

## **Impact of Parental Divorce on Juvenile Delinquency: A Review**

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**Abstract.** Delinquency among young people has become more prevalent and has affected their families, communities, and quality of life, all of which have contributed significantly to the problem. Parents are essential to a child's growth because they give them the support they need to deal with life's challenges. Parental effectiveness is believed to be a key factor in deciding the results for children of divorced parents, and divorce can have a substantial impact on a child's development. The purpose of this essay is to investigate how serious delinquency in teenagers is impacted by divorce or separation and how parental efficacy may mitigate this impact. Other significant factors contributing to divorce rates, according to Iraqi officials, are early marriages, broader economic challenges, and adultery fostered by modern technologies. In 2021, the 42-million-person nation's courts granted about 73,000 divorces, which is essentially the same number as in 2018. This represents an increase from an average of a little less than 51,700 annually between 2004 and 2014. There were 681 terrorist-related criminals, 601 thieves, and the fewest number of offenders (146) involved in narcotics offenses. With a total of 1453 criminals and a percentage of 64.9%, the 12–14 age group led the crime rate, followed by the 17–15-year-old group with 486 criminals and a rate of 21.7%, and the 9–11-year-old group with 300 criminals and a rate of 13.4%.

### **Highlights:**

1. Teen Delinquency & Divorce: Divorce impacts youth delinquency; parental efficacy mitigates effects.
2. Divorce Causes: Early marriage, economy, and technology-driven adultery increase divorce rates.
3. Crime Statistics: Ages 12–14 lead crime rates; theft and terrorism most common.

**Keywords:** Impact, Parental Divorce, Juvenile Delinquency

## **Introduction**

The term "juvenile" describes a person who has not reached the age of eighteen, and "juvenile delinquency" describes breaking a US law if the offender is younger than

eighteen. However, he is not referred to as an adult when he has committed the offense. In many US states, including Iraq, a person who is over eighteen but under twenty-one is deemed a juvenile if their delinquent act took place before their eighteenth birthday [1,2]. Today, juvenile delinquency is a widespread issue that is becoming worse every day and having an impact on society as a whole. Every civilization identifies acts that are unwanted or illegal and establishes penalties to improve society [3,4].

For a family, divorce may be a trying moment. However, attitudes toward marriage in Iraqi society have rapidly changed during the past 50 years. Both parents must love and care for their children for them to be raised properly, but when a divorce occurs, the youngster is split apart from one of them, which shatters his fragile mind from the inside out. Some kids become melancholy because they can't handle this separation from their parents. Additionally, a recent study found that children of divorced parents do not develop socially or mentally as they should [5,6].

The rise in divorces worldwide is the primary factor contributing to the rise in juvenile delinquencies. A child must have the full protection of both parents to grow up with high morals. To ensure that they raise morally upright children, a child's mother and father each have certain tasks to play [7,8].

The mental health system overrepresents children and adult children of divorced parents. Most mental health therapies target known risk factors, such as parental problems or family conflict. It has been shown that structured programs that educate and support parents reduce psychological issues in children. Unfortunately, there hasn't been much study on mental health treatments for families going through a divorce [9,10].

The parents play the largest role in the upbringing of a kid, she can develop the child in which way she may want. This is the reason why a child has to have proper guidance because as he grows up into an adult, he has to have the right aspects in mind [11,12]. A parent can assist a child to acquire qualities like humility and compassion by showing them kindness and encouragement. If the parent is harsh with the child, the child will probably imitate her harsh behavior. Harsh behavior is said to be the catalyst for delinquency. A child's family has a big influence on their character [13,14].

The degree of parental efficacy a child receives may have an additional effect on these outcomes. Considering its significant impact on a child's cognitive, behavioral,

emotional, and social development, parenting is undoubtedly one of the most important developmental aspects in their life. Numerous characteristics, such as a child's propensity to engage in criminal activity and their reaction to a situation like divorce, can be influenced by the quality of parenting they receive. Parental effectiveness, which can take many different forms and involve different parenting techniques, is the ability of a parent to plan and carry out a set of duties associated with raising a child [15,16].

The number of juvenile offenders worldwide has increased over the past few decades, particularly during the terrorist era and the engagement of young people in terrorist activities [17,18]. The number of juvenile arrests in Iraq increased from 8,476 arrests per 100,000 children in 1996 to 2553 arrests per 100,000 teenagers (10–17 years old) in 2016 [19,20]. Tens of thousands of divorce decisions are issued by the judiciary each year in Iraq, where divorce rates have been rising for at least ten years. This trend is caused by several factors, such as financial hardship, family meddling, early marriage, and marital adultery which is frequently promoted by social media platforms. Sadly, children continue to be the major victims of these disputes within the family [21,22].

## Types of Delinquency in Children

The four main categories of juvenile delinquency are situational, organized, group-supported, and individual, depending on how the delinquent activity is executed.

### 1-Individual Delinquency

By imagining their immediate surroundings, children modify their behavioral patterns, hence family plays a big role in shaping a child's behavior. Therefore, a good environmental modification will lessen a child's development of criminal tendencies.

### 2-Group Supported Delinquency

It describes how a child behaves when interacting with people in an antisocial manner. The culture that predominates in their immediate social groupings outside of their families influences the delinquents' development of this behavior. When children start to value their peers' opinions over their parents, parents are unable to maintain control over them.

### 3-Organized Delinquency

It is carried out by a gang of young people who have formally joined together to commit crimes. 4-Situational Delinquency

Someone who engages in antisocial behavior due to a lack of impulse control brought on by family restrictions. Compared to other forms of delinquency, situational delinquency is much simpler to manage [23,24].



## Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

### 1-Broken Homes:

If both parents are divorced or one or both parents have passed away, the home may be divided. Parents have a very crucial responsibility to engage and educate their children. A child's development may be impacted if their home is broken up for any of the reasons above. Children who no longer have the affection and authority of their parents are more susceptible to anti-social influences.

### 2-Poverty:

Most juvenile offenses are committed by kids from low-income households. Due to their parents' need to work long hours to make ends meet, children in low-income households are often ignored. These children are affected by gangsters, whether on purpose or accidentally, and their need for money leads them to engage in delinquent behavior.

### 3-Bad company:

A child's peers, neighbors, and companions will all have a significant influence on their behavior. They may commit crimes as a result of their lousy companionship. The child's attitude may change and there is a greater likelihood that he will become delinquent if he joins a harmful group or companionship.

#### 4-Mental instability:

Numerous studies have found that many young offenders suffer from mental instability. They may have been experiencing mental disease or a mental impairment. Children with mental disabilities, as we all know, are unable to distinguish between good and wrong.

#### 5-Emotional problems:

Children who commit crimes frequently struggle with emotional issues like inferiority and jealousy. When these kids believe that society is against them, they are not treated fairly, and they are deprived of their fundamental rights, they turn into delinquents. Juvenile criminality will arise from this kind of inferiority [25,26].

## Risk Factors for Child Delinquency

The term "risk factors" refers to "those characteristics, variables, or hazards that, if present for a given individual, make it more likely that this individual, rather than someone selected from the general population, will develop a disorder." A risk factor predicts an elevated likelihood of subsequent offenses. Anything that raises the probability that someone will get hurt is a risk factor [27,28].

### The Impact of Divorce on Children

#### 1 - Mental Health Problems:

Children with divorced parents experience grief, sadness, frustration, and anger. Children and teenagers who experience these emotions over extended periods are more likely to develop mental health issues including anxiety and depression.

#### 2- Behavioral Problems:

Compared to children from high-conflict, intact families, children from divorced families are more likely to experience behavioral issues. They start to cause trouble at home and school. They smoke, use drugs, drink too much, and have promiscuous sex, among other harmful behaviors. A 2010 study found that youngsters who were 5 years old or younger after their parents died were more likely to lose their virginity before turning 16. Additionally, studies reveal that children of divorced parents start using drugs and alcohol earlier than their classmates.

#### 3-Poor Academic Performance:

Children may find it difficult to focus on their schoolwork due to the changes in their habits and living conditions, as well as the mental stress they are going through. Children may become distracted from their studies and unable to fully participate in their academic responsibilities due to the stress and emotional upheaval in the family. Some kids may act out in class and struggle to obey rules and directions because they are impulsive. After a divorce, one may no longer have access to the financial resources that were previously available, such as educational materials, tutoring, or extracurricular activities.

#### 4- Strained Relationship with Parents:

A child's relationship with his parents becomes less intimate, which is the most obvious consequence of marriage dissolution. It is challenging to keep tight relationships with both parents when living with one of them. Over time, a parent and child grow apart as their contact becomes less regular. Children whose parents are divorced receive less encouragement, support, and practical assistance, which has an impact on their mental health [29,30].

#### 5- Trouble in Emotional Relationships:

The emotional toll divorce can take on kids is among its most important and enduring consequences. Divorce is a transformative experience that can upend a child's foundation of stability and security. Emotional turmoil during and after a divorce can have a long-term harmful effect on a child's mental health and overall well-being. First and foremost, divorced children may feel abandoned. It is possible for them to feel abandoned or rejected when their parent's marriage ends. Youngsters may find it difficult to comprehend their parents' separation and may even hold themselves responsible for it. A child's everyday life frequently undergoes significant changes as a result of divorce, including adjustments to living arrangements, schools, and social

#### 6-Loss of Interest in Social Activity:

Children whose families are separating may have fewer social interactions and struggle to connect with others. Children may experience feelings of insecurity and question whether they are the only members of their family who have experienced a divorce.

7-Feelings of Guilt:

It's common for kids to inquire about the reasons behind their parents' divorce. They will search for answers, wondering if their parents are no longer in love or if they are to blame. These feelings of guilt are common among children of divorced parents, but they can also result in a variety of other problems. Stress is increased by guilt.

8-Loss of Faith in Marriage:

Last but not least, research indicates that although children of divorced parents hope to have stable relationships of their own as adults, they are more likely to divorce while still married. According to some studies, children of divorced parents maybe two to three times more likely than children of nondivorced parents to go through a divorce [31,32].

The Impact of Divorce on Children According to Age Group

1- The Impact of Divorce on Children Age 1-3Years old:

During a divorce, children between the ages of one and three may become clinging and angry. They do considerably better than older kids, though. This is a result of their hazy recollections of that stage. As they mature, they get accustomed to their living situation and daily schedule because they don't recall the change well.

2- The Impact of Divorce on Children Age 3-6 Years old:

When their parents divorce, children between the ages of three and six typically react with shame and terror. They're confused because young children are unable to understand what's going on or why. They think that if Dad can leave their life, Mom can too. They could think that if they can stop loving one another, they can stop loving their parents. Concerns about where they will live, who will care for them, and whether there will be enough food or money are common among young children. Stress in a toxic relationship can impact children at any age [33,34].

Parents frequently witness youngsters reverting to their early habits, such as having trouble using the restroom or wanting a comfort blanket once more. An increase in the desire to masturbate could occur. They might cling, weep, or rebel. They might be afraid of the dark or of being alone. Youngsters may conjure up bizarre explanations for the absence of one parent. Children often blame themselves for the separation; they may think that their parents would not have left if they had behaved better. When they



are really upset, preschoolers may hide their feelings to keep their parents from being upset [35,36].

#### 3-The Impact of Divorce on Children Ages 6–8 Years old:

The most common response from children between the ages of six and eight is sadness. When it comes to expressing their sadness, boys are more prone than girls to cry and sob. Additionally, they yearn for the absent parent very much. The kids will still miss that parent a lot, even if they didn't get along well with them before the split. Since kids don't see the absent parent very often, they usually don't express their animosity toward them. They may blame the custodial parent for the other parent's absence and vent their resentment toward him or her. Children at this age frequently assume that their absent parent no longer loves them when contact with them is diminished.

Emotional trauma results from this response. When parents try to sway a child's feelings to take a side, it can become a "tug of war". Children may hear from some parents that the other parent is awful or that the issues were brought on by the other parent. Every parent may hold this straightforward opinion. The most likely victims of this conflict are children caught in the middle [37,38].

#### 4-The Impact of Divorce on Children Ages 6–12 years old:

Children between the ages of nine and twelve are not affected by divorce in the same way as younger children. People in this age range have more sophisticated thought processes and can consider a variety of viewpoints. Some of the reasons for the breakup are understandable to the majority of these kids. They will make a sincere and courageous effort to do their best. Children at this age are more likely to experience strong anger and are quite aware of it, in contrast to their younger siblings. Anger is a normal emotion when a family splits apart. A seriously shattered sense of self is also common at this age. Children might suffer from a variety of illnesses, including infections, headaches, stomachaches, and asthma. These issues are made worse by the stress the kids are experiencing. Youngsters from divided households visit their doctors' offices considerably more frequently than other youngsters, according to the doctors.

Family breakups can also lead to peer problems. Children may worry about being rejected by their peers and may not have as many friends as they once had. These children are more likely to become friends with their "rejected" classmates. These new friends may experience emotional or behavioral difficulties, which may lead to more



significant problems including breaking the law, failing classes, abusing drugs or alcohol, or engaging in risky sexual interactions. Although preteens have acquired new cognitive abilities that enable them to comprehend cause-and-effect linkages, they still do not have a comprehensive understanding of how things operate. They will probably be extremely disappointed and may "act out" by trying to use the power they feel they have to hurt one or both of their parents. They may say cruel or hurtful things, or they may blame parents for moral failings or for changing. Since they now believe the parent is guilty, they might not want to spend time with them [39,40].

#### 5-The Impact of Divorce on Children Age 13-17 Years old:

Because the bad effects of divorce can last into adulthood, the effects of divorce on children between the ages of thirteen and seventeen are the most severe for teenagers. Teens who live with their mother after divorce often harbor resentment toward their father for the rest of their lives because they believe he caused the split. They become distrustful, frequently lose their temper, and act rebelliously [41,42].

## Intervening to Support Children During Divorce to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency

#### 1- Intervening During Age 1-6 Years old:

Young children require frequent and explicit reminders that both parents still love them and will look after them. Every family member needs to be reminded that they are still a family, regardless of where they now reside. Parents should provide a clear explanation of the reasons for the split to help the children understand that the problems are between Mom and Dad and that it is not their fault. They need a chance to talk about their fears. Every parent should set aside time regularly to talk to their preschoolers about their feelings. A lot of time should be spent with both parents by children.

Additionally, parents should avoid bickering in front of their children. If young children hear their parents fighting, they can think they are at fault. Children's safety must be guaranteed when there has been violence; a violent parent can assist mend the damage by providing a positive example of how to regulate one's anger. Respecting the other parent can help children who have witnessed violence recover. Every parent should have quality time with their preschooler. For children under three, a week away is too

lengthy, thus the majority of them feel rather sad to be separated from the absent parent. Their concept of time is much shorter than that of older children [43].

2- Intervening During Age 6-8 Years old:

All children must be protected from the pain and anger of their parents. Since the children shouldn't feel pressured to take a side, never insult the other parent in front of them. They have to realize that both of their parents still adore them. They will be cared for even if Mom and Dad do not live together. It must be possible for the absent parent to interact with the children. They have to realize that it's acceptable to love that parent. Young children need more love and support at this time because they don't know if their parents still care about them [44].

3- Intervening During Age 9-17 Years old:

At this age, children must be able to communicate their worries, anxieties, and grievances to both parents regarding the breakup and life following it. Children also comprehend the parents' feelings to some extent. It's acceptable to say that Mom and Dad don't agree on everything, but let them know that they do agree on the children. Parents need to acknowledge their children's rage while also showing them love and support. It is common for children to wish for their parents to get back together. If this is not going to happen, as it usually does not, children should be told clearly and completely; giving them false hope does not help them [45].

Parents must learn to control their anger toward one another. Parents must step back if their children become violently angry, and they should stay away from them until they acquire self-control. When a dispute is unresolved or spiteful, parents must keep it to a minimum in front of their kids. When parents can compromise and negotiate, they provide an example for their children, who learn social skills from watching conflicts addressed. This could lessen the conflict's effects. It is necessary to allow children to love their parents. Encourage the children to call or write letters to the other parents and help them provide gifts on important occasions (birthdays, Father's Day, Christmas, etc.). Don't force kids to "pick sides." Many parents genuinely think they never do this, and the majority are unaware of how frequently they do it. Children's connection with the other parent suffers when you try to win them over, which increases stress and engenders resentment toward both parents [45].

## Conclusion

Every nation in the world has at some point dealt with or continues to deal with the issue of juvenile delinquency. However, developing nations face a far greater problem with youth delinquency. Delinquency is usually caused by many variables that vary from child to child. To develop effective tactics for preventing child delinquency and its progression into violent and serious juvenile offenses, intervention techniques must take into account the wide range of individual, peer, school, community, and separation of family risk factors. Numerous effective intervention programs that focus on young children's chronically disruptive conduct have reduced later serious, violent, and chronic offending. Some therapies focus on parental behaviors that increase the chance of disruptive conduct in children over time.

Families find divorce challenging, but it might not be the best idea to remain together just for the sake of the kids. Children raised in households with high levels of conflict, hostility, and dissatisfaction may be more susceptible to behavioral issues as well as mental health issues. Children frequently struggle with their emotions and behavior as a result of parental separation. However, seek professional help if your child's behavioral or emotional issues persist. Individual counseling may help your youngster work out their feelings. Another option is to recommend family therapy to address changes in family connections. Child support groups are also offered in some places. Children in specific age groups can engage with others who might be going through similar changes in family structure through support groups.

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