick & Duane 1989, as cited in Miklikowska, Jasko, & Kudrnac 2023). Inadequate political socialization, coupled with identity crises and social rejection, can exacerbate this vulnerability (Arnett 2000; Kroger 2004, as cited in Miklikowska, Jasko, & Kudrnac 2023).

Adolescents are significantly more likely to support or engage in political violence than older individuals (Desmarais, Simons-Rudolph, Brugh, Schilling, & Hoggan 2017; Wolfowicz et al. 2020, as cited in Jahnke, Borger, & Beelmann 2022). Numerous studies have identified risk and protective factors for political radicalization and violence. Some risk factors are contextual, relating to political and economic conditions, while others are psychological.

A meta-analysis focusing on risk factors for political violence among adolescents has shown significant effects of depression, empathy, aggression, identification, relative group deprivation, realistic threat, symbolic threat, negative intergroup emotions, experiences of discrimination, dissatisfaction with the police, political actors, and institutions, and negative attitudes towards democracy (Jahnke, Borger, & Beelmann 2022).

The social context in which an individual is raised significantly influences their resilience or vulnerability to risky behaviors. Poor social conditions can foster politically radical attitudes (Obaidi, Bergh, Akrami, & Anjum 2019). Family dysfunction, victimization, and poverty are vulnerability factors for radicalism (Simi, Sporer, et al. 2016). Individuals from dysfunctional families and hostile school environments often perceive the world as an adverse place (Network for Psychosocial Innovations and Institute of Psychology 2020).

Recent research highlights the impact of childhood trauma and adversity (Adverse Childhood Experiences – ACE) on radicalization. Factors such as parental loss, witnessing violence, household dysfunction, and experiencing abuse or domestic violence contribute to increased aggression, anxiety, and impulsivity, making individuals more susceptible to extremist and radical violent behaviors (Koehler 2020). Adolescents who have experienced more harassment express more pronounced extremist views (Miklikowska, Jasko, & Kudrnac 2023). The experience of threat and insecurity (Hogg, 2014) further drives individuals towards groups offering firm boundaries and directive leadership, the foundations of radical ideologies.

Personal characteristics also influence susceptibility to radicalization. Adolescents, seeking identity and group belonging, are vulnerable to radical groups that exploit these needs. The need for security, belonging, or achievement can drive individuals towards political violence (Kruglanski et al. 2014). Uncertainty, perceived threats, and insecure life attachments are linked to political violence (Oluf Gøtzsche-Astrup 2021). The search for personal meaning through values, goals, and identity interpretations is crucial in vulnerability to radicalization (Miklikowska, Jasko, & Kudrnac 2023). Social identity processes also play a significant role in radicalization (Ozer, Obaidi, & Pfatteicher 2020).

Given these potential variables of individual susceptibility to radicalization, this research examines self-esteem, collective self-esteem, social support perception from family, friends, and significant others, symbolic and real intergroup threat perception, and personality variables such as cognitive flexibility. These factors encompass a wide spectrum of grievances, injustices, and societal shortcomings exploited by radicalizers, including marginalization, inequality, discrimination, and existential threats (Brkić Šmigoc et al. 2019). At the individual level, these factors manifest as vulnerabilities or resilience traits or predispositions towards radicalization.

Previous research has highlighted the significance of factors such as family dysfunction, poverty, peer violence, trauma, self-esteem, social support, perception of threats, and cognitive flexibility in shaping youths' political behaviors. However, comprehensive studies that simultaneously examine these variables remain limited.

The primary research question guiding this study is: What are the personal, contextual, and social correlates of political radicalism, and violence among adolescents? By answering this question, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on political behavior and radicalization and inform policymakers and practitioners working to promote stability and positive political participation.

2. APPROACH

2.1. Sample and Sampling

The target population were high school students in the third and fourth grades of secondary vocational schools and gymnasiums in BiH. International schools and schools operating under special programs for atypical populations are excluded from the population. The total sample was calculated using the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was done because there is no specific data available on high school

students, especially those in the third and fourth grades. A total planned sample of 1500 respondents (which is about .04 of the total population) was based on 2013 census, which shows that the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 3,531,139.[1] Given that the average number of students per classroom in secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 21, the research planned for 71 classes. The sample in the research followed the criteria of a multi-stage sample. In the first stage, all secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina were sampled according to the first stratum, representing the country's administrative organization. This includes the Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska (RS), and the Brčko District, which regulate educational competence in BiH. In the second stage, the sample was formed according to the occupational profile, and vocational schools and gymnasiums were represented in equal proportion. Based on the total population, the proportions of three areas were determined: for FBIH p=0.655; for RS p=0.325; for BD p=0.02. The planned sample consists of 22 schools for the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, more precisely two schools for each of the 9 cantons and four schools for the Herzegovina-Neretva canton, of which two schools implement the program according to the Croatian curriculum and two the program according to the Bosnian curriculum. Nonetheless, the planned number of classrooms are as follows: 46 classrooms in FBiH, 24 in RS, and 4 in BD.

To conduct the research, consent was required from relevant ministries, school directors, and the students themselves. Since the participants were over 15 years old, a letter was sent to parents informing them about the research and the project, in line with the 2012 Code of Ethics for Research with and on Children (Article 2.2.1. paragraph 2).

Despite following strict methodological requirements, significant changes occurred in the final number of respondents. The research was only conducted in administrative units where consent was obtained.

The resulting sample is 740 high school students, with an average age of 17 (SD .57). In the obtained sample, 55% were women, 43% were men and 2% did not want to answer. Over 90% of respondents declared that they belong to a certain religion, most of them identify themselves as Bosniaks, 83.3%, and they rate the financial situation in the family as very good (48%). The obtained sample resulted from permissions granted by the relevant ministries in specific administrative units for conducting the research.

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1   Federal Statistical Office, Final results of the 2013 census, available at: https://fzs.ba/index.php/popis-stanovnistva/popis-stanovnistva-2013/konacni-rezultati-popisa-2013/

2.2. Instruments

To assess contextual variables for political radicalization and violence: to assess family dysfunction and poverty, *the poor socialization scale* was used (Knežević 2003); *the peer violence scale* (Olweus 1996) was utilized to assess experienced and committed peer violence; and questions were applied for the assessment of experienced wartime family trauma.

To assess individual factors of vulnerability/resilience to political radicalization and violence: to assess self-esteem, *Rosenberg's self-esteem scale* was used (Rosenberg 1989); *the collective self-esteem scale* was utilized to assess the perception of social identity (Jelić 2009); to assess perceived social support, *the multidimensional scale of perceived social support* was used (Medved and Keresteš 2011, according to Zimet et al. 1988); *the intergroup threat scale* (Skokandić 2018) was applied to assess the perceived symbolic and real threat; *the cognitive control and flexibility scale* was utilized to assess cognitive flexibility and control (Dennis et al. 2010).

To assess political radicalization and violence, questionnaires were used to assess the intention and attitudes: to assess the intention of political radicalism, *the intention of political radicalism scale* was applied (Moskalenko et al. 2009); to assess attitudes about political violence, *the attitude about political violence scale* (Kalmoe 2014) was used.

2.3. Procedure

The research was conducted in schools that received permission from the competent ministry and the school directors.[2] Initial contact was established through official let-

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2   Certain schools in sample declined to participate in the study. Despite being fully informed about the research process, instruments, and ethical approvals, some schools provided brief and unsubstantiated reasons, such as the study being sensitive, which were sufficient for their management to refuse cooperation. The research was conducted in the following locations: Mramor, Tuzla; Tešanj; Mostar; Vitez; Busovača; Zenica; Goražde; Donji Vakuf; Pasci, Tuzla; Topčić Polje; Prača; Travnik; Živinice; Brčko; Bistrica; Matuzići; Lončari; Lugovi; Kaćuni; Konjic; Modriča; Vitkovići; Mosnik, Tuzla; Čajniče; Gornji Rahić, Brčko; Jelah; Mrkotić, Tešanj; Bašigovci; Čapljina; Ljepenice; Sarajevo; Todorovska Slopnica; Krojčica, Tuzla; Gradačac; Pelagićevo; Potočari, Srebrenica; Velika Kladuša; Ćelebići; Vrnograč, Gradina; Kladanj; Predgrađe, Tuzla; Obudovac; Bijela; Mihaljevići, Busovača; Ustikolina; Gračanica (Babići); Zornik; Nova Bila; Potočani; Poljice kod Lukavca; Rajnovac, Velika Kladuša; Doboj Istok; Todorovo; Brezovo Polje; Grablje, Busovača; Trnovci; Gunja; Maoča, Brčko distrikt; Jablanica; Vogošća, Sarajevo; Čelić; Potpeć; Bukovci; Velino Selo; Podlugovi; Donja Lučka; Podzvizd; Srebrenica; Palanka; Miladije; Banovići; Gornje Dubrave; Kalesija-Jajići; Puračić; Doboj; Starina; Lukavac; Koraj; Sivša, Usora; Domanovići; Vrhovine; Kalošević; Šije; Putiš; Semizovac; Kopaći; Blagaj; Šatorovići; Velika Kladuša; Kiseljak; Vukovo, Tešanj; Vranduk; Šićki Brod, Tuzla; Vučkovci, Gradačac; Rajnovac; Donji Vakuf; Selo Prijedor; Dž. Planje; Loznica; Elezovići; Orčeva Luka, Velika Kladuša.

ters to school principals. The research was conducted by the researchers who signed this report.

Considering that children in secondary schools over 15 years independently decided on their participation in the research, the survey was carried out during the first visit to the class. The research was anonymous and voluntary. Data collection was carried out in a group procedure and was organized as part of regular teaching. At the beginning of the research, the participants were given basic information about the purpose and topic, after which they could decide whether they wanted to participate in the research or not. As the research was voluntary, the participants could withdraw from the research whenever they wanted, without stating the reason for their withdrawal, but not a single participant refused to participate in the research. Filling out the questionnaire took 30 minutes.

3. RESULTS

This section explores the intricate relationships between various socio-psychological factors and the political attitudes of adolescents. Utilizing Pearson correlation analysis, this section reports how family dysfunction, poverty, peer violence, trauma, self-esteem, group identity significance, social support, perception of threats, and cognitive flexibility are related to political radicalism and political violence.

3.1. The context of growing up and living of young people

Family functionality and poverty

Family dysfunctionality and poverty were assessed using the poor socialization scale (Knežević 2003). The scale consists of two subscales: family dysfunction and poverty.

Table 3.1.1. Family dysfunction and poverty correlation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		Family Dysfunction	Poverty
Political Radicalism Intent	Pearson Correlation	.097**	.133**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,009	0,000
	N	722	722
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	.222**	.175**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000
	N	718	718
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

The correlation between Family Dysfunction and Political Radicalism Intent is 0.097, indicating a weak positive correlation, which is statistically significant (p = 0.009). This implies that higher levels of family dysfunction are slightly associated with an increased intention towards political radicalism.

The correlation between Family Dysfunction and Political Violence is 0.222, indicating a low positive correlation, which is statistically significant (p = 0.000). This suggests that higher levels of family dysfunction are associated with a higher inclination towards political violence.

The correlation between poverty and political radicalism intent has a correlation coefficient of 0.133, indicating a weak positive relationship. This correlation is statistically significant, as evidenced by the significance level (Sig. (2-tailed)) of 0.000.

The correlation between poverty and political violence shows a correlation coefficient of 0.175, indicating a weak positive relationship. This correlation is statistically significant, with a significance level (Sig. (2-tailed)) of 0.000.

These results suggest that while there are weak but statistically significant positive relationships between poverty and both political radicalism intent and political violence.

Peer violence

Assessment of the experience of peer violence was measured using the peer violence scale (Olweus 1996). The peer violence scale assesses the frequency of verbal and physical violence at school. Two subscales were set – one referring to experienced peer violence, i.e. to victims. On the other hand, the second refers to committed peer violence, that is, to abusers.

Table 3.1.2. Peer violence correlation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		Experienced peer violence	Perpetrated peer violence
Radicalism Intent	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000
	N	722	722
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	.141**	.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000
	N	719	717

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The intention of political radicalism shows a significant correlation of .135** (p < 0.01) with experienced peer violence, suggesting a slight but noteworthy positive relationship.

The correlation with political radicalism is stronger at .237** (p < 0.01), which is significant and suggests a moderate positive relationship. The correlation between political violence and experienced peer violence is .141** (p < 0.01), indicating a moderate positive relationship. The correlation between political violence and perpetrated peer violence is stronger at .316** (p < 0.01), showing a significant and positive relationship. Finally, the correlation between political violence and the intention of political radicalism is .336** (p < 0.01), indicating a moderate positive relationship.

Trauma

Traumatic experiences were assessed with a question about wartime family trauma. The respondents' task was to indicate if the stated claims apply to them and their family.

Table 3.1.3. Traumacorrelation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		Family war trauma	Individual life trauma
Political Radicalism Intent	Pearson Correlation	-0,065	-0,042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,085	0,260
	N	714	712
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	-0,025	-0,042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,511	0,268
	N	712	709

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis conducted on the variables related to trauma and political tendencies provides significant insights. Political radicalization intention shows weak negative correlations with both Family war trauma (-0.065, p = 0.085) and Individual life trauma (-0.042, p = 0.260), but these correlations are not significant. Similarly, Political violence has weak negative correlations with Family war trauma (-0.025, p = 0.511) and Individual life trauma (-0.042, p = 0.268), neither of which are significant.

The analysis of the context of growing up and living of young people reveals weak but statistically significant positive correlations between family dysfunction and poverty with both political radicalism intent and political violence. Peer violence, both experienced and perpetrated, shows a stronger positive relationship with political radicalism intent and political violence. Traumatic experiences, however, do not show significant correlations with political radicalism or violence, suggesting that these factors might play a less direct role in influencing political behaviors among adolescents.

3.2. Personal characteristics as potential factors of susceptibility or resistance to political radicalization and political violence

The correlation provides a detailed examination of the relationships between various psychological constructs and behavioral intention and attitude towards political violence. The analysis focuses on self-esteem, its positive and negative social dimensions, perception of social support, perception of intergroup threat, cognitive flexibility and their associations with intentions towards political radicalism, as well as political violence.

General and collective self-esteem

In psychological research, the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (1979) is most used to measure people's general self-esteem. *The Collective Self-Esteem* Scale (CSES) (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992) measures the level of social identity based on membership in a particular group (Jelić 2009). Collective self-esteem in this study was measured through 4 subscales, namely: positive social self-esteem, negative social self-esteem, public social self-esteem, and unimportance of the group for identity. The mentioned subscales represent the information needed to explain group bias, intergroup prejudices, and discrimination, i.e. intergroup attitudes in general (Jelić 2009).

Table 3.2.1. General and Collective self – esteem correlation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		General Self-esteem	Positive social self-esteem	Negative social self-esteem	Public social self-esteem	Insignificance of Group for Identity
Political Radicalism Intent	Pearson Correlation	0,000	.319[**]	-0,012	-0,004	-.175[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,995	0,000	0,757	0,918	0,000
	N	720	721	721	721	718
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	-0,054	.125[**]	.163[**]	-.116[**]	-0,056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,146	0,001	0,000	0,002	0,133
	N	715	716	716	716	714

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlations with political intentions reveal interesting insights. Self-esteem has a weak, almost non-existent correlation with the intention towards political radicalism (r=0.000, p=0.995). However, positive social self-esteem shows a stronger positive correlation with political radicalism intentions (r=0.319, p<0.01). Negative social self-esteem has a non-significant correlation with political radicalism intentions (r=−0.012, p=0.757).

Public social self-esteem is not significantly correlated with political radicalism intentions (r=−0.004, p=0.918).

Regarding political violence, self-esteem shows a non-significant negative correlation (r=−0.054, p=0.146). Positive social self-esteem has a significant positive correlation with political violence (r=0.125, p<0.01), while negative social self-esteem is positively correlated (r=0.163, p<0.01). Public social self-esteem has a significant negative correlation with political violence (r=−0.116r=−0.116, p<0.01p<0.01).

The correlation between Insignificance of Group for Identity and Intention of Political Radicalism is -0.175, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (p = 0.000). This indicates a weak but significant negative correlation, implying that higher insignificance of the group for identity is associated with lower intentions of political radicalism.

The relationship between Insignificance of Group for Identity and Political Violence shows a correlation of -0.056, with a significance level of 0.133. This indicates a very weak negative correlation, suggesting that an increase in the perceived insignificance of the group for identity is associated with a slight decrease in political violence. However, this correlation is not statistically significant.

The data reveals a statistically significant negative correlation between the insignificance of group identity and political radicalism intentions, while the correlation with political violence is weak and not statistically significant. These findings suggest that perceptions of group insignificance may play a role in reducing radicalism intentions, though the effects on political violence are less clear.

Perception of social support

Perceived social support was measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support) by Zimet et al. (1988), which was translated into Croatian by Medved and Keresteš (2011). The scale consists of 12 items that measure the perceived social support of family, friends, and significant others.

The correlation (Table 3 provides a nuanced understanding of the relationships between diverse types of social support and various political behaviors.

Table 3.2.2. Support from significant others correlation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		Support from Significant Others	Support from Family	Support from Friends
Political Radicalism Intent	Pearson Correlation	-0,053	0,071	0,047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,157	0,055	0,204
	N	721	721	721
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	-.156[**]	-.114[**]	-0,009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,002	0,812
	N	719	718	718

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the context of political radicalism intent, the correlations are less pronounced. The data shows that support from significant others has a correlation of -0.053, which is not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.157. Support from family has a correlation of 0.071, also not significant with a p-value of 0.055. Support from friends has a correlation of 0.047, which is not significant with a p-value of 0.204. These weak and insignificant correlations indicate that support from significant others, family, and friends does not have a strong direct influence on the intention for political radicalism.

Regarding political violence, the correlations show a different pattern. The data indicates that support from significant others has a correlation of -.156, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level with a p-value of 0.000. Support from family shows a correlation of -.114, also significant at the 0.01 level with a p-value of 0.002. However, support from friends has a correlation of -0.009, which is not significant with a p-value of 0.812. These findings reveal that higher levels of support from significant others and family are associated with lower tendencies towards political violence. This negative correlation suggests that supportive relationships can act as protective factors against engaging in violent political actions.

Intergroup threat

Intergroup threat was measured using two subscales, namely: *Perception of real threat* and *Perception of symbolic threat.* The perception of threats to the safety and survival of both personal and collective identity can be a sensitivity factor for the adoption of radical narratives as realistic interpretations of reality. *The perception of a symbolic threat* is a predictor of prejudice (Skokandić 2018), which is a component of every radical opinion and ideology. The perception of real threat did not prove to be a significant predictor of prejudice. In examining the intergroup threat on groups of different status in a multi-ethnic community after the conflict, *the perception of real threat,* unlike the symbolic one, did not prove to be significant for predicting the intention to discriminate and intragroup bias (Skokandić 2018, according to Löw Stanić 2014).

Table 3.2.3. Intergroup threat correlation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		Perception of real threats	Perception of symbolic threats
Political Radicalism Intent	Pearson Correlation	.198[**]	.354[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000
	N	688	688
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	.214[**]	.328[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000
	N	694	693

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

[*]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between the perception of real threats and the intention of political radicalism is 0.198, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. This suggests a weak but significant positive correlation, indicating that as the perception of real threats increases, the intention of political radicalism also increases.

The correlation between the perception of real threats and political violence is 0.214, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. This denotes a weak but significant positive correlation, suggesting that a higher perception of real threats is associated with a higher tendency towards political violence.

The correlation between the perception of symbolic threats and the intention of political radicalism is 0.354, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. This shows a moderate and significant positive correlation, suggesting that as the perception of symbolic threats increases, the intention of political radicalism also increases.

The correlation between the perception of symbolic threats and political violence is 0.328, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a moderate and significant positive correlation, suggesting that a higher perception of symbolic threats is associated with a higher tendency towards political violence.

Both perceptions of real and symbolic threats show weak to moderate positive correlations with political radicalism and violence, with symbolic threats having slightly stronger correlations.

Cognitive flexibility

Cognitive flexibility can be defined as the ability to change cognitive patterns of thinking and reasoning due to adaptation to environmental stimuli that are variable (Dennis, Vander Wal 2010).

Research on individual differences in radical attitudes and behaviors shows that information processing styles increase an individual's sensitivity to accepting violence to protect an ideological goal or group. Zmigrod, Rentfrow, and Robbins (2019) found that cognitive rigidity, unlike some other aspects of cognition, is specifically implicated as a cognitive antecedent of extremist attitudes.

Table 3.2.4. Cognitive flexibility correlation with Political radicalism Intent and Political Violence

		Cognitive flexibility
Political Radicalism Intent	Pearson Correlation	0,057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,127
	N	717
Political Violence	Pearson Correlation	0,003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,933
	N	714

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data describes the correlations between cognitive flexibility and various forms of political intentions and actions. The correlation between cognitive flexibility and the intention of political radicalism is 0.057, which is not statistically significant, as indicated by the significance value of 0.127. The correlation between cognitive flexibility and political violence is a negligible 0.003, with a significance value of 0.933, indicating no significant relationship.

Finally, the correlation between the intention of political radicalism and political violence is 0.336, significant at the 0.01 level, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating a moderate positive relationship.

4. DISCUSSION

This section synthesizes the findings from the correlation analyses and interprets their implications in the context of existing literature. The discussion aims to provide an understanding of how family dysfunction, poverty, peer violence, trauma, self-esteem, group identity significance, social support, perception of threats, and cognitive flexibility interact with political radicalism, and violence among adolescents.

The significant positive correlation between family dysfunction and political radicalism ($r = 0.097$, $p = 0.009$) highlights the impact of adverse family environments on youths' propensity towards radical ideologies. This finding is consistent with the life-course criminological perspective, which posits that early exposure to family

conflict and instability can lead to the development of maladaptive behaviors and attitudes (Simi, Sporer, & Bubolz, 2016). The theory suggests that dysfunctional family environments contribute to feelings of marginalization and resentment, which radical groups exploit to recruit vulnerable individuals. Koehler (2020) also identified childhood adversity, including family dysfunction, as a critical factor in the radicalization process.

The moderate and significant correlation between family dysfunction and political violence (r = 0.222, p = 0.000) indicates that adolescents from dysfunctional families are not only more likely to adopt radical ideologies but are also more inclined towards violent political actions. This finding aligns with studies such as those by Kalmoe (2014), who demonstrated that individuals with aggressive tendencies and a history of adverse familial experiences are more likely to support and engage in political violence. The connection between family dysfunction and aggressive behaviors can be attributed to the social learning theory, which posits that children learn and internalize behaviors observed in their immediate environment, including aggressive and violent responses to conflicts.

Furthermore, this study's findings align with research on the impact of socio-economic and psychological factors on radicalization. Borum (2011) emphasizes that radicalization is a multifaceted process influenced by a combination of personal grievances, identity crises, and exposure to radical ideologies, often facilitated by dysfunctional family dynamics. The sense of insecurity and lack of support in such families can drive adolescents towards radical groups that promise belonging, identity, and purpose.

The positive correlation between poverty and political radicalism intent, with a correlation coefficient of 0.133 and a significant p-value of 0.000, aligns with findings from research that link economic deprivation to radicalization. Krueger and Malečková (2003) found that poor economic conditions can foster radical sentiments, as economically disadvantaged individuals may find radical ideologies promising significant societal changes. This notion is further supported by Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010), who points to the role of socio-economic marginalization in the radicalization process. These studies collectively suggest that economic hardship can increase susceptibility to radical ideologies, which promise redressal of grievances and transformative change.

Similarly, the correlation between poverty and political violence, evidenced by a correlation coefficient of 0.175 and a significant p-value of 0.000, is consistent with the broader theoretical and empirical literature on the drivers of political violence.

Collier and Hoeffler (2004) argue that economic deprivation can create substantial grievances that may lead to violence, as marginalized individuals or groups might resort to violent actions as a means of political expression. This argument is supported by Gurr's (1970) theory of relative deprivation, which posits that perceived discrepancies between expected and actual living conditions can lead to frustration, thereby escalating into political violence.

The significant and strong correlation between experienced peer violence and perpetrated peer violence (.601) is consistent with the findings of Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn aggressive behaviors through observation and direct experience. This relationship suggests that those who endure violence are more likely to adopt similar behaviors, emphasizing the cyclical nature of violence within peer groups.

In contrast, the significant but modest correlation between experienced peer violence and the intention of political radicalism (.135) aligns with research by Simi et al. (2016), which suggests that experiences of violence can foster radical ideologies. This correlation implies that personal victimization might contribute to the adoption of more extreme political views, even if it does not necessarily translate into general political activism.

However, the moderate and significant correlation between perpetrated peer violence and the intention of political radicalism (.237) is supported by studies such as those by McCauley and Moskalenko (2008), indicating that engaging in violence can be a pathway to radicalization. This finding suggests a potential escalation from interpersonal violence to more organized and ideological forms of violence.

The moderate positive correlation between political violence and experienced peer violence (.141) and the stronger correlation with perpetrated peer violence (.316) reinforce the idea that early exposure to violence can predispose individuals to adopt violent political methods (Horgan 2008). These findings suggest that interventions aimed at reducing peer violence might also mitigate the potential for political violence.

Finally, the moderate positive correlation between political violence and the intention of political radicalism (.336) further supports the notion that radical intentions are closely linked to violent methods, as shown in studies by Bjørgo (2005). This brings attention to the critical need for deradicalization efforts that address both ideological and behavioral aspects of radicalism.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between trauma and political behaviors. The positive correlation between Individual life trauma and Family war trauma ($r = 0.343$, $p < 0.001$) aligns with previous research

indicating that diverse types of traumas are often interconnected and can compound their effects on individuals (Garbarino 2015). This significant relationship draws attention to the importance of addressing multiple sources of trauma in therapeutic and policy interventions.

The correlations between Political radicalization intention and both Family war trauma ($r = -0.065$, $p = 0.085$) and Individual life trauma ($r = -0.042$, $p = 0.260$) are weak and not statistically significant. These results suggest that while trauma may contribute to a predisposition towards radicalization, it is not a definitive predictor. This is in line with Borum's (2011) findings that radicalization is influenced by a complex interplay of individual and contextual factors.

Similarly, the weak negative correlations between Political violence and both Family war trauma ($r = -0.025$, $p = 0.511$) and Individual life trauma ($r = -0.042$, $p = 0.268$) indicate that trauma alone does not predict violent behavior. This is consistent with the literature suggesting that violent extremism results from a combination of risk factors, including socio-economic conditions, ideological motivations, and social networks (Weine et al. 2016).

The moderate positive correlation between Political radicalization intention and Political violence ($r = 0.336$, $p < 0.001$) confirms the strong link between radical intentions and violent actions, points out to the critical need for early intervention strategies that address radical ideologies before they escalate into violence (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).

Furthermore, the study by Ozer et al. (2020) explores the complex interplay between life attachment, collective self-esteem, and extremism across diverse cultural contexts. They replicated findings that an insecure life attachment is associated with a higher degree of extremism endorsement. This relationship was found to be moderated by aspects of group membership, with variations observed among majority and minority groups from Denmark, India, and the United Kingdom. The study underscores the importance of general social psychological processes underlying radicalization, emphasizing the role of collective self-esteem as both a promoting and mitigating factor in the endorsement of extremism. These insights are particularly relevant for understanding the dynamics of radicalization among adolescents, as they highlight the significance of addressing underlying psychological and social factors in counter-radicalization efforts.

In discussion, these findings align with previous literature that stresses the complex interplay between self-esteem and social behaviors. The positive correlation between self-esteem and positive social self-esteem supports the notion that social

validation plays a crucial role in enhancing self-concept. Leary and Baumeister (2000) proposed the sociometer theory, suggesting that self-esteem is a gauge of social acceptance and inclusion. Individuals with higher self-esteem are likely to feel more accepted and valued in social contexts, which may explain the positive association with positive social self-esteem.

The negative correlation between self-esteem and negative social self-esteem underscores the detrimental impact of social rejection and criticism on one's self-view. Crocker and Park (2004) highlighted that the pursuit of self-esteem can be costly, leading to defensive behaviors and negative emotions when social validation is lacking. This dynamic is evident in the significant negative correlation observed in the study, suggesting that higher self-esteem is associated with lower experiences of negative social self-esteem.

The significant positive correlation between self-esteem and public social self-esteem further emphasizes the importance of social perceptions in shaping self-worth. Public social self-esteem, which reflects how individuals believe they are viewed by others, aligns positively with overall self-esteem, reinforcing the role of social feedback in self-evaluation.

The associations with political intentions extend the understanding of how individual psychological factors can influence broader social and political behaviors.

The positive correlation between positive social self-esteem and political radicalism intentions, although counterintuitive, can be explained through the lens of social identity theory. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), strong identification with a social group can lead to extreme behaviors if the group's norms and values support such actions. Thus, individuals with high positive social self-esteem might be more susceptible to radicalization if they strongly identify with radical groups.

Regarding political violence, the significant positive correlations with both positive and negative social self-esteem illuminate the complexity of the relationship between self-esteem and aggressive behaviors. High positive social self-esteem might drive individuals to engage in political violence as a means of defending or advancing their social group's interests. Conversely, high negative social self-esteem could lead to violent behaviors as a response to social rejection and perceived injustice.

There is a significant negative correlation between the insignificance of group identity and the intention of political radicalism (-0.175, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that perceiving the group as insignificant is associated with lower intentions of political radicalism. This is supported by research suggesting that strong group identity can contribute to radicalization when individuals feel their group is marginalized or under

threat (van Bergen et al. 2020).

The correlation between the insignificance of group identity and political violence is -0.056, which is not statistically significant (p = 0.133). This suggests a very weak and statistically insignificant negative relationship, indicating that perceptions of group insignificance are not strongly related to political violence. Research in this area has shown that political violence is often influenced by a range of factors, including personal, social, and environmental influences, rather than solely group identity (Schmid 2013).

The correlation data presented offers insights into the relationships between various types of social support and political behaviors, aligning with existing research in several significant ways.

Research has shown that social support networks are crucial for fostering civic and political engagement. For example, Putnam (2000) emphasized the role of social capital in promoting participation in civic activities, suggesting that individuals embedded in supportive networks are more likely to engage in community and political activities due to the encouragement and resources provided by these networks.

The weak and non-significant correlations between social support and political radicalism intent reflect the complex nature of radicalization. Previous research indicates that radicalization is influenced by a multifaceted interplay of factors, including ideological beliefs, socio-economic conditions, and psychological traits (Horgan 2008). The non-significant correlations of -0.053, 0.071, and 0.047 for support from significant others, family, and friends, respectively, suggest that immediate social support might not be the primary driver of radicalization. This finding is in line with studies that emphasize the importance of broader contextual and individual factors over social support in the pathways to radicalization (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010).

The data on political violence further supports the protective role of social support. The significant negative correlations of -.156** and -.114** for support from significant others and family, respectively, indicate that these forms of support can act as buffers against engaging in violent political actions. This is consistent with research by Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz (2016), which found that strong family bonds and emotional stability provided by significant others can deter individuals from resorting to violence. The insignificant correlation of -0.009 with support from friends suggests that while peer support is important, it may not be as related in preventing political violence as family support.

The findings from the correlation analysis reveal several significant relationships between perceptions of threats and political behaviors, aligning with and extending previous research on the topic.

The weak but significant positive correlation between the perception of real threats and the intention of political radicalism ($r = 0.198$, $p < 0.01$) is consistent with past studies indicating that perceived threats can fuel radicalization processes. This is supported by studies such as those by Doosje, Loseman, and Van den Bos (2013), who found that perceived threats and injustices are key factors in the radicalization of youth.

Similarly, the weak positive correlation between the perception of real threats and political violence ($r = 0.214$, $p < 0.01$) supports earlier findings that individuals who perceive higher levels of threat are more likely to endorse or engage in violent behaviors. This relationship has been underlined in research by McCauley and Moskalenko (2008), who identified perceived threat as a significant driver of political violence. The findings align with Ozer et al.'s (2020) assertion that perceived threats and injustices are key factors in the radicalization of youth. Perceptions of real threats and symbolic threats significantly correlate with political radicalism and violence

The significant relationship between the perception of symbolic threats and political radicalism ($r = 0.354$, $p < 0.01$) and political violence ($r = 0.328$, $p < 0.01$) provides further evidence that symbolic threats, which involve perceived challenges to one's cultural values and identity, are potent predictors of radical and violent behaviors. This corroborates previous research suggesting that symbolic threats are strongly related to hostile and defensive reactions, as outlined by Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman (1999).

The data on the correlations between cognitive flexibility and various forms of political intentions and actions offer meaningful insights when discussed in relation to previous research findings.

Cognitive flexibility is associated with adaptive and engaged forms of political behavior. For instance, research by Zmigrod et al. (2019) found that individuals with higher cognitive flexibility are more likely to engage in constructive political actions, as they can better navigate and respond to complex social and political issues.

The non-significant correlation between cognitive flexibility and the intention of political radicalism ($r = 0.057$, $p = 0.127$) indicates that cognitive flexibility does not have a direct relationship with radical political intentions. This is consistent with findings from studies such as those by Doosje et al. (2016), which accentuates that radicalization is influenced more by factors such as identity crises, perceived social injustices, and exposure to radical ideologies rather than cognitive flexibility.

The negligible and non-significant correlation between cognitive flexibility and political violence ($r = 0.003$, $p = 0.933$) suggests no direct link between cognitive flexibility and violent political behaviors. This finding is in line with research by

Webber and Kruglanski (2018), which suggests that violent behaviors are typically associated with factors like aggression, exposure to violence, and specific personality traits, rather than cognitive flexibility.

Finally, the moderate positive correlation between the intention of political radicalism and political violence ($r = 0.336$, $p < 0.01$) supports the extensive body of research showing a strong link between radical beliefs and violent actions. Borum (2011) highlights that ideological commitment and radical intentions are critical precursors to violent extremism.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study illuminate the complex interplay of personal, contextual, and social factors that contribute to political radicalism, and violence among adolescents. By examining these relationships, the research provides valuable insights into the pathways leading to both constructive political engagement and extremist behaviors. The implications for policymakers and practitioners are substantial, highlighting the need for targeted interventions addressing family dysfunction, socio-economic conditions, peer violence, trauma, self-esteem, social support, perceptions of threat, and cognitive flexibility.

One of the key findings of this study is the significant impact of family dysfunction on political radicalism and violence. Adolescents from dysfunctional families are more likely to adopt radical ideologies and engage in violent political actions. This underscores the importance of family-based interventions aimed at improving family dynamics and providing support to at-risk youths. Programs that promote positive parenting practices and strengthen family relationships could be effective in mitigating the risk of radicalization and political violence.

Economic deprivation is another critical factor related to political radicalism and violence. The study found that poverty is positively correlated with both radicalism and violence, suggesting that improving socio-economic conditions could play a crucial role in preventing extremist behaviors. Policymakers should consider implementing economic policies that address poverty and provide opportunities for disadvantaged youths. This could include job creation programs, educational scholarships, and other initiatives aimed at reducing economic disparities.

Peer violence, both experienced and perpetrated, also plays a significant role in shaping political behaviors among adolescents. The study found strong correlations between peer violence and both political radicalism and violence. Interventions aimed

at reducing peer violence in schools and communities could help mitigate the risk of radicalization. Anti-bullying programs, conflict resolution training, and initiatives that promote positive peer interactions are essential components of such interventions.

The relationship between trauma and political behaviors is complex and multifaceted. While the study found weak correlations between trauma and political radicalism or violence, it is essential to consider the broader context in which these experiences occur. Addressing trauma through therapeutic interventions and providing support for individuals who have experienced significant adversity can help build resilience and reduce vulnerability to radicalization.

Self-esteem and social identity also play crucial roles in shaping political behaviors. The study found that positive social self-esteem is associated with political radicalism, suggesting that individuals who feel valued and accepted in their social groups are more likely to engage in political activities, whether constructive or extreme. Conversely, negative social self-esteem is linked to political violence, indicating that social rejection and criticism can lead to aggressive behaviors. Interventions that promote positive self-esteem and social inclusion can help reduce the risk of radicalization and violence.

The perception of social support is another significant factor influencing political behaviors. Supportive relationships with family, friends, and significant others can act as protective factors against political violence. However, the study found weak correlations between social support and political radicalism intent, suggesting that social support alone may not be sufficient to prevent radicalization. Comprehensive interventions that address multiple risk factors and provide holistic support to at-risk youths are necessary.

Perceptions of threats, both real and symbolic, are strongly correlated with political radicalism and violence. Adolescents who perceive higher levels of threat are more likely to adopt radical ideologies and engage in violent behaviors. This finding highlights the importance of addressing the underlying fears and insecurities that drive radicalization. Efforts to promote social cohesion, reduce intergroup tensions, and address perceived threats can help mitigate the risk of extremist behaviors.

Cognitive flexibility, or the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and think creatively, is another important factor related to political behaviors. The study found that cognitive flexibility is not significantly correlated with political radicalism or violence, suggesting that other factors may play a more critical role in shaping these behaviors. However, promoting cognitive flexibility through educational programs

and critical thinking training could still be beneficial in fostering resilience to radical ideologies.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design of the research limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the temporal relationships between the identified factors and political behaviors. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, such as social desirability bias or recall bias. Future research could incorporate multiple data sources, including observational and behavioral measures, to enhance the validity of the findings.

Additionally, the study sample was limited to high school students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations and contexts. Replicating the study in diverse cultural and socio-political settings could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors relating to political radicalism and violence among adolescents.

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of political radicalism and violence among adolescents. By identifying the personal, contextual, and social correlates of these behaviors, the research provides valuable guidance for developing targeted interventions aimed at preventing radicalization and promoting positive political engagement. Addressing family dysfunction, improving socio-economic conditions, reducing peer violence, supporting trauma recovery, fostering positive self-esteem and social identity, enhancing social support, addressing perceptions of threat, and promoting cognitive flexibility are all critical components of a comprehensive strategy to mitigate the risk of political radicalism and violence among youths.

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OSOBNE, KONTEKSTUALNE I DRUŠTVENE POVEZNICE POLITIČKOG RADIKALIZMA I NASILJA MEĐU ADOLESCENTIMA

Sažetak:

Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj identificirati osobne, kontekstualne i društvene poveznice političkog radikalizma i nasilja među adolescentima. Istraživanje naglašava adolescente kao demografsku skupinu koja se može smatrati rizičnom za političku radikalizaciju zbog formiranja socijalnog identiteta i političke socijalizacije. Istraživanje koristi sveobuhvatnu metodologiju, primjenjujući višeetapno uzorkovanje srednjoškolaca za procjenu individualnih ranjivosti i otpornosti, te šire kontekstualne doprinose političkoj radikalizaciji i nasilju. Nalazi pokazuju da disfunkcija obitelji, siromaštvo i vršnjačko nasilje značajno koreliraju s političkim radikalizmom i nasiljem među adolescentima, dok opća samopouzdanost i kognitivna fleksibilnost imaju manje važnu ulogu. Podržavajuće društvene mreže i percepcija prijetnji ključni su faktori koji djeluju kao zaštita od političkog nasilja. Intervencije usmjerene na smanjenje disfunkcije obitelji, poboljšanje socio-ekonomskih uvjeta i jačanje društvenih mreža podrške mogli bi smanjiti rizike političke radikalizacije i političkog nasilja. Studija pruža vrijedne uvide za donositelje politika i praktičare koji nastoje smanjiti rizik političke radikalizacije i nasilja među mladima.

Ključne riječi: politička radikalizacija; političko nasilje; individualni faktori; kontekstualni faktori; adolescenti

Authors' address
Adrese autora

Jelena Brkić Šmigoc
University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Political Sciences
jelena.brkic.smigoc@fpn.unsa.ba

Sead Turčalo
University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Political Sciences
sead.turcalo@fpn.unsa.ba

Muamer Hirkić
University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Political Sciences
muamer.hirkic@fpn.unsa.ba

Mirza Buljubašić
University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Criminalistics, Criminology and Security Studies
mbuljubasic@fkn.unsa.ba

Veldin Kadić
University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Political Sciences
veldin.kadic@fpn.unsa.ba

Mirza Smajić
University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Political Sciences
mirza.smajic@fpn.unsa.ba