



CAUSES OF YOUTH DELINQUENCY AND MEASURES FOR ITS PREVENTION: MODERN APPROACHES AND LEGAL MECHANISMS

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Abstract. *This article provides a criminological analysis of the root causes of youth and juvenile delinquency under the conditions of globalization and rapid digitalization, examining various socio-economic, psychological, and destructive factors. Within the framework of the state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the effectiveness of early crime prevention, mitigating the risks of "digital delinquency" (cybercrime), and the newly implemented "mahallabay" institutional system are comprehensively studied. Furthermore, the national prevention model is compared with advanced foreign practices from the United States, Germany, and Japan, utilizing official statistical data provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan. Conclusively, the paper puts forward a series of scientific and practical recommendations aimed at improving the juvenile justice system and stabilizing the criminogenic situation among the youth.*

Keywords: *youth delinquency, deviant behavior, crime prevention, juvenile justice, criminology, cybercrime, social environment, digital culture, foreign experience, mediation.*

At the stage of building the New Uzbekistan and implementing reforms that ensure the priority of the socio-legal state, raising a healthy, educated, and harmoniously developed generation is considered one of the highest priorities of state policy. However, the rapid development of modern information technologies, the intensification of ideological threats, and global transformations are exerting a significant influence on the worldview of young people and their socialization process. As a result, new forms of manifestation of delinquency and crime among youth (e.g., cyberfraud, circulation of synthetic narcotics) are emerging.

Youth delinquency is not merely a problem for law enforcement agencies, but rather a symptom of a crisis encompassing the entire society, the educational system, and the institution of the family. The formation of an individual's criminal behavior largely coincides with their youth—a period when they are not yet fully stabilized psychologically and socially. Therefore, studying the true determinants (causes and conditions) of this phenomenon on a scientific basis and improving mechanisms for early prevention is an urgent criminological task.

Criminological research demonstrates that the roots of youth delinquency are multi-vector in nature.

The first crucial factor is deformations within the family and domestic environment. The majority of young people who commit crimes come from dysfunctional, divorced families, or those left without parental supervision (including children whose parents are away for long-term labor migration). Domestic violence, combined with a lack of love and attention, arouses feelings of aggression and social alienation in the hearts of young people.

Economic problems and employment issues can be cited as **the second factor**. Financial shortages, unemployment among youth, or their inability to find their place in the labor market drive them to satisfy material needs through illegal means (theft, robbery, fraud).

The third and most dangerous factor is informational-psychological threats and unstructured leisure time. The failure to engage young people in useful labor, sports, or creative activities outside of school and higher education makes it easier for them to fall under the influence of street criminal groups and destructive online subcultures.

In addition to traditional types of crime, serious structural changes are being observed in youth delinquency in the third decade of the XXI century. The internet space has become the primary tool for involving young people in crime. Anonymity in cyberspace creates a sense of impunity among youth. Consequently, the share of

young people is sharply increasing in areas such as stealing funds from plastic cards (phishing), online extortion, and online gambling or wagering (bookmaking).

According to summarized statistical analyses from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Supreme Court, in recent years, youth aged 18 to 30 have accounted for approximately 25-30 percent of the total crimes committed across the republic. Notably, more than 65 percent of fraud and theft crimes committed in cyberspace are attributed precisely to students and young people who have mastered modern IT technologies well but possess low legal culture.

Furthermore, many minors and students are being lured into networks distributing narcotics and psychotropic substances via social media and the Telegram messenger through promises of financial gain. According to data from the Prevention Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 40 percent of the youth apprehended for this type of crime are students within the school or higher education system who had no prior record of law-breaking. Without realizing the legal consequences of their actions and the long-term prison sentences involved, they become participants in grave crimes.

As youth delinquency is a global issue, developed countries around the world have established unique and effective systems in this regard.

In the experience of the United States, primary emphasis is placed on "Scared Straight" and community supervision programs. At the same time, the juvenile justice system in the US features highly developed specialized courts whose purpose is not to incarcerate the adolescent, but rather to rehabilitate them through mandatory psychological treatment and involvement in socially useful labor.

In Germany's experience, the institute of "Offender-Victim Mediation" (*Täter-Opfer-Ausgleich*) plays a crucial role in dealing with youth who have committed crimes. Under this framework, young people who commit minor or moderate offenses undertake the obligation to reach an agreement with the victim, compensate for the damage caused through labor, and participate in community

service as an alternative to imprisonment. German legislation prioritizes rehabilitating youth without isolating them from society.

Japan's experience stands out for its unique "Family and Community Supervision" model. In Japan, the police operate within an interconnected chain with local schools and neighborhood committees (*Chonai-kai*). If a teenager commits an offense, not only are legal measures taken against them, but the entire neighborhood and school community also take the adolescent under their supervision, implementing measures to fully occupy their leisure time. As a result, Japan remains one of the countries with the lowest rates of youth delinquency in the world.

Today, the system for preventing delinquency among youth in the Republic of Uzbekistan is undergoing fundamental reform. This transformation process manifests itself in several directions:

- **Change in the methodological approach:** While the primary emphasis in the traditional system was previously placed on post-crime punishment and investigative measures, the modern innovative system focuses chiefly on early prevention and the social screening of families—meaning the preemptive identification of problems.
- **Expansion of institutional foundations:** Whereas previously this activity was carried out exclusively by law enforcement agencies, today a cooperative system encompassing the *mahalla* (local community), the Youth Affairs Agency, and the institution of the family has been established. The introduction of the "Youth Leader" position in every *mahalla* has become the social bridge of this system.
- **Modernization of technological support:** Bureaucracy and generalized statistics characteristic of the old system have now been replaced by "Digital Mahalla" systems, online monitoring of preventive registries, and the integration of at-risk youth into electronic employment platforms.

- **Transformation of the ultimate goal:** While the main objective previously consisted of ensuring the inevitability of punishment, the priority task today is designated as the social resocialization of youth who have erred, returning them to society as healthy members, and re-educating them.

To effectively organize the system of combating youth delinquency and incorporate the advanced practices of developed nations into national legislation, the following measures must be implemented:

1. **Introducing the institute of "Juvenile Mediation" based on Germany's experience:** Legally strengthening a system to eliminate the consequences of crime by applying social mediation as an alternative to criminal punishment when minors commit non-grave offenses for the first time—thereby achieving an agreement between the adolescent and the victim.
2. **Creating "Cyber-Prevention and Digital Hygiene" programs:** Organizing systematic lessons in schools and higher education institutions to protect youth from online fraud, illegal bookmaking, and virtual networks involved in illicit narcotics trafficking.
3. **Strengthening the "School–Mahalla–Internal Affairs" chain based on the Japanese model:** Introducing a daily individual work system managed by *mahalla* inspector-psychologists and youth leaders to conduct early identification of families with disruptions in their children's upbringing and education, as well as to engage truant adolescents and those prone to deviant behavior.
4. **An inclusive vocational education system for at-risk youth:** Providing free training in modern IT professions, foreign languages, and entrepreneurship to previously convicted youth or those on preventive registries, and allocating targeted state subsidies to secure their employment.

In conclusion, youth delinquency is a dynamic phenomenon that threatens social stability and future security in society. The experience of states such as the US, Germany, and Japan demonstrates that this problem cannot be resolved solely by intensifying punitive measures. The most effective path is not to combat the consequences of crime, but to eliminate its root causes early on.

By developing the *mahallabay* (neighborhood-by-neighborhood) working system in New Uzbekistan and adapting foreign practices of juvenile mediation and social rehabilitation to national practice, youth delinquency can be significantly curbed. The continuous screening of statistical data and the systematic satisfaction of the intellectual and material needs of youth serve as the ultimate guarantee for building a safe and healthy society.

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