

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIO-LEGAL FOUNDATIONS FOR REFORMING THE FAMILY INSTITUTION IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the social and legal foundations of family institution reforms in New Uzbekistan, the process of their formation, key principles, and future directions. The initiatives on the family institute was proposed.*

Keywords: *New Uzbekistan, institute of family, society, legal system, Family code, women, children, gender*

Introduction.

"The greatest thing in life for every person is the family. For me, the family is sacred. Its sanctity lies in the fact that regardless of where you work or who you are if there is no attention paid to upbringing, environment, honesty, and compassion within the family, it is impossible to achieve the desired results. That is why I have always paid great attention to the upbringing of my children. I have a special relationship with both my child and my grandchild. I know each of their intentions and wishes. If you are with your family, you have every right to call yourself happy. And not only my family if my people are happy, I feel happy too" (Sh. Mirziyoyev).

The "Mahalla and Family" Research Institute under the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 367 dated June 10, 2020. The Institute is a specialized state scientific research institution that contributes to strengthening the institutions of community and family, transforming citizens' assemblies into real partners of the population, and implementing the idea of "Healthy Family – Healthy Society"[1].

The institution of family plays the most fundamental role in shaping an individual's personality and socialization when compared to other social institutions. Indeed, it is within the family that personal and professional interests, individual abilities, moral norms, and competencies are formed. The influence of the family continues throughout a person's entire life. From a social perspective, the family is a community in which a person occupies various social statuses.

Methods

In New Uzbekistan, the development of the socio-legal foundations for reforming the family institution is gaining significant importance. In recent years, the wide-ranging social and legal reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan have had a considerable impact on all spheres of society, including the family institution. As the fundamental legal and social unit of society, the family plays a key role in ensuring social stability and development. Therefore, under the conditions of the new era, there has emerged a need to modernize the family institution and bring it in line with contemporary requirements. Family code of the Republic of Uzbekistan was adopted on 30 April 1998.

The Role and Importance of the Family Institution in Society. As the fundamental social and

legal unit of a person, the family serves as the center for family relationships, child upbringing, and the transmission of moral values. The stability and development of society are often closely linked to the strength of the family. Changes within the family institution are deeply connected to broader social transformations and reforms within the legal system. In New Uzbekistan, the need for reforms aimed at improving the social and legal status of the family has become evident.

In Uzbekistan, economic and demographic processes, as well as urbanization, rising educational attainment, and increased attention to gender equality, are driving the need for changes in the traditional forms of the family. Strengthening the social functions of the family requires a new family policy, particularly aimed at protecting the rights of women and children, educating youth, and developing mechanisms of social support. Within the framework of family institution reform in Uzbekistan, the Family Code and other relevant laws are being revised. This legislation aims to introduce clear and modern regulations to govern family relationships.

Mechanisms for Protecting the Rights of Women and Children

New legislation in Uzbekistan places significant emphasis on ensuring gender equality, preventing domestic violence, and protecting the rights and interests of children. Reforms in the judicial and legal system are also underway. The role of courts and other relevant institutions in resolving family disputes is being strengthened. These reforms aim to ensure that family-related conflicts are resolved more swiftly and fairly [2].

Practical Initiatives and Projects in Reforming the Institute of family institution. Efforts to reform the family institution in Uzbekistan include a number of practical initiatives and projects such as: Enhancing family education and awareness; Promoting family upbringing, gender equality, and healthy family relationships through widespread public outreach; Improving the system of social services; Developing mechanisms for providing psychological assistance and social support services to families.

Future Directions of Reforms. In New Uzbekistan, further strengthening of the family institution will focus on several key directions:

- ☐ Improving family legislation based on international experience;
- ☐ Expanding programs aimed at preserving and promoting family values;
- ☐ Making social protection mechanisms more effective;
- ☐ Enhancing family education and awareness among youth.

Results.

Reforming the family institution in New Uzbekistan is considered a crucial condition for ensuring social stability and prosperity. The harmony between social and legal foundations creates opportunities to strengthen the family and improve its social functions. Reforming the family institution in line with modern demands primarily depends on the development of legislation regulating family relations, the enhancement of social support systems, and the promotion of public awareness and education.

In the first half of 2025, over 95,000 marriages were registered in Uzbekistan. At the same time, more than 23,000 divorces were recorded. Simply put, one in every four marriages ends in divorce. According to statistics, divorces are increasing while marriages are becoming less stable than before. Data from the Statistics Agency shows that over the past 10 years, the number of marriages has been gradually decreasing. For example, in 2018, there were 311,400 marriages, whereas by 2024, this figure had declined by 12.7%. On the other hand, divorces have increased. In 2018, there were 32,300 divorces, but by 2024, this number had risen to 45,100. In fact, in 2023, even more families—49,200—divorced. Moreover, 2024 marked the year with the lowest number of marriages recorded in the past decade.

In Uzbekistan, the average duration of a marriage is around 10 years. According to data from 2024, men divorce at an average age of 35, while women divorce at an average age of 32. Among women who divorce, the majority—64.6%—are under 35 years old. Many experts believe that young people often enter marriage before they are fully prepared for life. They may lack complete education, stable employment, independent housing, or steady income. In a recent survey, 49.7% of respondents identified this as the primary reason for divorces.

Financial independence is another important factor. According to survey participants, a person should have their own income before starting a family. Money-related problems are a common cause of conflicts and divorces in many families—second only to personality incompatibility. Nearly half (48.1%) of divorced couples had not yet had children. Among the rest, 28.6% had one child, while

23.3% had two or more children [3].

In 2024, the Uzbekistan Gender Commission conducted a study on the social harms caused by divorces. According to the study's conclusions, most divorced women experienced the following problems:

First, housing problems arise. It is difficult for a divorced mother to live with her child in her parents' home, and rental prices are high. The child support payments often do not even cover half of the rental costs.

Second, children grow up without a father's care. Among 51 women surveyed, who had a total of 70 children, it was found that 99% of these children have no contact with their fathers. Considering that 31,389 families divorced in 2019 alone, the number of such children can be estimated to be significant. It has been observed that men not only lose contact with their children but also try to avoid paying child support through various excuses [4].

Third, divorced women face social stigma: they are viewed negatively by society, subjected to inappropriate sexual advances, and face difficulties in renting housing.

Respondents attributed divorces to factors such as the former spouse's irresponsibility in managing household affairs, lack of independent thinking, interference of others in the family (mother-in-law, sister-in-law), the husband's involvement in bad habits, abusive treatment of the wife within the family, and infidelity. Although the Constitution obliges parents to fully care for and support their children until they reach adulthood, attention was drawn to the fact that some parents do not approach this responsibility with due seriousness.

Discussion.

Criticism has been raised regarding delays in the implementation of tasks such as Uzbekistan's accession to the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, expanding the sources for forming the Child Support Fund, and integrating the unified information system for the enforcement and monitoring of child support obligations with the electronic Treasury system of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Although 40.6 billion soums have been paid to 1,723 recipients from the Child Support Fund, only 2% of these funds—that is, 849.2 million soums—have been recovered and returned to the fund. This highlights the need for effective measures to be taken in this area as well [5].

Additionally, according to Article 107 of the Family Code, if a minor child is taken from their parents by a court decision and placed in a childcare institution, child support payments are collected from both the father and the mother in amounts determined for the benefit of the child. The collected child support payments are deposited into a bank account opened in the name of the child and are paid out when the child reaches adulthood. However, since the legal basis for opening bank accounts in the name of minor children has not been established, to date, child support payments have been made to other accounts.

Since its establishment, the Institute has signed 25 memorandums of cooperation in the field of strengthening family and mahalla institutions and providing comprehensive support to women. These include agreements with: The Scientific Research Institute of Sanitary Hygiene and Occupational Diseases under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan; The Republican Rehabilitation Center for Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking; The Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi; The "El-Yurt Umidi" Foundation for training specialists abroad and engaging with compatriots; The Republican Center for Social Adaptation of Children; The Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies; The International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan; The Institute for Youth Studies and Training of Prospective Personnel under the Youth Affairs Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan; The Center for Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle and Physical Activity of the Population; The State Institute of Arts and Culture of Uzbekistan; The Main Directorate of Fire Safety under the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Uzbekistan; The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan; The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Uzbekistan; The Agency for the Development of Medical and Social Services of the Republic of Uzbekistan; The Republican Center for Rehabilitation and Adaptation of Women.

Conclusion.

In recent years, the number of weddings in Uzbekistan has decreased, while divorces have increased. From 2018 to 2024, weddings declined by 12.7%, whereas divorces have risen by nearly 1.5

times. Most young people get married before reaching the age of 25. The average bride is 22 years old, and the groom is 27 years old. However, these early marriages often end in divorce. The main reasons for divorce are incompatibility of character and financial difficulties. Ther, it is important to be prepared for life, responsibility, and financial independence before deciding to start a family.

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