

The family and its role as a “*criminogenic factor*” in the submission of juvenile delinquency

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Abstract

Micro group factors are considered one of the powerful instruments for preventing juvenile delinquency and juvenile and youth crime in general. The family, i.e. parents are considered as one of the important factors in the growth and education of children, and at the same time, they are very significant in this regard. Children descended from families and parents with a criminal past potentially inherit the same thing.

If positive influence is not achieved along the way of the child’s development, together with other micro group factors without neglecting other factors as well, then the family is presented as a problem and would be considered one of the causes of the appearance of specific forms and types of crime in general and juvenile delinquency in particular.

Reasons for science interest in the problem of juvenile delinquency, and youth crime in general, stems from the fact that it is a fairly widespread and disturbing phenomenon in society today. In this article, I will focus only on the family, specifically related to parental stand in the family, as well as family cohesion rate.

Keywords: family, children, crime, juvenile delinquency, and micro group factor.

General overview

The family has undergone major changes. Social, spiritual, ethical, cultural and economic crises definitely manifest mostly in the family. Conceptual crises and the understanding of married and family life are affecting the family the most, that within its walls are carried out activities and criminal acts which negatively reflect on children, “as a product” of violent domestic crime.

The family, as the “essential nucleus of society”, is more exposed to change, and as a result each decade of the postmodern era makes great changes in meaning, conception, especially in marital and family life. It turns out that one of the parenting tasks, perhaps the most significant and even the most challenging, is educating the child.

Strong family relationships are important for reducing deviant behaviors¹. Family ties are believed to reduce deviant behaviors by serving as a protective factor to isolate oneself from criminal influences, as well as providing emotional support and facilitating the change process.

The family plays a central role in the overall development and that it has many influences on children, among others in the development of the child’s character. It is clear that there are other obvious factors related to the family, which definitely affect

¹ Berg MT, Huebner BM. Reentry and the ties that bind: An examination of social ties, employment, and recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*. 2011; 28:382–410.

the prevention of delinquency and violent criminal behavior of children. The family has recently been seen as a critical element for the development of the child and at the same time as one of the “determining” factors for the subsequent involvement of children in delinquent and violent criminal behavior².

The role of the parent - a dam against juvenile delivery

Parents often face many dilemmas, among them how to raise a child in order to successfully integrate into society and function properly on the one hand, without changing his personality beyond recognition, and to be away from the area where may be involved in delinquent acts and engaging in criminal activities on the other hand.

The family is the oldest form of social community, which is mainly based on bio-sexual, reproductive, economic and socio-protective functions³. In its content it is universal and typical, the most homogeneous, strongest and most enduring community in all kinds of society throughout history. By being born, growing up and maintaining a family, the social community is also preserved.

In the legal sense, family members are considered to be: spouses and ex-spouses and their children and children of each of them, extramarital and ex-spouses and children and children of each of them, blood relatives and relatives from adoption full online without restrictions and collateral up to the fourth degree, relatives from incomplete adoption, relatives of the father-in-law up to the second degree, persons living in a family, regardless of kinship and persons having a relationship joint child or child in conception⁴.

The family environment is considered as one of the important determinants of personality behavior, both pro-social and staying away from juvenile delinquency and crime⁵. This factor, more or less, as direct or indirect, is respected by most criminological theories⁶. It can be freely said that the moral function of the family is taken as one of the important conditions for the possibility not only of the way of

² See for the impacts of unstable family, where discord prevails and there is a lack of harmony between members, hence the appearance of delinquent children, the article by the authors Terence P. Thornberry, Carolyn A. Smith, C. Rivera, D. Huizinga and M. Stouhamer-Loeber, “Family disruption and delinquency”, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Justice bulletin*, Michigan 1999.

³ The family as the oldest human institution has historically been a place of production. Although ordinary economics throughout history largely ignored the role of the family in determining key economic outcomes, this has changed over time. See more, on family types like types and effects, article by Natali B. & Requel F., “The family as a social institution”, National bureau of economic research, Cambridge, June 2021, p. 1.

⁴ Family Law, RMV, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, 20 October 2014.

⁵ For the impact of the family environment on juvenile delinquency see a wonderful book that includes research and theory, which among other things characterizes this approach and comparative analysis of several disciplines, see Sheldon Clueck and Eleonor Glueck, *Family environment and delinquency*, Routledge, London, 2013.

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice/Office of justice programs-office of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, “Family life and delinquency and crime”, retrieved from [www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ Digitization/140517NCJRS.pdf](http://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/140517NCJRS.pdf), accessed on: 15.01.2022.

integration of the child in society but also of his socialization.

In the family, as a social community of marital and kinship ties, the appropriate relationship of education, harmony and stability is the most important element of the socially acceptable appropriate behavior of the individual⁷.

In it, the older members are models. They learn and acquire habits both positive and negative, attitudes about values, moral qualities and adopt norms of behavior.

The family is a social environment, the basis of age and experience, in which the primary process of education including the religious one takes place⁸, and the socialization of a person. It takes the first and basic moral and aesthetic principles, intellectual predispositions, work habits and social function in general precisely within the family.

Any lack of educational function of the family, disintegration and structural disorganization leads to a form of deviation or delinquency of children. In theory, opinions on the influence of the family on the behavior of its members are inseparable, only views on the modalities of the influence of family factors in such a situation are different⁹.

⁷ Among the factors that increase the risk of children being prosecuted for delinquency is violent crime manifested within the family. Definitely the high incidence of alcohol, drug use, gambling etc. problematic behaviors in the family indirectly affect the cause of psychological stress in mothers, and this makes children exposed to the greatest risk, neglect on the part of the mother to deal with their education, as these mothers are no longer available emotionally enough to care for them. The various forms of verbal and psychological abuse against women seem relatively harmless at first, but they expand and grow and become more threatening over time. The most serious consequences are those mental, psychological problems that make the mother not be at the levels of her duty to educate the children properly. A broken family life, therefore, has a detrimental effect on children, including the loss of trust in the family institution. These consequences have long-term effects on social order and cohesion. See WHO for more details. (2007). Multi country study on Women's health and domestic violence against women. Geneva: World Health Organization; p. 20, and WHO. (2001). Domestic violence: A priority public health issue in western Pacific region. Western Pacific Regional Office, p. 12.

⁸ B. Johnson in his article talks about the constructive side of the relationship between religion and behavior, as he would point out that religion and religious practice not only protect children and juveniles from delinquent behavior, but, according to research that has been done by which he refers, that relationship also encourages positive and / or normative behaviors in juveniles. Among other things, it examines the current and potential role of religion in crime reduction, rehabilitation of offenders, and subsequent care of juvenile offenders. Emphasizes that, from many studies conducted, it has been found that the frequent participation of adolescents in religious activities can help them learn values that give them a greater sense of empathy for others, thus reducing the likelihood of performing actions that harm other people, see in more detail: Bayron R. Jonson, "The role of religious institutions in responding to crime and delinquency", in Peter B. Clarke (red.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Michigan, September 2009, Oxford Handbook Online, p. 982.

⁹ Problematic, degraded, deficient families and, as prof. Halili, those with many members with high material standard are presented criminogenic factors in society, for more see Ragip Halili, *Criminology*, 6th edition, Pristina 2008, pp. 278-82.

Causes affecting the family to present “criminal factor”

Contemporary transformations of the family from the traditional status and patriarchal forms of relations result in two tendencies for the emergence of different types of crime, both in this area and juvenile delinquency and juvenile delinquency. On the one hand, the family function as cohesive and educational is weakening¹⁰, and on the other, the elements of individualization of members are being strengthened, leading to a conflict with the old conservative elements of supervision and standards of behavioral value¹¹.

Throughout different periods of time, an attempt has been made to break the “glorification” of the concept of “stability of the family hearth”. Trends are numerous even today that operate in this direction, making the family less and less to be emotional and constructive. For this reason, motivational goals have changed. Marriage is less and less understood as love and society, the importance of reproductive function is lost, family groups are limited, marriages are “desacralized”, family interactions of children and parents are declining over time.

The complexity of relationships in modern society brings the family into many psychological, moral and existential problems of its normal and natural functioning. Economic crises bring the family to the brink of survival while social crises lead to moral dilemmas, and children and the elderly find themselves in a hopeless position in a family where they need to feel more secure. Family problems develop behind closed doors, the environment does not notice them, and the family considers them transient and does not recognize them as alarming. Only with serious crises and escalation of violence, unfortunately in most cases, is the problem noticed.

The reasons for the appearance of juvenile delinquency mostly come from structural abnormalities in the family, in particular: disorder of family relations and disorder of family structure. Certain research also shows that the educational role, economic and demographic function of the family has a significant impact on the occurrence of crime, especially the living conditions of parents and the number of children in the family. The emergence of social pathology in the family environment can be a source of conflict, imitation or appropriation of deviant habits.

In the following we are treating structural anomalies in the family as criminogenic factors, namely:

Structural disorders of family relationships

The basis of the family environment is its essence. Marriage is a lawful and recognized union of a man and a woman, whose harmony forms the basis of family stability. Disorders in marital relations are considered as one of the factors of deviation of the micro group, both in spouses and children. Disagreement in marital relationships

¹⁰ See for contemporary family functions Dr. Jovan Vukoja, “Osnovne funkcije savremene porodice”, Naučno stručni časopis “SVAROG”, no 4, May 2012. (137-144), retrieved from www.readcube.com/articles/10.7251%2Fsvr.1204137, accessed on: 17.01.2022.

¹¹ See the article “The family as the main social institution. Retrieved from <https://minikar.ru/sq/love-and-relationship/semya-kak-osnovnoi-socialnyi-institut-semya-kak-socialnyi-institut-tipy/>, accessed on: 18.01.2022.

is reflected in many ways in family crises, abuses between members, as well as in emotional and educational development and socialization of children.

Such disorders can also result in more serious criminal acts of the individual or more members, such as: extramarital affairs, abuse and neglect of minor children, breach of family obligations, occurrence of domestic violence, incest.

Disorders in the family structure are caused by the incompleteness of the family nucleus and they occur with the death of one of the parents, divorce or any other reason for the separation of the spouses from each other or from the children.

Broken relationships between parents and children

Parenting by men who commit domestic violence is associated with special characteristics. They are likely to use controlling behavior and physical discipline to display more anger with their children, to have unrealistic expectations and poor developmental understanding of appropriate behavior of children at different ages and stages. Many of these parenting characteristics are supported by a sense of entitlement.

The role of the father may be essential in the identity of these men and an important motivator for change, however, paternity identity among men who commit violence should not be idealized. Thinking about rights prevails in their attitudes and they often see their child as their investment or possession, or as someone who should love them unconditionally. Most theorists point out that structural changes in the family, especially the dissolution of marriage, play an important role in their delinquent behavior and engaging in criminal activity by young people.

Rothenberg found that married men who have domestic violence, having violent behavior towards their wives do so out of their disabilities, insecurities or concerns about the husband they feel they are or are not¹², and this is reflected in family community in the form of various antisocial behaviors of children.

Delinquent, antisocial behaviors are also influenced by those affective disorders such as: jealousy, lack of attention and excessive tenderness, submission, antipathies and the like. They are usually accompanied by a disturbance in the relationship that prevails in the family, conditioned by an unbearable atmosphere and hatred between spouses, alcoholism¹³ or criminal behavior of one or both parents. Based on some studies conducted that show that 60% of men who have violent behavior in the family respectively in their marriages with their wives, they had grown up in families that were violent. Most research on this issue shows that the root cause of abuse stems from the way abusers and victims are mistreated¹⁴.

¹² Rothenberg, B. (2002). "The success of the battered woman syndrome: An analysis of how cultural arguments succeed". *Sociological Forum*, 17(1), p.88-103.

¹³ Some researchers have found evidence that men who have a pattern of drinking alcohol have violent domestic violent behavior, which for more see Quigley, B., & Leonard, K. (1996). "Desistance of husband aggression in the early years of marriage". *Violence & Victims* 11(1), p.355-370.

¹⁴ Delsol, C. & Margolin, G. (2004). "The role of family-of-Origin violence in men's marital violence perpetration". *Clinical Psychology Review*, 24(1), p. 99- 123.

Broken marital relationships

The family and the closer marital stability, i.e. the state of family relations and family structure, are mainly influenced, in addition to emotional factors, by socio-economic ones. The family has gone through many complex stages in its development, marked by the impact of a large number of external, extra-family difficulties and internal crises. Any crisis in family relationships and existential conditions is a risk to its future functioning. A family crisis is a potential state of various relationships and contents in which there is individual or group dissatisfaction with family life, which requires some change.

Perhaps the most severe forms of family crises are caused by the difficult social and economic conditions to which family members are exposed, which would be directly manifested in existential-social crises (unemployment, housing insecurity, lack of material needs, health threats, etc.). The problem of existential and social need disrupts family relationships and causes disturbances in family relationships with the outside world. Often in such families, parents, due to the inability to fulfill their parental functions, fall into various states of neurotic disorders (anxiety and depression). In such situations, crisis problems usually multiply from social to emotional problems and make it difficult to establish family stability. Possible psychosomatic and neurotic reactions, as well as social and existential crises in the family can cause delinquent behavior, especially if families have not developed internal (emotional) cohesion, before the new crisis situation¹⁵.

Lack or misdirected function of family education

Patterns of education and socialization for the way of family education are an essential condition of children's behavior at all stages of development. Deviation can bring with it oppressive and abstinent ways of education. In the first case, strict education and punishment creates a person with psychological disabilities, insecure, depressed,

¹⁵ Criminologists Ristanovic and Vilic point out that most criminologists agree that the increase in juvenile delinquency in Western European countries in the early 1990s was precisely due to rising unemployment and general socio-economic conditions in those countries caused by from the arrival of immigrants from former socialist countries. Thus after the unification of Germany, the high rate of unemployment and the inability to achieve full social integration of people accustomed to living in completely different social conditions led to the rise of all forms of delinquency. The impact of socio-economic conditions on juvenile delinquency was not only in Macedonia but everywhere in the region and in the world. All the results of research conducted in this regard, show that juvenile delinquency is mainly related to specific socio-economic conditions, among others, characterized by low living standards and inadequate housing conditions. These objective characteristics exist both in juveniles living in cities and in juveniles living in rural areas. They are a particular problem, due to insufficient adaptation of juveniles who have moved with families from rural to urban areas. However, the authors point out that, it would not be justified to say that poor economic conditions and modest living in general lead to delinquent development of minors. Most criminologists agree that juvenile delinquent behavior is not directly affected by poor living conditions and poverty, but by parental behavior, which due to these characteristics is not satisfactory in terms of proper education of children and juveniles. . See for this and other factors that cause juvenile delinquency the book of authors Ristanovi, Dr. Vesna N. & Vilic, Dr. Slobodanka K., Criminology, 4th edition, "Prometheus", Belgrade 2018, p. 148-149.

depressed, and in the second case aggressive, without feeling for the permissible and normal limits of society. An unorganized family has many consequences for the behavior of children. Children from such families move as if in a “vicious circle”, thus permanently experiencing emotional and spiritual anxieties and worries. Raising children in a dysfunctional family can therefore leave children with deep emotional scars and it affects them throughout their lives.

According to Elizabeth D. Hall¹⁶, such family settings may include, but are not limited to:

- *Aggression*: Behaviors characterized by demeaning, domination, lying, and control.
- *Limited love*: Lack of physical or verbal assertions of love, empathy, and time spent together.
- *Neglect*: Not paying attention to the other and worrying about family members.
- *Violence*: The threat and use of physical and sexual abuse.

Such attitudes were demonstrated by earlier criminological theories and studies. From the pioneers of Italian criminology Lombroso noticed that a large number of children of “wild” parents are among criminals¹⁷. This problem, in addition to the hereditary factor, Lombroso considered as interactive and asked quite challenging questions when he said, how can a child dissatisfied with evil be saved, when others present him with the most satisfied colors and, what is worse, when he is imposed by the authority and example of his parents and educators¹⁸.

Some researchers pointed out that the most important role of the family is the

¹⁶ A valuable researcher like E. Durant Hall, who has expanded and applied several theories of interpersonal and family communication such as: family communication model theory (FCP), confirmation theory, etc., has explored how communication and family support, among other things, they are related to the state of psychological well-being of young people. See: Dorrance Hall, E. (2017). Why Family Hurt Is So Painful Four reasons why family hurt can be more painful than hurt from others [blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/conscious-communication/201703/why-family-hurt-is-so-painful>

¹⁷ Concepts for the inheritance of criminal provisions in addition to appearing in Lombroso's anthropological theory, we can see that the eminent criminologist Garofalo also emphasizes the existence of certain provisions for crime. In Graz there is a well-known criminal-biological school, headed by Lenz, whose representatives sought the explanation of criminal activity in the general heritage and not in a particular hereditary factor. The creator of one of the most famous biopsychological theories - the theory of biological adaptation, the Swede Kinberg, believed that an individual reacts to stimuli of the social environment depending on its biological structure. Researcher and scientist V. Ristanovi, points out that research on the legacy of criminal provisions can be divided into: studies of criminal families and studies of criminal twins. For these and many issues related to this issue, see in more detail Dr. Vesna N. Ristanovi and Dr. Slobodanka K. Vilić, *Criminology*, 4th edition, “Prometheus”, Belgrade 2018, p. 273-274.

¹⁸ For his theory and that of other criminologists, and not only that but also the influence he had on criminologists and other researchers, see the article of Marvin E. Wolfgang, “Pioneers in Criminology: Cesare Lombroso (1825-1909)”, *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 52, Issue 4, November –December 1961, retrieved from <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5047&context=jclc>, accessed on: 31.01.2022.

transmission of the social “self”. Within the family, children receive parental experiences in terms of relationships, which clearly shows that the family has a very important role in the social development of children¹⁹.

Within the psychological theory of connection, many researchers have proven the conditioning of the child’s future behavior by the child’s connection with another parent or guardian, when in such periods the child is, as it were, dependent on them, and this significantly affects the stages subsequent development of proper socialization or deviation from normal social acceptance. Children deprived of parental ties, consequently have the impossibility of proper integration into society. Therefore, as a result of the absence of one or both parents and frequent unfavorable, traumatic conditions and difficult living situations delinquent behaviors appear in the child. Children less connected to the family, in later stages of life are more prone to violence than others, and especially the lack of family connection in childhood is later associated with sensitivity to the environment and results in the appearance of delinquent behaviors. This is exactly what we are talking about, the researcher and criminologist Rebeka K.²⁰, in her research explains the model of close connection, and in turn confirms the following important criminological hypotheses, such as:

- An early missing father stimulates the child’s insecure bond;
- The insecure bond between parent and child is inversely conditioned by self-control (empathy), and stimulates violent behavior in later life;
- Insecure connection between parent and child stimulates insufficient attention to the child;
- The strictness and lack of interest of the mother and father reduce the self-control of the child.

Psychoanalysts, such as K. Friedlander, first of all assume that the child is an instinctive being which, over time, from the stage of pleasure, adapts to the principle of reality, which leads to the reshaping of instincts and their sublimation. . In developmental periods, they particularly emphasize the stage of formation of moral consciousness, when the child after the liquidation of the Oedipus complex naturally tries to identify with the parent, begins to imitate them, so that if his family environment is criminal, consciousness can develops normally, but the rule is necessarily antisocial²¹.

¹⁹ Laible, D., Carlo, G., Torquati, J., & Ontai, L. (2004). Children’s perceptions of family relationships as assessed in a doll story completion task: Links to parenting, social competence, and externalizing behaviour. England: Blackwell Publishing, quoted according to Claidia Rodrigues Sequeira de Figueiredo, Filomena Valadao Some in the article “Families: Influences in Children’s Development and Behaviour, From Parents and Teachers’ Point of View”, p. 704. *Psychology Research*, vol. 2, no. 12, 693-705, December 2012.

²⁰ See for this the article of Rebecca S. Katz, “Building the Foundation for a Side-by-Side Explanatory Model: A General Theory of Crime, the Age-Graded Life-Course Theory, and Attachment Theory.” *Western Criminology Review* 1(2). [Online]. <http://www.westerncriminology.org/documents/WCR/v01n2/Katz/Katz.html>.

²¹ A wonderful book, though the first edition dates back to the year. 1947, the author Kate scholarly approaches with a psychoanalytic approach, juvenile delinquency, which makes the book attractive, which is still interesting and very current today. See K. Friedlander, *A Psycho-Analytical Approach to Juvenile Delinquency: Theory, Case Studies: Theory, Case studies, Treatment*, 6th edition, Routledge, London, 2013.

There are sociological theories that oppose the importance of the family's influence on the delinquent behavior of children, but acknowledge that the child in later stages of adulthood is a problem to be fixed. Sutherland starts from the point of view that a child due to lack of education his behaviors as a delinquent has from the lack of education that his parent should have provided, which later does not lead him to delinquent and criminal behavior. However, a child may or may not become a delinquent, it all depends on the teacher in the education process. He suggested that these elements are not the cause of the appearance of delinquency (crime), but external symptoms of a still unexplained problem and a more general theory of crime should be used to explain them.

One of Sutherland's²² main objections to previous explanations of delinquency was that they failed to understand that conditions that are said to cause crime must be present when crime is present, and they must be absent when crime is absent. Sutherland suggests that criminal behavior is like any other social behavior. His main premise is that delinquent but also criminal behavior is taught. To explain this he developed nine propositions that explain how a person becomes a delinquent (criminal):

(1) Delinquent (criminal) behavior is learned; (2) Delinquent (criminal) behavior is learned in interactions with other persons through communication; (3) Inclined delinquency mainly occurs within close personal groups; (4) Delinquent (criminal) behavior is taught through simple and complex techniques of committing delinquency (crime) as well as with orienting motives and attitudes; (5) Individuals learn to define legal codes as favorable or unfavorable; (6) The person becomes delinquent due to excessive exposure to definitions that favor the violation of laws - differential association; (7) Differential bonding may vary in frequency, intensity, priority, and duration; (8) Learning as a delinquent (criminal) uses the same processes as learning any other behavior; (9) General needs or motives do not explain delinquent (criminal) behavior because they are also the motivation for non-criminal behavior.

In incomplete families, in which the hearth of the family is not stable, the social adjustment of the child is endangered, and the form of risk comes from the negligence for proper education, or the refusal to deal with the education of the child, excessive authority in education by the father etc. The frustrations of children during marital quarrels, the lost authority of parents, the appearance of a third person in the previous marital relationship, counting him as an "intrusive" rival to the child²³, he reacts to the mother and does not want her to educate and "Revenge on oneself" goes to self-punishment with what is involved in delinquent and criminal actions and behavior.

Conclusions

The family is an educational organism, that solves (fulfills) his special duties interacting with all other means available to society, always in the general interest,

²² Cressey, D. (1978). Other people's money: A study in the social psychology of embezzlement. In S. Traub & C. Little (Eds.), *Theories of deviance* (5th ed., p. 237 and 244-251). Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.

²³ The Fountain Hill Center (2006). Parental Alienation and Domestic Violence: What Gets Lost in the Fog? Retrieved from <https://fountainhillcenter.org/parental-alienation-and-domestic-violence/> accessed on: 22.02.2022).

including the younger generation, with a very high and sublime purpose, to be as far away from the path of delinquent actions and criminal activities as possible.

A well-structured family plays a central role in determining juvenile delinquency and criminality levels, as such, it plays an important and successful role in contributing to juvenile delinquency prevention.

A well-organized family affects the child's overall development, with a crucial role in developing children's own values, skills, and feelings, it can rightly be said that the development of children greatly influences their future character and the likelihood that they will be involved in delinquent actions. The family, therefore, has a role in determining whether a child can be involved in delinquency and antisocial acts.

A stable family structure is of significant importance, as a means of providing children with secure families in which they can learn and acquire constructive social values.

In the fight against juvenile delinquency, public policies that support the family should be promoted as a quality space for effective communication and relationships. Different policies should always be reviewed, and in particular, the authorities should consider creating provisions for different programs for children.

Fighting juvenile delinquency requires the commitment of many sectors, including not only society and school, but also the religious community.

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