

DEGRADED FAMILY AS A CAUSE OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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Abstract. *Degraded family refers to a family structure that has experienced significant breakdowns in its fundamental roles and functions. This degradation is often manifested in various forms, such as domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse, or severe financial instability. Such family environments lack emotional support, supervision, and social norms typically provided by a stable family. As a result, children growing up in such families may develop behavioral issues, lack proper role models, and have limited access to education or positive social interactions. The author first addresses the etiology of juvenile delinquency, emphasizing that the deficient and degraded family is a fundamental and decisive cause of delinquency among young people. In addition to highlighting the accepted definitions and understanding of deficient and degraded families, the paper emphasizes the degradation of the family in a broader sense, indicating that the degradation of the family as a core social institution is a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency. The causal relationship between juvenile delinquency and family dynamics is illustrated by some statistical data from Serbia and the USA. In the conclusion, the author emphasizes the degradation of the family as a natural institution, which serves as a fertile ground for a degraded family in the criminological context. Finally, the author sees a return to traditional, conservative values as a possible path to the 'healing' of the modern family.*

Key words: *juvenile delinquency, degraded family, deficient family.*

"Society prepares the crime; the criminal commits it."
Henry Thomas Buckle

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1. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency¹ is regarded as the most severe social problem and phenomenon within a society. Due to its specific characteristics, may fall into a specific category of crime.² Some authors consider juvenile delinquency to be one of the "eternal questions of criminology" (Ignjatović, 2014: 173-195). The seriousness of the issue of juvenile delinquency calls for examining it through a sociological-criminological perspective. Unlike the narrower conception of juvenile delinquency, which encompasses only those behaviours which are criminalized in the existing criminal legislation, the sociological theories of criminology perceive juvenile delinquency as behaviors that are contrary not only to prescribed legal norms but also to moral norms (Konstantinović-Vilić, Nikolić-Ristanović, Kostić, 2010: 222).

When talking about juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to define the age limit for individuals who are considered minors. In comparative law, it is not uniform and remains a subject of ongoing professional and societal debates.³ The provisions of the Criminal Code (CC) of the Republic of Serbia⁴ stipulate that criminal sanctions cannot be imposed on a person who, had not reached the age of 14 at the time of committing the criminal offence. Additionally, educational and rehabilitation measures and other criminal sanctions may be imposed on a juvenile under the conditions prescribed by a special law (Article 4 § 3 of the CC).

The Act on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Law Protection of Juveniles (hereinafter: the Juvenile Justice Act)⁵ defines the age of the offender/minor. According to this Act, a minor is a person who, at the time of committing the criminal offense, has reached the age of 14 but has not yet reached the age of 18 (Article 3 § 1 of the JJ Act). In addition, the JJ Act distinguishes between younger and older minors. A younger minor is a person who, at the time of committing the criminal offense, has reached the age of 14 but has not yet reached the age of 16, while an older minor is a person who has reached the age of 16 but has not yet reached the age of 18 (Article 3 § 2-3 of the JJ Act).

2. ETIOLOGY OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The form of manifesting socially negative behavior and the causes that led to the external manifestation of internal immoral ideas are inextricably linked. The cause, as an important concept in the science of criminology, can be understood as a real change that subsequently leads to another real change or consequence (Kostić, 2002: 211-229). In modern criminological theory, theorists distinguish two approaches: the "classical causal

¹ In theory, this concept entails asocial behavior, educational neglect, hooliganism (Konstantinović-Vilić, Nikolić-Ristanović, Kostić, 2010: 222).

² In the broadest sense, crime is as a negative social phenomenon; in this context, juvenile delinquency is perceived as a negative and socially unacceptable behavior of minors.

³ In the Republic of Serbia, the age limit for criminal prosecution and establishing criminal liability of minors is the age of 14. Yet, following the mass shooting tragedy at "Vladislav Ribnikar" Primary School in Belgrade, on 3 May 2023, the issue of lowering the age limit for criminal liability has been raised. It would consequently open numerous questions in the fields of criminology and juvenile delinquency.

⁴ Krivični zakonik (Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia), *Službeni glasnik RS*, br. 85/2005, 88/2005 - ispr., 107/2005- ispr., 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014, 94/2016 i 35/2019; https://www.mpravde.gov.rs/files/Criminal%20%20Code_2019.pdf

⁵ Zakon o maloletnim učiniocima krivičnih dela i krivičnopravnoj zaštiti maloletnih lica (Act on Juvenile Offenders and Criminal law Protection of Minors (hereinafter: the Juvenile Justice Act), *Sl. glasnik RS*, br. 85/2005

approach," which answers the question of what leads to criminal behavior, and the actuarialistic approach, which points to the risk factors of criminal behavior (Ignjatović, 2015: 25). However, considering the specific characteristics of juvenile delinquency, certain criminogenic factors also affect individuals of juvenile age in a particular way (Konstantinović-Vilić, *et al.*, 2010: 224).

Criminal offences committed by minors are usually not accompanied by the most severe consequences. However, the issue of juvenile delinquency presents a significant challenge for any society. This significance arises from the constant increase and growing prevalence of such behavior among minors, which affects general societal goods and values. An issue of particular concern is that an increasing number of juvenile delinquents later become adult offenders. The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is extremely complex, and to achieve a more objective understanding of this problem, it is necessary to pay special attention to its phenomenology (Macanović, Grbić-Pavlović, Kurpešanić, 2016: 9).

On the other hand, the etiological characteristics of juvenile delinquency, that is, the causes and factors leading to deviant behavior in minors, which often escalates into delinquent and even criminal behavior, are numerous and can generally be divided into three groups of factors: biological factors, psychological factors, and sociological factors (Konstantinović-Vilić, Nikolić-Ristanović, 2018: 224). What is specific to juvenile delinquency is that, in addition to social factors, it is essential to consider the personality of the juvenile offender, which is most often shaped and transformed into a criminal personality, primarily due to the social or societal contexts in which the juvenile grows up. Another important factor is the poor financial situation, which has historically been an almost decisive factor in juvenile delinquency. Nowadays, juvenile criminal behavior can also be significantly influenced by failure in school and poor upbringing (Konstantinović-Vilić, Nikolić-Ristanović, 2018: 225), for which we cannot solely blame the juveniles and their families. The responsibility is shared by the entire system of the state, reflected in a poor educational system and the decline of the nation's moral values.

Family dynamics and atmosphere play a crucial role in the development of minors, whose sensitivity and vulnerability are especially evident during early childhood. Parents who engage in deviant or delinquent behavior lose their authority and control over their children, making it more likely for the children to identify with negative role models. In families where the parents are delinquents, there is often a strong criminogenic influence on the minors (Jašović, 1983: 243).

Effective communication within the family is essential for its proper functioning. Positive communication is a key factor in children's development and upbringing. Furthermore, the quality of family relationships is significantly influenced by the financial and social conditions. Families with better material resources are better positioned to establish a stable environment for raising children, while poverty and resource scarcity can contribute to the conditions that lead to juvenile delinquency. However, poverty does not always result in negative outcomes; families with strong moral values can often withstand such pressures, maintaining harmony even in difficult circumstances. Conversely, material wealth alone does not guarantee that a family will avoid behavioral issues or deviance among its members. Parental employment is economically important for the family; when both parents are unemployed, it can negatively affect the family's living standard, particularly in urban areas, and such circumstances can be linked to juvenile delinquency. Even when both parents are employed, a lack of adequate social support and supervision during their parents' absence can lead to negative consequences (Jašović, 1983: 246).

Before we begin analyzing the deficient and degraded family as the strongest social factor influencing the emergence of criminal thoughts in juveniles, we must first draw attention to the "personality factor" of the juvenile. Personality represents a unique set or structure of traits that develop through the interaction between the individual and society. From this set of traits or characteristics, certain determinants emerge that shape characteristic behavior and reactions to environmental influences (Vejnović, 2008: 6). Thus, factors related to the personality of the juvenile delinquent, specifically the issues in their development, inevitably lead to a lack of social intelligence. It is manifested as a lack of self-control, low self-esteem and confidence, emotional or psychological problems, asocial and antisocial behaviors. Personal factors also include lower intelligence, egocentrism, inability to accept others, feelings of inferiority, lack of a sense of responsibility, and emotional instability. Numerous psychopathic traits are evident in juvenile delinquents or criminals (Konstantinović-Vilić, Nikolić-Ristanović, 2018: 226).

The author's focus in this paper is the family as one of the fundamental natural institutions, and the deficient and degraded family as probably the most significant social cause of deviant behavior in minors. Thus, the following sections will discuss these two phenomena of the disrupted family institution in more detail. In addition to the functionality of the family, it is important to highlight other characteristics that can contribute to the development of deviant behavior. These include socio-economic status, the behavior of family members, intra-family relationships, living conditions, and the size of the family (Macanović, *et al.* 2016: 40). Among the many social factors, the degraded and deficient family has an almost decisive influence on juvenile delinquency, considering that minors typically live in a family unit with their parents (Konstantinović-Vilić, *et al.*, 2010: 224).

2.1. Deficient family

The family, as a social institution, plays a crucial role in the development of youth and children. In addition to the inevitable material support it provides, the family is a significant factor in the development of social intelligence and the socialization of young people. It is within the family that a child should develop a sense of morality, which is reflected in social moral behavior. Moreover, young people undoubtedly bring both positive and negative values of the social system they live in into family relationships, and vice versa (Jašović, 1978: 219).

The term "deficient family" generally describes a family environment or structure that lacks essential elements needed for proper child development and socialization. Such deficiencies are believed to heighten the risk of delinquent or criminal behavior in children as they mature (Konstantinović-Vilić, *et al.*, 2010:224). This concept is commonly referenced in discussions about how family dynamics impact criminal behavior and is considered in various criminological theories, including those related to social disorganization and strain theory.

A deficient family is characterized by the absence of one of the two equally important parental roles. Incomplete or deficient families can take various forms, depending on the causes that generate them. The loss of one parent due to death has prominent but less severe negative consequences when compared to situations such as divorce, extramarital relationships, or other forms of parental separation. In such cases, children usually suffer more serious consequences. When discussing a deficient family or any family anomaly, we may not disregard the concept and significance of the family as a social institution. Consequently, due to the collapse or destruction of the family, there is undoubtedly a change in the personality of juvenile individuals, which, it should be noted, does not necessarily have to

be negative *a priori*. However, the feelings of frustration and loneliness that arise in the personality of a juvenile raised in a deficient family may be a condition or cause at the onset of pre-delinquent behavior and subsequent juvenile delinquency (Ignjatović, 2015: 25).

Deficient families, which commonly entail only one parent either due to a tragic loss of a parent or a divorce, can have a decisive impact on the emergence of juvenile delinquency, which may subsequently develop into serious criminal behavior. A deficient family will not *a priori* be conducive to creating and fostering delinquent behavior in a minority, but it certainly represents a higher risk for the development of such behavior. Additionally, considering the weaker financial standing of a deficient family, the risk for delinquent or criminal behavior is significantly greater (Anderson, 2002: 476).

2.2. Degraded family as a cause of juvenile delinquency

At this point, it is important to highlight the dual understanding of a degraded family. In criminological theory, a degraded family is commonly perceived as a dysfunctional family featuring poor family relationships. Such a family is often associated with juvenile delinquency and crime due to the compromised social adaptation and socialization of young members. In these degraded families, the lack of positive influences can lead only to negative role models for children, resulting in the development of negative traits, tendencies, and attitudes that adversely affect their personalities.

The negative role models and the process of assimilation and socialization are perhaps best explained by the French criminologist Gabriel Tarde.⁶ In his *Theory of Imitation*, Tarde explains that most people are prone to adopting the customs of their immediate environment and adjusting their behaviour accordingly. In the case of criminal behavior, a person who commits a crime often imitates others who engage in the same behavior (imitation of superiors by inferiors). He describes this imitation in criminal cases as a process of mutual conflict between and transfer of trends and habit. Criminal behavior starts as a fashion (imitation of others' behaviour) that gradually becomes a habit, and imitation spreads from those at higher social levels to those at lower levels (Konstantinović-Vilić, *et al.*, 2010: 293). Tarde believed that crime is the result of imitation or modeling behavior after others in the specific social environment. He argued that imitation is particularly relevant in family relations between fathers and sons. His theory of imitation was against the widely accepted belief that criminals are simply bad people, and other theories proposing the concept of a "born criminal". In his opinion, if crime is learned by observing and imitating the criminal conduct of others, then crime could also be unlearned. Tarde believed that imitation was more likely to occur in densely populated urban environments where individuals are exposed to a greater number of people and their behavior models, and thus more susceptible to imitation (Vanderpyl, Matsuda, Moreno, Sobolewski, 2024: 227-233).

The quality of the parent-child relationship is also recognized as a significant etiological factor, especially regarding sibling violence. In families where the emotional connection between the child and the parents is weak, extreme forms of sibling violence are common, particularly among younger minors. Furthermore, favoritism towards one child may result in frustration and resentment in the neglected child. Many authors attribute the increased occurrence of sibling violence in families with unequal treatment to this phenomenon.

⁶ Gabriel Tarde (1848-1904), French criminologist, sociologist, and social psychologist pointed to the importance of the social environment in the development of criminal behavior and its control (New World Encyclopedia (n.d), Gabriel Tarde, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gabriel_Tarde

Relevant literature also highlights that assigning the responsibility of caring for younger children to older siblings may contribute to sibling violence. It is often explained by the older children's tendency to replicate parental behaviors they have witnessed or experienced (Dimitrijević, Stevković, 2014: 140).

Internal behavior models are imitated prior to the external ones. It means that the imitation of non-materialized ideas precedes the imitation of their external expression and materialization; in other words, goals are imitated prior to the means. Tarde points out that evidence for this can be found in the fact that envy, or the desire for external imitation, never precedes obedience in relationships between different social classes, but is always a sign and consequence of prior obedience (Vanderpyl, *et al.*, 2024: 227).

Undoubtedly, parents with a history of criminal and delinquent behavior are more likely to have delinquent and antisocial children in the future. Some studies reveal alarming data, showing that 63% of boys whose fathers have been convicted also end up being convicted themselves. This research confirms and demonstrates that juvenile delinquency is associated with the conviction of a family member or relative. Considering that the father is the most significant figure for children, conviction or even an arrest of the father has a direct impact on the later delinquent and criminal behavior of children (Farrington, Welsh, 2008: 86-88).

By observing the degraded family as a serious social anomaly, through Tarde's theory of imitation we get an answer to the question why adolescents or children behave like their parents. Failures and mistakes in parenting (such as child neglect, physical punishment, insufficient parental commitment, etc.) lead to the juvenile's insufficient maturity, emotional instability or lability, which create a conducive environment for delinquent behavior and subsequent juvenile delinquency and crime (Konstantinović-Vilić, *et al.*, 2010: 225).

In addition to Tarde's theory of imitation which, in the author's opinion, provides all the necessary answers concerning the emergence and development of juvenile delinquency and criminal thoughts in minors, it is important to highlight other factors within a degraded family that induce a young person to diverge from morally responsible and exhibit deviant behavior. Specifically, parental neglect or inadequate supervision of children is one of the most significant individual factors contributing to delinquent behavior in children or young people. Some authors suggest that parental supervision is best captured by the term "vigilance." Parental neglect, lack of interest in the child's daily activities, or indifference toward knowing the child's friends or establishing household/family rules primarily leads to the absence of responsibility in the children's perception of their behavior. Such "relaxation" is one of the factors that later contributes to deviant behavior in the child (Gruevska, 2007: 481).

In addition to parental vigilance, Buljubašić (2008) points out to the particularly important role of the family in the context of children's socialization. Given the fact that children usually observe and follow the behavioral patterns of their parents, this role is reflected in the importance of the personal example that parents set for their children, as well as the established morality and the parents' attitudes toward certain social phenomena. This is evidently the paramount social function of the family (Buljubašić, 2008: 70).

It is important to emphasize that domestic violence is another significant characteristic of degraded family. Domestic violence is a negative social phenomenon with severe consequences for all family members. When it is particularly aimed at children (in the form of neglect, abandonment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), domestic violence has a direct impact on the development of criminal personalities in juveniles. As previously noted, a child who grows up in a family where violent behavior is part of daily life often becomes aggressive, violent, and delinquent. The fact that the child "learns" violence from the parents requires attention. Finally,

a child who is a victim of domestic violence, either by directly experiencing or witnessing it, develops specific trust and security issues, as two traits are compromised in domestic violence cases. Consequently, a juvenile or a child learns that power and control are acceptable behavior patterns (Konstantinović-Vilić, Nikolić-Ristanović, 2018: 123).

2.2.1. Degradation of the family as a social and natural institution

It is particularly important to note that the concept of a deviant and degraded family can also be observed in a broader sense, as a social and natural institution. Today, the institution of the family as the basic unit in society and the primary social institution with multiple inherent functions is largely degraded in terms of disregard for its natural authority.

The term degradation of the family in a broader sense should be understood as attempts to label the traditional family as unacceptable and to further marginalize its three basic functions: (reproductive, social, and economic). These attempts seem to be increasingly successful in the contemporary society which is largely based on individual moral and social norms derived from and created on the basis of one's own value system and individually acceptable principles. The family and society of the 21st century is undoubtedly in a deep crisis, both socially and morally. Despite the increasingly prominent deviant conduct of individuals and the degradation of the family as the core social unit, modern society embraces these anomalies with open arms. The root of this problem, which is further materialized through juvenile delinquency, should be sought in the general trend towards individualization.

As noted by the proponents of conservative thought⁷, such as Edmund Burke, Louis de Bonald, de Maistre, etc., we should focus not only on the degraded family as perceived by criminological theorists but also on the degradation of the family as a social institution. One of the conservative French theorist, Louis de Bonald,⁸ says: "*It is a society created by God, a society that shapes the character and life of each individual, not the other way around.*" (Nisbet, 1995: 275). However, under the guise of individualism, people deny this understanding of society. An average person sees oneself as an individual and places one's own value system above the society, demanding that society conform to him. The very idea of placing oneself above the family and the society in the natural hierarchy is logically unfounded, perhaps even naive and absurd (Nisbet, 1995: 275). Morality or social morality cannot be derived from an individual mind, nor can a person reject all authority and place oneself at the top of the pyramid of natural hierarchy. A person who does not recognize the authority of societal institutions (such as family, society, state, church, etc.) are prone to deviation; furthermore, the rejection of authority fosters human deviation. Awareness and acceptance of authority affect a person by instilling a sense of belonging to society and, as a part of society, a person will naturally, almost reflexively, act in the interest of the community (Nisbet, 1995: 275).

⁷ Essentially, conservatism is a philosophical theory about humans, society, and the state which focuses on the importance of institutions and authority in society, with God at the top of the hierarchy of authority. On the other hand, conservatism as an ideology was constructed after the French Revolution, which likely played a crucial role in its development. Edmund Burke is considered the father of conservatism, which was first presented in his work "*Reflections on the Revolution in France*" (1790) (Nisbet, 1995: 275).

⁸ *Louis de Bonald* (1754–1840) was the French philosopher and the Counter-Revolution theorist, who challenged the anarchy and degradation of the state brought by the French Revolution, and advocated for stability, diplomacy and dialogue to balance the "moral force" of the state (EHNE Digital Encyclopedia of European History (n.d.) Europe as Viewed by Louis de Bonald, by F. B. de Balanda, Digital project of the EHNE- Sorbonne Université); <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/political-europe/intellectuals-and-europe/europe-viewed-louis-de-bonald>

3. FAMILY RELATIONSHIP AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: STATISTICAL DATA

In criminal proceedings involving minors, a thorough examination of minors' personalities is essential to identify and understand their issues and needs. The focal point should be uncovering the factors that led to their deviant, unlawful and illegal behaviour. Thus, it is important to review any prior convictions and assess the social, psychological, and medical aspects of minors' personality, while collecting all relevant information regarding their development and behavior (Bugarski, Ristivojević, Pisarić, 2016: 67).

In this part of the paper, the author presents some statistical data that will highlight the causal relationship between juvenile delinquency or criminal behavior of minors and family dynamics, with a focus on family functionality. As criminologists and other professionals emphasize the impact of poor family relationships on the rise of juvenile delinquency, the presented statistical data provide an insight into the situation in Serbia and in the United States.

To highlight the significance of family factors in the development of criminal and delinquent behavior among minors, particularly in degraded families, it is essential to present statistical data on the trends of juvenile crime. In one of his works, Ignjatović (2014) states that most minors who have been reported and convicted of committing criminal offenses in the Republic of Serbia live in a family unit with both parents (56.9%). This is indicative and suggests a possible influence of family in the development of criminal and delinquent behavior among minors. According to the official data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, it is interesting to note the occupations of the father and mother of the juvenile offender. In the observed period, the offenders' fathers were most frequently miners, skilled workers, and unemployed persons, while their mothers were most frequently housewives. This shows that the parents' occupations, which determine the family's financial standing, have a significant impact on the development of criminal and delinquent behavior in minors (Ignjatović, 2014: 191).

Another interesting study was conducted at the Juveniles Correctional Facility in Valjevo, where the research sample included 270 minors. A significant number of respondents identified deficient and degraded family environment as a key factor in the development of criminal and delinquent behavior. Other factors identified by the respondents were disruptions in family roles, parents' deviant conduct, and parental infidelity (Vasiljević-Prodanović, Kovačević, 2020: 490).

On the other hand, nearly opposite results were obtained in an empirical study conducted at the Higher Court in Novi Sad in the period 2010-2015, where the researchers had insight into 25 randomly selected criminal cases involving minors (Bugarski, Ristivojević, Pisarić, 2016: 70). The study showed that, in 73.3% of cases, the minors came from functional families with harmonious relationships; in 26.7% of cases, they lived in dysfunctional families with disrupted family relationships, including conflicts within the community, aggressiveness, and excessive alcohol abuse. The same study examined the minors' relationship with the guardianship authority, specifically in terms of the minors' respect for the authority and whether the authority helped the minors gain insight into the incriminating event and their behavior during it; the study indicates that 66.7% of respondents provided affirmative replies, while 33.3% of them expressed a pronounced fear of authority (Bugarski, *et.al.*, 2016: 81).

In addition to the highlighted research and statistical data for the Republic of Serbia, it is important to point to some studies conducted abroad, focusing on the impact of poor family relationships on the rise of juvenile delinquency. The results of a study in the United

States (2019) show that 35% of children in the USA live in non-traditional (deficient, dysfunctional and degraded) families. A significant number of minors growing up in such "families" are, in fact, delinquent individuals (Vasiljević-Prodanović, Kovačević, 2020: 490).

Further, other studies in the United States show that parents who exhibit criminal and delinquent behavior patterns often have children who also behave delinquently and deviantly. For instance, over 60% of boys whose fathers were incarcerated have also been convicted of committing crimes later in life. Thus, there is an undeniable connection between juvenile delinquency and criminal behavior and conviction of a family member. It is evident that while the father is the most important figure in the family, his arrest has the greatest influence on the development of criminal and delinquent behavior in minors (Walker, Downey, Bergman, 1983: 19).

Domestic violence and child abuse are closely linked to the early onset of juvenile delinquency. In this context, some studies indicate that minors who are exposed to domestic violence, or who are either victims or witnesses of domestic violence, have almost a 40% higher chance of being prosecuted or convicted of committing crimes later in life when compared to minors who were not exposed to domestic violence in early childhood and are neither victims nor witnesses of domestic violence (Jenson, Fraser, 2007: 60).

4. CONCLUSION

Essentially, in Gabriel Tarde's theory of imitation, we can find answers to nearly all questions related to juvenile delinquency and its causal relationship with a degraded family. The theory of imitation suggests that individuals tend to adopt and adapt to the customs of their surroundings. In terms of criminal conduct, persons who commit crimes often model their actions after others who engage in similar behavior. Tarde identified this imitation in criminal cases as a process involving mutual conflict and dissemination of trends and practices.

Degraded family refers to a family structure that has experienced significant breakdowns in its fundamental roles and functions. This degradation is manifested in various forms, such as domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse, or severe financial instability. Such family environments lack emotional support, supervision, and social norms typically provided by a stable family. As a result, children growing up in these families may lack proper role models, develop behavioral issues, and have limited access to education or positive social interactions.

The numerous causes of the rise in deviation and deviant behavior in humans are rooted in the previously mentioned rejection of authority. Misunderstanding the significance and devaluation of the family as a primary social institution can be considered one of the fundamentally critical causes of societal deviation. Problems faced by the "modern" family can also reflect broader societal issues. Disregard for the institution of the family leads to dysfunctional, degraded families, which naturally produce individuals with "disordered" or morally unacceptable value systems that have negative consequences for the society through their subsequent deviant or criminal behavior.

We witness the daily devaluation of traditional values, the family being at the core of these values. The destruction of the traditional family, as a social and natural institution, is carried out daily through media, social networks, and other means. Modern society rejects all similarities with the traditional family and does not stop there; it also criticizes the traditional family as anachronistic and strives for its complete opposite. As a result, large

families with more than three children are increasingly rare, and unnatural relationships are being represented as families.

Modern society hides from social responsibility behind the veil of individualism and progress, rapidly moving towards complete social anarchy. On this path, it is guided by its own "imaginary" value system, which is so changeable (depending on societal interests) that it is questionable whether it can even be called a system. If we understand deviation as ideological straying or deviation from the right path, then a return to traditional, conservative values and ideas, as well as respect for the authority of natural institutions, primarily respect for the authority of the family, may bring individuals back to the right path.

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DEGRADIRANA PORODICA KAO UZROK MALOLETNIČKOG PRESTUPNIŠTVA

Degradirana porodica odnosi se na porodičnu strukturu koja je doživela značajan slom svojih osnovnih uloga i funkcija. Ova degradacija se često manifestuje u različitim oblicima, kao što su nasilje u porodici, zanemarivanje, zloupotreba supstanci ili ozbiljna finansijska nestabilnost. Takva okruženja nemaju emocionalnu podršku, nadzor i društvene norme koje obično pruža stabilna porodica. Kao rezultat toga, deca koja odrastaju u ovim porodicama mogu razviti probleme u ponašanju, imati nedostatak pravih uzora i ograničen pristup obrazovanju ili pozitivnim društvenim interakcijama. Autor u radu najpre ukazuje na etiologiju maloletničkog prestupništva, te kao suštinske odnosno odlučujuće uzroke prestupništva kod mladih osoba podvlači deficijentu i degradiranu porodicu. Osim prihvaćenih definicija i razumevanja deficijente i degradirane porodice, u radu se ističe i degradiranje porodice u širem smislu. Autor teži da kao uzročnika maloletničkog prestupništva navede i degradiranje institucije porodice kao društvene i prirodne institucije. Uzročna veza između maloletničke delinkvencije i porodične dinamike ilustrovana je nekim statističkim podacima iz Srbije i SAD. U zaključku, autor podvlači degradaciju porodice kao prirodne institucije, koja, nesumnjivo tako degradirana, predstavlja pogodno tle za degradiranu porodicu u kontekstu koji razumeju kriminolozi. Konačno, autor nalazi povratak tradicionalnim, konzervativnim vrednostima kao mogući put „izlečenja“ moderne porodice.

Ključne reči: maloletničko prestupništvo, degradirana porodica, deficijenta porodica.