

# The silent victims of incarceration essay examples

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



## **Introduction**

Incarceration is never an easy situation for a family, especially on children. Regardless of what the status of the actual relationship between the parents and the children is, children also suffer most when parents are incarcerated. They carry so many emotional, behavioral, and psychological burdens that often negatively influence their own lives as they grow up. They may be exposed to certain risk factors prior to the parent's incarceration, which worsens even more due to the situation.

## **What Happens to Children of Incarcerated Parents?**

The number of children in the United States with at least one parent incarcerated is growing steadily (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Usually, these children enter the child welfare system although not all of them end up under the care of the state. Depending on the age of the child and the availability of substitute caregivers, some children end up staying with the incarcerated parent in prison. However, those who have living relatives whom the child can stay with, live with relatives instead of foster care. Emotionally, children suffer from separation anxiety especially if they witness the arrest of the parent they live with. According to studies, children who witness these events suffer from traumatic "nightmares and flashbacks of the arrest" (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001, p. 4). In addition, they may also suffer from depression, fear, and anxiousness. Partly, this is brought about by the fact that some relatives would rather not talk about the situation thinking that these children will not understand the situation. Instead, relatives and friends shield the children from the truth and a web of lies and

deception ensues.

On the behavioral aspect, children become more aggressive and display violent and destructive conduct whether at home or in school. Sometimes, these violent actions lead to criminal involvement that further aggravates their behavioral problems. They also encounter transient school issues when they change schools and generally perform poorly academically because of lack of concentration.

Psychologically, children become withdrawn due to fear of being ostracized by their peers. Isolation becomes their safe haven from other people's stares and by disconnecting from people and events, they build a wall around them as they draw back deeply into themselves. Sometimes, this is also because of the unwillingness of others to talk about the incarceration that further leads to more psychological and emotional burden to children.

On a study conducted among boys and girls, results showed that although both genders are affected by their parents' incarceration, their methods of adapting to the situation vary. Boys typically adapt through manifestations of "externalizing" behavior issues, while girls tend to turn more into themselves (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001, p. 6). This means boys tend to express their feelings through violent actions, criminal behaviors, and other physical manifestations such as smoking and drinking. Girls tend to become more emotional in their actions that could even lead to fostering relationships with the opposite sex.

What Can Be Done

## References

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