ABSTRACT

General characteristics of the research. The present dissertation is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of criminal-law and criminological issues in preventing the corruption of young children in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The research covers the construction of the offence, the qualification of contact and communication-mediated forms, issues of proof, latency, interdepartmental response and post-victim protection of the child under conditions of digitalization.

Relevance of the topic of the dissertation research. The protection of the sexual inviolability and normal moral and mental development of young children is among the key tasks of the state. The relevance of the topic is determined by the high social danger of sexualized offences against children, the growth of risks in the digital environment, the latency of such acts, difficulties in qualifying corrupting acts, and the need to build prevention that does not allow secondary victimization of the child. Current legislation provides a criminal-law prohibition; however, digital forms of communication, anonymity, cross-border interaction and the use of electronic traces require clarification of the prohibition criteria, evidentiary standards and a coordinated system of interdepartmental prevention.

For the Republic of Kazakhstan, this issue has not only theoretical but also clear practical significance. Criminal law provides a special prohibition on corrupting acts against knowingly young children, yet the digital environment has changed the ways in which a child may be influenced. Today, an offence may begin not with physical contact, but with messaging, video communication, exchange of images, gradual building of trust and pressure. Therefore, ordinary approaches to proof and qualification do not always allow similar situations to be assessed uniformly. There are risks of broad interpretation, competition with related offences and inconsistent application of the law. This directly concerns the principles of legality and fairness of criminal liability.

The high latency of such offences is also important. A child and the child's surroundings are not always ready to report what happened because of fear of publicity, dependence on an adult, shame, distrust of institutions and a lack of clear reporting channels. In the digital environment, concealment is intensified by closed chats, deleted messages, anonymous accounts and the cross-border nature of communication. Therefore, prevention cannot be limited to punishment after the crime has already been committed. It must include early detection of warning signs, secure preservation of digital data, training of specialists and clear interdepartmental interaction.

Comparative analysis shows that effective protection of the child is not built only by expanding criminal prohibitions. The clarity of the offence, provability of its elements, protection of the child from secondary trauma and coordination between schools, families, social services, law-enforcement bodies and digital intermediaries are also essential. Early intervention is admissible where harm may arise before

physical contact, but it must have clear thresholds and verifiable signs. Otherwise, there is a danger of arbitrary application of the norm and errors in treating ordinary communication as criminal conduct.

Degree of scientific elaboration of the topic. In Kazakhstani and foreign scholarship, issues of protecting the sexual inviolability of minors have been examined in the works of S.M. Rakhmetov, I.Sh. Borchashvili, I.I. Rogov, M.S. Narikbayev, A.A. Biebayeva, A.A. Imanmussayev, G.T. Shekenova and other authors, as well as in studies devoted to victimological prevention, crime latency and digital risks. At the same time, the corruption of young children as an independent criminal-law and criminological problem has been developed only fragmentarily: the boundaries of the offence, rules of competition with related prohibitions, standards for assessing electronic data, tools for identifying latency and the model of prevention in the digital environment remain insufficiently defined.

The degree of scientific elaboration of the topic also remains uneven. Kazakhstani scholarship has examined in detail general issues of protecting the sexual inviolability of minors, the qualification of violent offences and certain response measures. However, the corruption of young children as an independent problem, especially in the digital environment, has not been sufficiently studied. Criteria for distinguishing contact and non-contact forms, rules of competition with other offences, standards for assessing electronic evidence and the connection between criminal-law measures and real prevention remain insufficiently disclosed.

The purpose and objectives of the research. The purpose of the dissertation research is to provide a scholarly justification and develop a model for improving the criminal-law construction of corruption of young children, as well as an integrated multi-level system of prevention and post-victim protection under conditions of digitalization, ensuring the normative certainty of the prohibition, stability of law enforcement and reduction of criminological risks.

To achieve this purpose, the following objectives are set:

- to disclose the social danger and criminological contours of corruption of young children in offline and digital environments;
- to substantiate the criteria of limiting criminalization and the parameters of normative certainty of the criminal-law prohibition;
- to define the boundaries of criminal-law protection and the rules for distinguishing corruption of young children from related offences;
- to identify collisions of age criteria and vulnerability presumptions and to propose a model for resolving them;
- to develop a qualification algorithm in cases of competing norms, multiple episodes, complicity and communication-mediated forms;
- to construct a criminological model of the mechanism and determination of corruption of young children, tools for assessing latency and a system of multi-level prevention.

The object of the dissertation research is the social relations arising in the sphere of criminal-law protection of young children from corruption, the prevention, detection and suppression of such acts, and the post-victim protection of the child in offline and digital environments.

The subject of the dissertation research comprises the norms of criminal and criminal-procedure legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, law-enforcement practice in cases of this category, criminological materials and statistical data, international standards for the protection of children, and doctrinal approaches in Kazakhstani and foreign legal scholarship.

The theoretical, methodological and methodical basis of the research relies on formal-legal, systemic, comparative-legal, statistical and victimological methods, analysis of law-enforcement practice and modelling. Their combination made it possible to consider the criminal-law prohibition, evidentiary standards and prevention as interrelated elements of an integral model of child protection.

The normative framework of the research consists of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, legislation on the rights of the child, personal data and information security, as well as international legal instruments in the field of protecting children from sexual exploitation and violence.

The methodology is based on a combination of formal legal, systemic, comparative legal, statistical, victimological methods and modelling. This approach makes it possible to consider not only the text of the criminal norm, but also how it works in practice, what evidence is required, what risks remain hidden and what measures can actually reduce danger. In this regard, the dissertation research is aimed at finding a balance between strengthening the protection of young children and preserving legal certainty. The work proposes to consider the criminal-law prohibition and criminological prevention as a single system. Such a system must take into account the mechanism of the offence, digital risks, hidden episodes, features of proof and the need for careful treatment of the child during the process. For this reason, special attention is paid to qualification algorithms, the minimally sufficient standard for establishing circumstances, assessment of latency and multi-level prevention. In general, the chosen logic makes it possible to preserve the protective purpose of criminal law and at the same time avoid excessive expansion of the prohibition where the problem can be addressed by preventive or organisational measures.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in considering the corruption of young children as a complex interdisciplinary problem that requires both clarification of the criminal-law boundaries of the prohibition and the construction of a criminological architecture of prevention under conditions of digitalization. The scientific novelty of the dissertation research is reflected in the following **key provisions submitted for defence**:

The scientific novelty is expressed through clarification of the boundaries of the prohibition, development of an algorithm for distinguishing related offences,

determination of a standard for working with electronic data and construction of a model for assessing latency. The research also proposes multi-level prevention that combines primary, secondary and tertiary measures. This approach makes it possible not only to respond to an act already committed, but also to identify dangerous situations earlier, support the child safely and assess the effectiveness of actions taken by competent bodies.

1. It is substantiated that the normative certainty of the prohibition of offences against young children in offline and digital environments is ensured not by expanding criminal-law wording, but by introducing criteria of limiting criminalization, including clarity in the description of the act, predictability of law enforcement, and commensurability of repression with its preventive effect. A criterion for assessing the preventive sufficiency of criminal repression is proposed as a condition for the admissibility of criminal-law intervention. Thus, the criminological assessment of prevention is integrated into the doctrine of criminalization as an element of its legal justification. The provision is specified in the form of a formalized test of the verifiability and predictability of the prohibition, suitable for law-enforcement and law-making expert review (Appendix A).

2. An integrated criminal-law and criminological concept for the protection of young children under conditions of digitalization has been developed. Within this concept, the digital environment is understood as a factor transforming the mechanism of the offence and the limits of criminalization; the dual protected interest in constructing the offence of corruption of young children (sexual inviolability and the normal development of the child) is substantiated; the boundaries of criminal-law intervention and criteria for distinction are formulated, ensuring uniform qualification in offline and digital scenarios; and a comparative-law framework is formed, allowing international standards and foreign experience to be used for improving the national model of prohibition and prevention.

3. The main collisions of age criteria and vulnerability presumptions in the structure of the offence, affecting the boundaries of criminal liability and the stability of qualification, have been identified and systematized. A model for resolving these collisions is proposed, based on the priority of age as a legal filter while allowing provable vulnerability circumstances to be used as qualifying features or factors for individualizing liability, thereby limiting the discretion of the law enforcer (Appendix B).

4. A qualification algorithm has been developed for distinguishing and resolving competition between criminal-law prohibitions in related offences. It includes rules for choosing the applicable norm depending on the direction of intent, the nature of influence, the method of interaction and the structure of episodicity. The algorithm is adapted to communication-mediated forms and takes into account multiple episodes and complicity, reducing the probability of typical qualification errors and increasing the predictability of law enforcement (Appendix C).

5. A minimally sufficient standard has been formulated for establishing key circumstances in cases involving corruption of young children when electronic data and communication information are used, ensuring the stability of qualification while observing procedural guarantees. A procedural protocol for child-sensitive proof is proposed, aimed at reducing the risks of secondary victimization of the child without losing the requirements of admissibility and reliability of evidence (Appendix D).

6. A criminological model of the mechanism and determination of corruption of young children has been constructed, revealing the interaction of family factors, institutional supervision factors and socio-digital risks that shape the conditions of victimization and recurrence. The model describes typical trajectories of the child's involvement and identifies points of preventive intervention aligned with the criminal-law boundaries of the prohibition (Appendix E).

7. Tools are proposed for assessing the latency of corruption of young children on the basis of mixed data sources, making it possible to identify the structural causes of the "invisibility" of episodes and to assess the dynamics of the hidden part of such offences. Indicators and rules for their interpretation are substantiated, suitable for monitoring the effectiveness of prevention and for managerial risk management within the interdepartmental framework (Appendix F).

8. An integrated multi-level system for preventing the corruption of young children has been developed, including primary, secondary and tertiary measures, as well as mechanisms of post-victim protection based on interdepartmental coordination and response standards in offline and digital environments. The system includes criteria for assessing effectiveness, including indicators of reduced latency, indicators of the quality of signal routing, and compliance requirements for digital intermediaries, ensuring the coherence of criminal-law and criminological measures (Appendix G).

The practical significance of the dissertation research research lies in the possibility of using its results to improve legislation, develop methodological recommendations, early detection routes, and training for specialists working with children. It also integrates criminal-law protection, risk assessment, and post-victim support into a single framework, contributing to consistent qualification, reduced latency, and prevention of secondary trauma to the child.

Approbation of the research results. The main findings of the dissertation have been published in 4 scholarly works, including an article in Journal of Criminal Justice, a publication of the M. Yessbulatov Almaty Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and materials of international conferences.

The structure of the dissertation consists of an introduction, three sections, 11 subsections, a conclusion and a list of references.