

Reforms to Ensure Interethnic Harmony and Religious Tolerance in Uzbekistan: A Psychological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the strategy of reforms being implemented in New Uzbekistan to ensure interethnic harmony and religious tolerance through psychological approaches. Based on data from the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan and the results of sociological research, the study analyzes the current state of interethnic and interconfessional relations in the country, as well as efforts aimed at maintaining security and social stability. The article also considers best practices in this field, contemporary global threats, and preventive measures designed to counter them.

Keywords: Interethnic Harmony; Religious Tolerance; Psychological Approach; Uzbekistan Reforms; Social Cohesion; Interconfessional Relations; Youth Resilience; Extremism Prevention; Empathy Development; Social Stability; Multicultural Society; Preventive Psychological Measures.

1. Introduction

Changes in the global geopolitical landscape and processes of globalization are affecting all spheres of human life, clearly demonstrating that ensuring peace and stability has become an issue of profound social significance [1].

In Uzbekistan, targeted spiritual-educational, social, and psychological reforms are being implemented in this regard, serving as key factors in ensuring interethnic harmony and interconfessional cohesion [2].

The purpose of this article is to analyze, from a psychological perspective, the strategy of reforms aimed at ensuring national and religious tolerance in Uzbekistan, as well as to assess their effectiveness through sociological analyses and practical measures.

According to the theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), individuals influence overall social stability by identifying themselves with ethnic and religious groups [3]. This process is particularly important in promoting social integration and tolerance, especially among young people.

1.1. Study Objectives

- to analyze the role of psychological factors in strengthening interethnic harmony and religious tolerance in Uzbekistan.
- to examine current state reforms and policy measures aimed at promoting interethnic and interconfessional stability.
- to evaluate sociological and statistical data reflecting public attitudes toward tolerance and social cohesion.
- to identify effective psychological and educational preventive mechanisms against extremism and radicalization.
- to assess the impact of youth-focused programs on empathy, social responsibility, and intercultural dialogue.

- to develop practical recommendations for enhancing tolerance through psychological, educational, and social initiatives.

2. Discussion

The ability to demonstrate emotional understanding toward representatives of other nationalities and religions helps prevent conflicts. Studies by Batson (1991) and Brewer (1999) show that individuals with a high level of empathy tend to regulate relationships peacefully in conflict situations [4],[5].

According to Staub (2003), fostering psychological resilience among citizens against radical and extremist ideologies creates social immunity, thereby supporting interethnic cohesion and solidarity [6].

Historically, Uzbekistan has developed as a multiethnic and multiconfessional society. Since ancient times, representatives of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam have coexisted peacefully within the country. These long-standing traditions continue to ensure stability and social harmony in Uzbekistan today [7].

Based on the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 7, 2017, “On the Action Strategy for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan,” ensuring interethnic harmony and religious tolerance has been designated as a priority task of state policy [8].

According to a 2023 sociological survey conducted by the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan:

92% of citizens support an environment of interethnic harmony;

87% consider religious tolerance to be an important value;

79% of the younger generation expresses solidarity with all religions and nationalities.

These data indicate the positive outcomes of state policy in this area [9].

Young people play a key role in fostering interethnic harmony. Psychological studies indicate that high levels of empathy and social responsibility among citizens aged 18–30 significantly contribute to stability in interconfessional relations [10].

Therefore, a range of psychological preventive measures has been consistently implemented in Uzbekistan. In particular, these include:

Educational campaigns – scientifically grounded lectures and video materials on religious tolerance and interethnic harmony are produced and disseminated through television channels and social media platforms [11].

Social trainings and seminars – conducted in schools and universities to strengthen resilience among young people against radical ideologies [12].

Mentorship programs – specialized initiatives designed to foster cooperation and tolerance among young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds [13].

According to data from the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, as a result of these measures, the proportion of young people inclined toward radical and extremist ideas declined from 12% in 2019 to 4% in 2023 [14].

Cultural and sports activities constitute effective instruments for bringing together representatives of diverse ethnic and religious groups. Examples include:

Cultural exchanges: Festivals dedicated to national music, dance, and traditional arts are organized among young people in both urban and rural areas.

Sports competitions: Football, volleyball, and chess tournaments foster interaction and unity among different ethnic groups.

International cooperation: In collaboration with various international organizations, Uzbekistan implements programs aimed at preventing extremism and promoting religious tolerance [15].

In Uzbekistan, the state has undertaken comprehensive measures to counter extremism and radicalism. These include the development and implementation of legislation targeting extremist activities during the period 2016–2023 [16], as well as preventive initiatives such as educational seminars organized in local communities with the participation of psychologists and sociologists [17].

Targeted psychological preventive measures also play a significant role in addressing this challenge. In particular:

Elimination of stereotypes: Educational efforts are carried out among young people to counter national and religious stereotypes [18].

Social integration: Representatives of different ethnic and religious groups engage in dialogue through cultural and sports activities.

Promotion of peace and tolerance: Citizens' rights to freely express their views are ensured and protected [19].

According to statistical data, in 2023 the level of susceptibility to radical ideas among young people decreased by 8% compared to 2019, indicating the effectiveness of both state and non-governmental preventive measures [20].

At the global level, extremism, radicalism, religious intolerance, and social conflicts pose serious threats to national stability. In Uzbekistan as well, strengthening resilience and developing psychological immunity against these challenges remain a priority [21].

Today, it is widely acknowledged that extremist and radical ideologies are being disseminated across the world. This phenomenon is driven by several key factors, including:

Extremist groups that actively spread their ideas among young people through the internet and social media platforms.

Social instability, such as economic and cultural deprivation, which—particularly in rural areas—may contribute to the proliferation of radical ideas among youth.

Religious pressure and marginal confessional groups, where religious discrimination and entrenched stereotypes in certain societies are perceived as significant sources of risk [22].

In response to these challenges, a range of practical measures is being implemented in Uzbekistan. In particular:

Strengthening psychological resilience – specialized trainings and seminars aimed at preventing extremism are organized in schools and universities.

Information and media campaigns – empathy and tolerance among young people are fostered through the dissemination of scientifically grounded videos and articles.

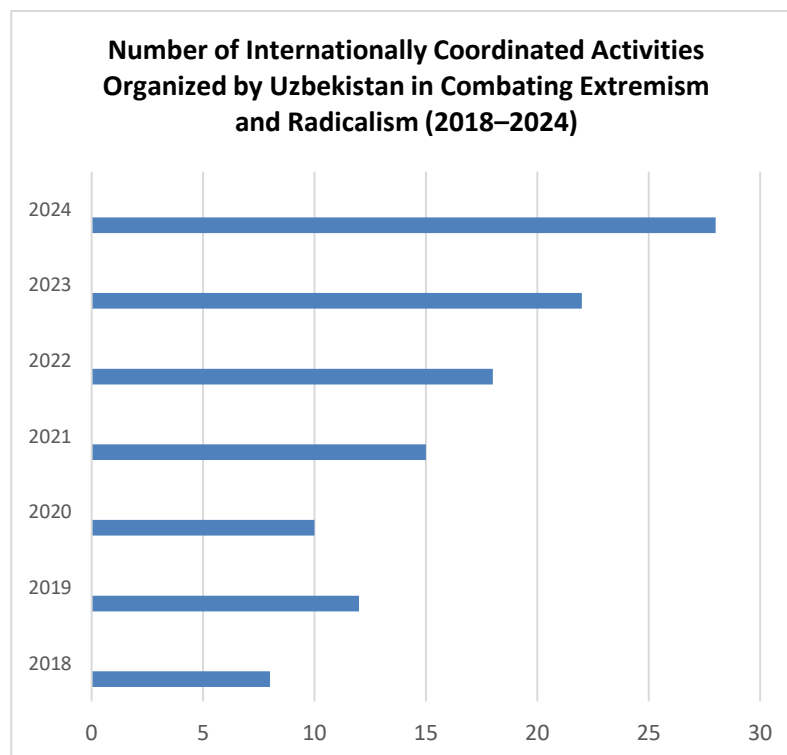
State and non-governmental cooperation – Uzbekistan engages psychologists, sociologists, and religious experts in the implementation of stability-oriented programs [23].

In this regard, international cooperation and the exchange of best practices have also been actively institutionalized. Uzbekistan collaborates with various international organizations to study and adopt advanced experience in the field of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance:

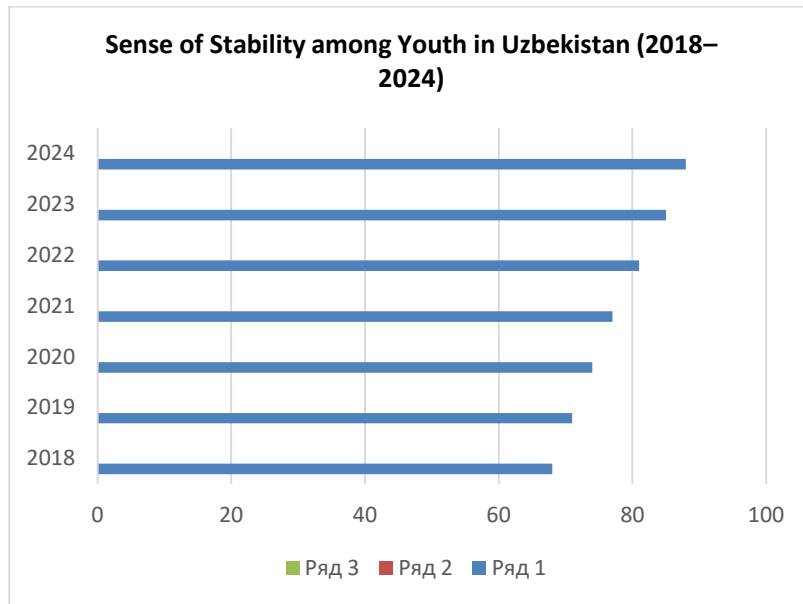
In cooperation with the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), programs promoting religious tolerance among youth are implemented.

Jointly with UNICEF and UNDP, initiatives aimed at enhancing social stability and preventing extremism among young people are carried out.

International cultural exchange programs play a significant role in expanding interethnic and interconfessional dialogue among youth [24].

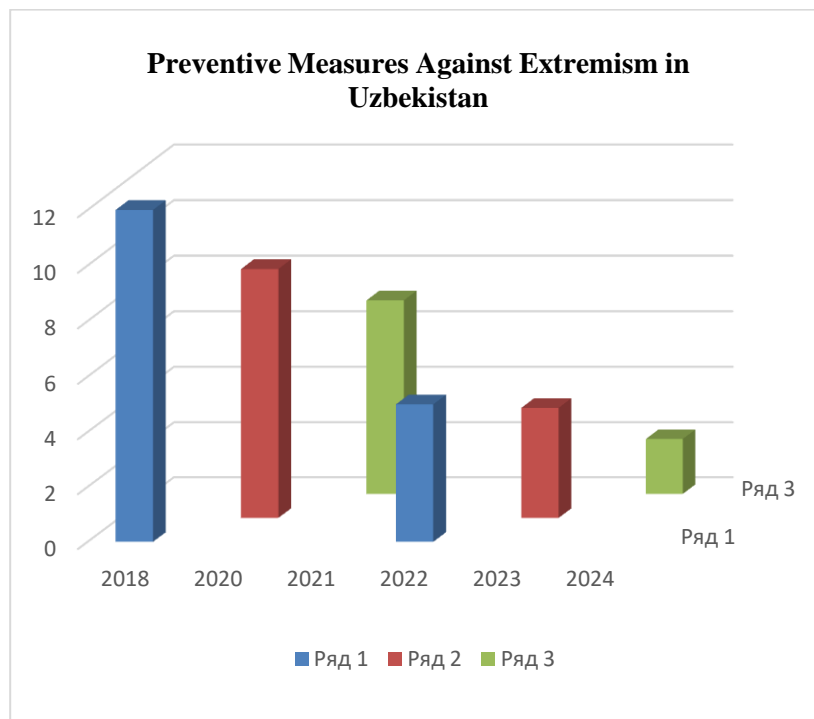


These indicators confirm the effectiveness of Uzbekistan’s efforts to ensure stability in combating extremism and radicalism through global cooperation. In this regard, as a result of strengthening the sense of resilience among young people in Uzbekistan during the period 2018–2024, the outcomes presented in the diagram below have been achieved.



As a result of preventive measures against extremism implemented in Uzbekistan, psychological preventive interventions were provided to 12% of affected youth in 2019, 7% in 2020, 5% in 2021, 4% in 2023, and 2% in 2024.

These figures clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of psychological prevention and educational measures in reducing youth vulnerability to extremist influences.



3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate that psychological mechanisms play a crucial role in ensuring interethnic harmony and religious tolerance in Uzbekistan. Based on sociological and psychological analyses, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Interethnic harmony and tolerance as state policy priorities. Since 2017, all state programs in Uzbekistan, including educational curricula in schools and universities, have been systematically implemented with a focus on promoting interethnic harmony and religious tolerance [7],[8].

Development of empathy and social responsibility among youth. Psychological studies indicate that citizens aged 18–30 exhibit relatively high levels of empathy and social responsibility, which significantly contribute to interconfessional cohesion and social stability [9],[10].

Resilience against extremism and radicalism. Psychological and educational preventive measures implemented through cooperation between state and non-governmental organizations have reduced the proportion of youth susceptible to radical ideas from 12% in 2019 to 4% in 2023 [12],[13].

Global challenges and international cooperation. Cultural exchange programs and cooperation with international organizations serve as effective tools for fostering religious tolerance and interethnic solidarity among young people [14],[21],[24].

The importance of didactic and cultural activities. Cultural, sports, and social integration initiatives strengthen young people's sense of stability, mutual understanding, and tolerance.

4. Recommendations

Expansion of psychological research: Conduct systematic scientific research in schools and universities aimed at developing resilience to extremism and radicalism.

Youth education and moral development: Introduce comprehensive educational programs across all educational institutions that promote interethnic cooperation and tolerance.

Information and media campaigns: Widely disseminate scientifically grounded lectures, articles, and video materials through social media platforms and television channels.

State and non-governmental cooperation: Expand the involvement of psychologists and sociologists in projects aimed at preventing extremism and radicalization.

International cooperation: Implement joint programs on stability and tolerance in collaboration with organizations such as the OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF, and others.

Use of diagrams and scientific analysis: Regularly analyze sociological and psychological data using scientifically grounded charts and diagrams to enhance evidence-based policymaking.

5. Future Suggestions

- Conduct longitudinal psychological studies to track changes in interethnic attitudes and tolerance levels among youth and adults over time.
- Develop digital psychological literacy programs that promote empathy, critical thinking, and resistance to online radicalization.

- Expand community-based intercultural dialogue platforms involving educators, psychologists, and religious leaders.
- Integrate tolerance and conflict-resolution training more deeply into national school and university curricula.
- Strengthen international joint research and exchange programs focused on social cohesion and preventive psychology.
- Establish regular nationwide monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of tolerance-building reforms and interventions.

Declarations

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The author declares that he/she consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

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Informed Consent

Not applicable for this study.

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