

## SOCIAL WORK TECHNOLOGIES FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### **Annotation**

The article is devoted to the study of local and foreign experience of social work with children who have suffered from abuse, aimed at protecting such children and creating favorable conditions for their development and life. It also analyzes modern areas of social work aimed at protecting children from abuse.

### **Key words**

violence, child abuse, social protection, social policy, social services, foreign experience.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Children are among the most vulnerable and unprotected members of modern society. Their lives, health, support, care, protection, and overall well-being are entirely dependent on adults. However, in reality, many children experience the horrors of violence and become victims of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse by adults or their peers within their families or social environments.

Child maltreatment refers to intentional or negligent actions by adults that may cause harm, developmental impairment, or even death, or that pose a threat to a child's rights and well-being. As the global understanding of the serious social and economic consequences resulting from violence against children continues to grow, the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and discrimination is increasingly becoming one of the most important and urgent priorities worldwide[2]. In Uzbekistan, the components of the child protection system are institutionally established, and the protection of children is regulated by a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework. The national priorities for reforming the system of family and child protection, as well as the judicial and

legal system, were outlined in the National Development Strategy for 2017–2021. These reforms also contribute to the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly Goal 16.2, which aims to end all forms of violence against children within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1].

Over the past decade, and particularly since 2016, Uzbekistan has made significant progress in aligning its legal framework and practices in child protection with international standards. The Law “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child,” adopted in 2008, establishes the child’s right to protection from all forms of violence, as well as the right to a family environment. Provisions on protection have also been incorporated into other laws that serve as the legal foundation for institutions and services operating within the child protection system[3]. The adoption of the new Law “On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence” in 2019 was recognized as a significant achievement. Furthermore, in the same year, the Family Code was revised to equalize the legal marriage age for men and women at 18 (previously, the marriage age had been set at eighteen for men and seventeen for women).

In addition, since 2016, increased attention has been given to strengthening the family support system through the development of community-level support programs, advancing the profession of social work, promoting alternative forms of family-based care for children deprived of parental care, and preventing juvenile delinquency. As a result of these reforms, specialized departments of social work were established in Uzbekistan in 2018. Moreover, the Ministry of Internal Affairs set up the country’s first child-friendly interview room aimed at improving the protection of the rights of children who are victims or witnesses of crime. In 2019, in order to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan introduced positions for social workers and psychologists in centers providing social and legal assistance to minors across the country.

In addition, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Social and Legal Assistance Centers for Minors began operating in place of former transit centers for juveniles. Significant progress was also achieved in assessing conditions in correctional and educational institutions, as well as in detention facilities for juvenile offenders. In 2019, social workers conducted assessments of the situations of 167 girls in two specialized closed educational institutions and developed reintegration plans for them.

The increasing threat to the moral, social, psychological, and physical well-being of children who, due to their age, are unable to resist violence compels us to

seek effective methods of support. This includes creating safe conditions for children's lives, ensuring appropriate social guidance, and fostering the development of their personal potential.

A child is considered a victim of violence if harm has been caused or if there is a high risk of harm due to the actions or inaction of others. Therefore, specialists must be able to identify risk factors and assess the likelihood of harm. The reasons for specialist intervention, assessment, and investigation may include:

- ✓ Reports from the child or witnesses regarding instances of violence;
- ✓ Signs of violence observed in the child;
- ✓ The presence of conditions or factors that may lead to violence against children [5].

Reports of child maltreatment can come via telephone, personal appeals from citizens or the children themselves, as well as from specialists working with minors. When a report comes directly from the victimized child, it is usually considered reliable. Occasionally, a child may falsely accuse an adult or exaggerate the level of violence, but this occurs rarely. Reports from witnesses who have observed violence or its consequences are considered equally reliable.

Therefore, one of the most effective methods for detecting violence against children is a dedicated "child protection hotline". Any report of violence should be carefully received, analyzed, and investigated. Interviews with the child should be conducted following established guidelines, and witnesses of child violence should also be interviewed.

Children and their family members are not always ready to report instances of maltreatment. This may occur for a variety of reasons, such as fear of punishment, lack of understanding of the seriousness of the events, distrust of specialists, mental or psychological factors, the perception of violence as a "normal method of upbringing," and others. In such cases, a child who has experienced violence can be identified through physical, psychological, and behavioral indicators. Additionally, the presence of these indicators can either confirm or contradict the statements of the child and other witnesses, which is crucial for investigating cases of maltreatment. Signs of violence may have short-term or long-term consequences, adversely affecting the child's physical and mental health as well as their overall development.

Factors contributing to violence against children include the characteristics of parents, the characteristics of the child, family dynamics, as well as social, psychological, and cultural factors. When there is a risk of harm to a child, preventive measures should be taken to avoid violence and its consequences.

At present, there is no single unified theory in international social work; its theoretical knowledge is expressed through various public and academic schools. Within these frameworks, key research traditions have developed, offering different scientific and practice-oriented paradigms for applied social work. Practitioners in different countries tend to prefer a particular theoretical model of social work depending on established traditions and social needs.

For example, in the United States, social work often emphasizes psychoanalysis, as it has traditionally focused on the individual level. At the same time, over the past decades, numerous technologies grounded in theoretical approaches from social sciences have emerged in the country. The knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through these methods allow practitioners to select the most necessary and effective approaches from various social resources to address specific social problems.

The main functions of child social services in many countries include: ensuring that families achieve a certain level of economic independence; preventing the abuse and exploitation of children; establishing and supporting various institutional forms of guardianship, as well as promoting non-institutional forms, particularly community-based approaches.

The organizational structure of child social services is as follows: at a certain territorial-administrative level, there is a specialized institution providing social assistance to children, with branch units, such as social support centers, located in areas with a high concentration of clients. This institution collaborates with “community” support centers, which are voluntary organizations within the region.

It should be emphasized that, in foreign countries, the activities of child social services are aimed not only at the child but at the entire family. For example, specialized institutions in the United States providing social assistance to families and children offer the following types of support:

- Establishing specialized professional training groups for parents and providing employment assistance;
- Providing child care for children whose parents work during the day or night;
- Creating services for unmarried mothers in urban health centers;
- Establishing and supporting services that protect children from domestic violence;
- Establishing and supervising foster homes, as well as working with foster families to monitor the child’s adjustment;

➤ Developing services that assist children in accessing education, supporting parents with household tasks, and other related support [4].

Thus, the issue of violence against children is a social problem that can be addressed at the state level through the coordinated efforts of the aforementioned institutions, involving qualified specialists who are well-versed in their respective areas of responsibility. Additionally, these specialists must know which institutions the child should approach, how to select an appropriate counselor based on specific criteria, and how to organize the step-by-step process of the child's rehabilitation in a systematic manner.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the distinctive feature of violence against minors is its tendency to escalate in the absence of reaction or resistance. Therefore, protecting children and adolescents from cruelty and preventing crimes against them is an extremely important, socially significant, and urgent task, whose solution requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Measures to address violence should involve law enforcement agencies, staff of guardianship and foster care institutions, representatives of the social-pedagogical sector, and employees of medical and psychological services. However, efforts to prevent and suppress violence against children, as well as to create an effective system of support for victims, are often hindered by various obstacles, including:

➤ Institutional constraints and inter-agency fragmentation; subjectivity in selecting non-governmental organizations for cooperation; lack of a unified methodological and systematic approach in organizing preventive work;

➤ Insufficient attention to preventive measures when working with young people and families;

➤ Absence of legislative norms and law enforcement practices for the protection and rehabilitation of victims, which is exacerbated by low legal literacy among the population, distrust of law enforcement agencies, and limited material resources that prevent access to qualified legal assistance;

➤ Lack of knowledge and communication skills among educators, law enforcement officers, social workers, and medical staff in interacting with victims, which leads to the concealment or suppression of cases of violence, especially in the absence of personal interest in punishing offenders or rehabilitating victims;

➤ Absence of an effective and purposefully organized rehabilitation system, which often results in many rehabilitation institutions becoming mere congregating places for children who have been removed from normal family life, and so on.

The problem of violence is further complicated by the fact that a significant portion of victims come from low-income families or are "street" children, and

relatively few people take a personal interest in their fate. At times, children become victims of their own suffering or even their lives due to parents' need for self-assertion, adults' desire to control private life, or the influence of intoxicated fathers and perpetually angry mothers.

### CONCLUSION

The issue of violence against children can only be addressed through the collaborative efforts of teachers, parents, and all other adults involved with children in one way or another. Furthermore, the goal of work aimed at mitigating the consequences of violence is not to replace or eliminate parents who are unable to take responsibility for raising their children, but rather to help restore or develop the family's capacity to perform this essential function.

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