

**ABSTRACT**  
**of the dissertation for the degree of Philosophy Doctor (PhD)**  
**in specialty “6D050100 – Sociology”**

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**Social and economic status of single-parent families in the big city (on the example of Almaty)**

**General characteristic of work.** The dissertation is devoted to a sociological study of social and economic strategies and living conditions of single-parent families in modern Kazakhstan. The paper reveals the process of institutionalization of a single-parent family in a transforming society and touches on various social and economic aspects of the life of single-parent families. In the context of the reform and modernization of Kazakhstani society, the sociological analysis of single-parenthood is relevant in both substantive and methodological aspects.

**Relevance of research.** The family is one of the main social institutions, along with economic and political systems, religion and education. The role of the family is significant, since no other social group brings so much importance to the normal physical and cultural reproduction of society. In connection with the serious transformation of Kazakhstani society, which began in the last decade of the last century and continues to this day, many social ties have changed that have led to family changes. The transformation of society has an impact on the practice of everyday life, resulting in a dynamic transformation of social relations, including in the field of family and family policy, since in the difficult economic and social conditions of our time, the family institution becomes the most vulnerable.

The relevance of the research topic determined by the presence of demographic trends observed in the world and in our country, associated with the emergence of an increasing number of single-parent families. Increase in their share is due, first of all, the growing number of divorces in families with children, an increasing number of non-marital births, and mortality of the male working population.

When determining the relevance of the study, it is important to emphasize that the phenomenon of single-parenthood, generating new forms of family relations, is no longer perceived by society as a definite departure from the norm or a consequence of crises. The desire for the birth of a child outside marriage - can be defined as a completely consistent reproductive strategy of a modern woman, as well as the possible priority of civil (unregistered) marriages. This process is to some extent related to the tendency observed in society since the 70s of the 20th century towards a weakening of the traditional functions of the family and the transformation of intra-family social roles. The increasing participation of women in non-family economic activities significantly expands the range of professional, social and family responsibilities of both men and women. However, despite all these features, both motherhood and fatherhood in an incomplete family are associated with a number of life difficulties, primarily of an economic nature, the overcoming of

which depends both on social conditions and on the personal qualities and attitudes of single parents. Trends in the transformation of family values and strategies manifest themselves to varying degrees in individual regions, countries, villages and the urban environment, which makes a sociological study of the socio-economic status of Kazakhstan single-parent families promising and relevant.

**Degree of problem development.** The study of the phenomenon of single-parenthood should be within the framework of family sociology, showing the processes of transformation of the family as a social institution. In developing the problems of determining the socio-economic status of single-parent families in a dissertation, an analysis of domestic, as well as foreign and Russian studies, revealing a methodology for determining the problems of the institution of the family in the context of demographic processes, changes in the socio-political sphere, economic and geopolitical trends. It is important to note that the material disadvantage of the single-parent family becomes a debatable issue in most works devoted to single-parent families. In publications, the authors draw the attention of the state and the public to the financial difficulties of single parents and their children, as well as the corresponding changes in life strategies and value priorities of single parents.

At the same time, an analysis of literary sources clearly shows both the relevance of studying the sociocultural processes that have developed around the phenomenon of single-parenthood, as well as the insufficient knowledge of individual aspects of the problem. One of this little-known fact is the situation and socio-economic status of single parents in Central Asia. Researchers also have not fully disclosed the features of the cultural environment that reproduces various attitudes regarding family and marriage. The socio-economic strategies of Kazakhstan single-parent families remain insufficiently studied, which makes the topic of the dissertation research especially relevant.

**Purpose of the work:** to analyze the socio-economic status and strategies for achieving the personal and economic well-being of single-parent families and to identify the social problems of single-parent families that determine the main directions of their social support.

The purpose of the dissertation research is revealed by solving the following tasks:

- To determine the social status of urban single-parent families in Kazakhstani society;
- To study the specifics of the socio-economic situation and social well-being of single-parent families;
- To reveal the peculiarities of the attitude to marriage and divorce of Kazakhstanis with different marital status;
- To study the problems and strategies for achieving personal and economic well-being of single-parent families;
- To analyze the influence of factors of the social environment on the social well-being of parents;
- Identify and characterize the determinants of well-being of single parents.

**Object of study:** single parents of single-parent families in Almaty.

**Subject of study:** personal and economic well-being of single-parent families.

**Research hypothesis.** The socio-economic status of parents of minor children varies depending on the structure of families: families with two parents and single-parent families. Social factors regarding children affect the level of satisfaction with the life of parents and vary depending on the type of family (single parent or family with two parents).

**Empirical base of research.**

The work used the results of sociological studies conducted by quantitative and qualitative methods. As part of the quantitative approach used a face-to-face survey on a standardized questionnaire. Quantitative studies allow us to determine the magnitude and prevalence of the phenomena studied. As part of the qualitative approach, conducted a series of in-depth interviews and case studies. Qualitative research reveals facts and processes that remain outside the scope of opinion polls and statistics. Theoretical conclusions substantiated by the results of the author's sociological study. In preparing the dissertation, used the quantitative data of the Committee on Statistics, as well as the results of the following sociological studies:

1. In 2016, was conducted a sociological research to study the situation of Kazakhstani children and their values in the framework of the project “Bakity bala - bakyti otbasy - bakyti el”. The study conducted by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion (CIOM) by order of the Republican public association “Bakity bala” under the state grant of the NAO “Center for the Support of Civil Initiatives” with the support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Civil Society of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The survey involved 1000 respondents from among parents with minor children. The author of this dissertation is one of the key researchers of the designated project, which has directly developed the survey tools and analytical report.

2. This work also presents the results of a study conducted by a qualitative method (in-depth interviews) to study the life of single-parent families, their survival strategies and the problems faced by single parents in a large city of Kazakhstan - Almaty. The study initiated and implemented by the author of this thesis with the support of the staff of the Center for the Study of Public Opinion. In total conducted 33 interviews: 28 with women (single mothers) aged 18 to 47 years, the average age of the study participants 32,7 years and 5 interviews with men (single fathers) of different ages - from 41 to 56 years, on average the age of the study participants is 49,8 years.

In this work studied various categories of the socio-economic status of single parents, aspects of the everyday life of single-parent families, such as raising a child, combining work and family, organizing the institutional education of the child. It studied in order to understand how single parents organize and combines family life and raising a child with work and ensuring the economic independence of his family, which made it possible to identify models of social and economic adaptation of single parent families in a large city in Kazakhstan.

The most significant scientific results of the dissertation research, reflecting its novelty, are in the following provisions, which **submitted to the defense:**

1. In the work carried out systematization of the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of problems of single-parent families institutionlization through analysis of this type of family through the lens of various social factors of its formation, the correlation between socio-economic and gender roles in single-parent families, the construction of socio-cultural ideas about single-parent families in public opinion.

2. The global trend of increasing the prevalence of single-parent families also observed in modern Kazakhstani society, in the development of its social institution of the family. Due to the reasons for the emergence of this family structure, single-parent families are mainly created because of one of the following cases: childbirth as a result of a planned or unplanned pregnancy out of wedlock; divorce; death of one of the spouses. In large cities of Kazakhstan, social recognition of cohabitation without marriage is growing, which also contributes to the creation of new types of families. The predominant factor in the formation of single-parent families, for both single mothers and single fathers, is divorce.

3. Identified and characterized the relationship between the attitudes to marriage of representatives of families with different statuses. Given the prevailing general positive attitude towards marriage and family formation among families in Almaty found that negative attitudes and answers “difficult to answer” are more common among representatives of single-parent families. This can be explained by the unsuccessful experience of creating a family or marriage, because of which people found themselves in the status of single parents. The study also found a connection between the individual’s family status and the success of parents’ marriage.

4. Based on the results of an empirical study, presented generalized socio-demographic portrait of single parents, using the comparative analysis methodology. The work gives a general description of this social group, and describes the following characteristics: (1) the gender composition of single parents; (2) correlation with age; (3) ethnic composition; (4) marital status of parents; (5) number of children.

5. Studied the specificity of the socio-economic situation and social well-being of single-parent families. In the framework of the research evaluated two indicators of parents' social well-being: the level of satisfaction with life and the level of satisfaction with the material situation of the household. Satisfaction with life correlates with satisfaction with the material situation of the household, the higher the level of satisfaction with the material situation, the higher the level of satisfaction with life.

6. Social factors regarding children to some extent affect the level of satisfaction with the life of parents, and they vary depending on the type of family:

- The factor of material well-being of children has the greatest impact on the level of satisfaction with the life of representatives of families with two parents. A second contributing factor is child safety.
- The level of satisfaction with life of representatives of single-parent families is primarily influenced by the safety factor of children, and secondly, by the factor

of children's involvement in sports, cultural and social events, it is confirmed by the results of factorial and regression analyzes.

7. Single parents are more prone to religiosity than other populations. They often seek peace, comfort, which gives them the observance of religious precepts, it was confirmed by the results of cluster analysis using the k-means method: active believers, i.e. observing the precepts of their religion, they are more widespread among representatives of single-parent families than among representatives of families with two parents. However, among single parent families there are significantly fewer atheists than among representatives of other family forms.

**Summary of work. In section 1 "Single-parenthood in the context of the transformation of the institution of the family in modern society"**, including three subsections, author analyzed and compared various theories, revealing the factors of changes in the family and family relations in modern society, the structure and functions of the family are studied in the context of the changes taking place.

In subsection 1.1 "Analysis of family development trends and family relations in sociological research", considered theoretical models of family research in the context of economic, political, and cultural processes of modern society. The family, being the most important social institution that ensures the reproduction of public life and the translation of cultural patterns, norms and values, is, at the same time, a rather dynamic component of society. In Kazakhstan, as in many countries, there is an increase in the number of single parents, which actualizes the research interest in this type of family. In order to develop a theoretical and methodological model for analyzing problems of single parenthood, we study the actualization of individual problems of family sociology in various historical periods and the formation of the concept of "single-parent" families.

Subsection 1.2 "Single-parenthood as a social practice of modern society" reveals certain aspects of the functioning of the family and analyzes the changes in the basic structural and functional elements of family relations in the context of single parenthood. The author notes that formulating a basic model for analyzing the socio-economic status of single-parent families, it is necessary to focus on two main functions of the family - economic and educational. The author reveals the need to analyze the concepts of "well-being" and "parental competence" as characterizing the key problem areas of single-parenthood.

Subsection 1.3 "Socio-economic status of single-parent families: design, influence, research methodology" discusses the theoretical and methodological problems of determining the socio-economic status of families. The author concludes that the study of various aspects of the life of single-parent families shows the effectiveness of using the concept of socio-economic status of the family as an integral indicator, reflecting both the economic strategies and priorities of single parents, and the characteristics of the implementation of family relationships and parenthood. Thus, we support the position of denying the possibility of deriving direct correlations, for example, between poverty, the social vulnerability of single parents and failures, problems in raising children. The author believes that in research practice it is necessary to consider not only the direct impact of economic and social conditions on the well-being of children, but also their indirect impact

through the practice of raising children, social well-being, etc. In the framework of this study author analyzed the factor of religious consciousness in the context of the social status of families. Finally, the most important element of the study was a comparative analysis of the social well-being of single parents.

**Section 2, “Scales and Trends in the Distribution of Single-parent Families in Kazakhstan”** discusses the main results of an empirical study, provides quantitative data, correlations, and basic theoretical generalizations.

Subsection 2.1 “Features of the attitude to marriages and divorces of Kazakhstanis with different marital status” presents, from the standpoint of the comparative methodology, individual results of the indicated study regarding the attitude to marriages and divorces of three conditionally divided social groups. For this created variable in which these groups are designated: single-parent families - one-parent and minor children, full families - two parents and minor children. In addition, the third group is respondents who are not married or officially married and who do not have minor children.

In subsection 2.2 “Causes of single-parent families in a large city of Kazakhstan (on the example of Almaty)”, summarized statistical data and the results of quantitative and qualitative studies of single-parent families. In this subsection presented the main factors of emergence of urban single parent families, it is examined in detail, given fragments of the interview and analytical generalizations. The author revealed the influence of various social, economic and cultural factors on the growth in the number of single-parent families. It is noted that in addition to the typical reasons for the appearance of single-parent families, among which divorce predominates, the unwillingness of partners to start a family, as well as the planned pregnancy with the aim of having children out of wedlock, Kazakhstan is characterized by the phenomenon of unofficial marriage concluded only as a result of a religious ceremony.

**Section 3 “Socio-economic status of families: research results”** contains 3 subsections in which an empirical sociological analysis of the socio-economic status of Kazakhstan single-parent families is presented.

In subsection 3.1 “Comparative analysis of the socio-economic status of single-parent families and families with two parents” presented the empirical results of a sociological survey, where participated 1012 parents from various social groups.

Subsection 3.2 “Social well-being of parents” reveals two indicators of social well-being of parents: level of satisfaction with life and level of satisfaction with the material situation of the household. The author's conclusions based on a generalization of the influence of factors of the social environment on the social well-being of single parents. The author also presents the results of regression and factor analysis.

In subsection 3.3, “The level of religiosity in the context of the social status of the family in a large city” revealed the level of religiosity of members of single-parent families in comparison with families with two parents.

In conclusion, summarized the main results of the study, formulated proposals and recommendations.

### **Theoretical and practical significance of the research:**

The theoretical significance of the study is to expand the basis for the analysis of problems of single-parent families. The results obtained in the course of the study allow us to expand scientific ideas about the lifestyle of single-parent families in Kazakhstan.

The practical significance of the study is to develop proposals based on the results of a sociological study of this topic. Putting proposals into practice will contribute to the development of an effective state demographic and family policy, and its implementation at the state and regional levels. Implementation of measures to support single-parent families will strengthen and develop the country's human potential as a strategically important resource.