

Risk Factors Of Juvenile Delinquency Among Children Growing Up In Single-Parent Families

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Abstract: Today, due to a number of factors, the number of juvenile delinquencies is sharply increasing worldwide. Several studies have examined the link between this phenomenon and the incomplete structure of families caused by divorce or other reasons. When analyzing the family environment and conditions of children brought to criminal and administrative responsibility, it was found that the majority of them were raised in single-parent families, which confirms the conclusions of these studies. The article provides a detailed explanation of the impact of an incomplete family environment on juvenile delinquency and presents proposals and recommendations for its prevention.

Keywords: Single-parent family, minor child, delinquency, crime, national-spiritual model, emotional attachment, tendency to delinquency, deviant behavior.

Introduction: Today, many children are growing up in single-parent families, that is, families where only one parent is present. In Western countries, the number of single-parent families has been steadily increasing in recent years. In the European Union and the United States, 15–27 percent of children under the age of 18 live in single-parent families. Growing up in such a family occurs as a result of parental divorce, the death of one parent, or abandonment of the family by the father or mother. In recent years, particularly due to the rising number of divorces, many single-parent families have been formed. According to the data provided by the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the number of divorces registered in Uzbekistan was 17,794 in 2010, 29,647 in 2015, 39,349 in 2021, and 49,198 in 2023. The annual increase in the number of divorces also requires systematic work with the children growing up in these families.

A number of studies have been conducted regarding the specific characteristics of children raised in single-parent families. In particular, researchers such as Korwin, De Lange, and Sandefur, in their scientific studies, emphasize that growing up in an incomplete family affects children's emotional well-being, cognitive development, and academic achievement.

According to researcher Felner, children of divorced parents face greater difficulties than children who have lost a parent due to death. Furthermore, divorce leads to depression in children and puts their future life opportunities at risk. As a result, adolescents may develop an interest in criminal behavior and easily become members of criminogenic groups.

Researcher B.A. Spasennikov classifies single-parent families among troubled families and notes that delinquent youth are often raised in such environments. Legal scholar A.E. Pobegaylo emphasizes that in the formation of children's deviant behavior, the completeness of the family is a secondary factor, while the primary one is the nature of relationships between family members.

Uzbek scholar G.T. Yadgarova, in her research on single-parent families, notes that nearly 75–78 percent of juveniles who have committed offenses and more than half of young people who consume narcotic substances come from such families. Furthermore, children raised in these families are more frequently affected by somatic and psychosomatic illnesses, and cases of suicide are also more commonly observed among them.

Pedagogue Y.K. Shaamirova emphasizes in her studies that the development of a child's personality in single-

parent families, without the participation of either father or mother, leads to distorted perceptions of parental roles and gender identities. For example, girls grow up without seeing a national-spiritual model of womanhood, while boys grow up without experiencing father figures or male role models, which later gives rise to a number of problems. The incompleteness and lack of proper supervision in single-parent families, as well as the insufficient creation of a national-spiritual environment, may contribute to the dominance of negative traits in the child's character and increase the likelihood of delinquency.

Several scientific theories attempt to explain why children from single-parent families are more prone to delinquency. For instance, according to T. Hirschi's social control theory, adolescents in single-parent families lack sufficient attachment to one parent, which may cause them to spend more time in criminogenic environments. In this theory, family completeness is considered secondary, while the primary factor is the degree of emotional attachment between the child and the parents. Accordingly, emotionally unattached children raised in complete families face a higher risk of delinquency compared to emotionally attached children raised in single-parent families.

According to the self-control theory of T. Hirschi and M. Gottfredson, single-parent families are often unable to fully exercise control over the child and ensure proper socialization. Children experiencing weakened parental control are more likely to become involved in criminal activities. Furthermore, M. Gottfredson emphasizes that the heavy responsibilities borne by a single parent make it difficult to spend sufficient time with children, which in turn fosters negative behaviors such as engagement in criminal activity.

In the economic stress model, attention is paid to how the unmet needs and lack of resources in single-parent families affect adolescents' criminal behavior. For example, a single father or mother may not have the opportunity to engage the child in after-school activities, which can lead to the criminalization of free time.

The family crisis model, on the other hand, focuses not on family structure itself but on the processes that create single-parent families. It highlights that a stable and prosperous family environment is an important factor shaping children's behavior. According to this model, parental divorce, abandonment, or death leads to psychological distress, emotional dissatisfaction, and social tension in children. Children's emotional dissatisfaction with their parents may change their positive attitude toward the family and foster delinquent behavior. Studies show that children of

divorced parents are more prone to delinquency than those who lost a parent due to death. Thus, the risk of delinquency is significantly higher among children of divorced parents. In contrast, children who lost a parent to death are less likely to experience resentment, anger, and hostility; instead, they more often suffer from sadness, social withdrawal, and depression.

Children from single-parent families, especially during adolescence, face a heightened risk of engaging in criminal behavior. According to studies conducted in foreign countries, children who are left in single-parent families at an early age or who grow up only with their mothers are more prone to delinquency. The main reasons for this include the mother's emotional vulnerability, her greater risk of stress and depression, and financial difficulties. However, in Uzbek families, stereotypes regarding stepmothers' violence toward children raised by fathers, as well as the father's limited time for upbringing, may also contribute to juvenile delinquency.

Brief conclusions on the propensity of children growing up in single-parent families toward delinquency:

- The younger the child is when the family becomes incomplete, the higher the likelihood that the adolescent will engage in criminal behavior during teenage years;
- Growing up in a single-parent family increases the probability of committing crimes not only among boys but also among girls;
- Children of divorced parents are more likely to engage in delinquency than those who have lost a parent due to death. The reason is that children from divorced families experience not only stress but also feelings of resentment and hostility;
- According to research, the decline in income in single-parent families does not significantly increase the risk of crime; the leading factor is the psychological state of the parent;
- In single-parent families, the parent often cannot devote sufficient time to the children, since they are forced to fulfill two roles (both father and mother). The lack of time prevents the strengthening of emotional bonds, and children adapt to act secretly, outside of parental supervision;
- Growing up in a single-parent family may negatively affect the child's emotional well-being, cognitive development, and academic performance in school subjects.

It should be remembered that not all children from single-parent families commit offenses. Although the propensity may exist, there are also protective factors

that prevent delinquency. For example, a child's high level of proactive motivation, the stable emotional state of the parent, sufficient mutual communication and the ability to solve problems together, and the family's economic well-being, among others.

To prevent juvenile delinquency in single-parent families, the parent must focus on strengthening relationships with their children, seek help from other parents or community resources, establish consistent rules and discipline, help organize the child's free time, and ensure that their primary needs are met. These strategies contribute to creating a stable home environment, fostering positive social values, and preventing delinquency by eliminating individual, family, and community-level risk factors. In addition, positive role modeling—that is, striving to be an exemplary parent, openly discussing problems through dialogue, being a person who understands and protects the child when mistakes are made, improving parenting skills, encouraging participation in quality education, sports, and art clubs—are all effective measures in preventing juvenile delinquency in single-parent families.

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