DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CAUSES AND EFFECTS. WOMEN´S PERMANENT STRUGGLE FOR THE WELFARE STATUTE

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Abstract: In this article, we reviewed the main theoretical dimensions of the phenomenon of domestic violence, after which we continued a series of previous investigations on a theoretical sample of victims of domestic violence, being interested in three directions of analysis: highlighting the personal perception of violent situations, evaluating the weight of the level of education in choosing the protective environment and identifying the specific problems generated by the recent pandemic situation. The conclusions can be useful to initiate more extensive research on extended samples, even in a situation where part of the phenomenon of domestic violence remains unknown.

Keywords: domestic violence, victim, symbolic interactionism, functionalism, conflict theory, aggressor, education.

Résumé : Dans cet article, nous avons passé en revue les principales dimensions théoriques du phénomène de la violence domestique, après quoi nous avons poursuivi une série d'enquêtes antérieures sur un échantillon théorique de victimes de violence domestique, en nous intéressant à trois directions d'analyse : mettre en évidence la perception personnelle des situations de violence, évaluation de poids du niveau d'éducation dans le choix de l'environnement protecteur et identifier les problèmes spécifiques générés par la situation pandémique récente. Les conclusions peuvent être utiles pour initier des recherches plus approfondies sur des échantillons étendus, même dans la situation où une partie du phénomène de la violence domestique reste méconnue.

Mots clés : violence domestique, victime, interactionnisme symbolique, fonctionnalisme, théorie des conflits, agresseur, éducation.

Rezumat : În acest articol am trecut în revistă principalele dimensiuni teoretice ale fenomenului violenţei în familie, după care am continuat o serie de investigaţii anterioare pe un eşantion teoretic de victime ale violenţei în familie, fiind interesaţi de trei direcţii de analiză: evidenţierea percepţiei personale asupra situaţiilor violente, evaluarea ponderii nivelului de educaţie în alegerea mediului protector şi identificarea problemelor specifice

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generate de recenta situație de pandemie. Concluziile pot fi utile pentru a iniția cercetări mai ample pe eșantioane extinse, chiar și în situația în care o parte a fenomenului violenței domestice rămâne necunoscută.

Cuvinte cheie: violență domestică, victimă, interacționism simbolic, funcționalism, teoria conflictului, agresor, educație.

1. Introduction

The current work presents the results of quantitative and qualitative research that highlights the negative effects of domestic violence both for the health of the individual and for family life. The number of cases from classical literature in the form of journal documents, specialized literature and practice try to sensitize the reader that these phenomena, and customs must be stigmatized and limited as „harmful habits". It is also necessary for society to be involved in not remaining passive to the harmful effects of this practice.

From the very beginning of mankind, the forms of social organization, the different forms of production or the living spaces have manifested and still manifest violent interpersonal behaviours. The regulations, the social and legal norms, had and have in mind the fight against and prevention of violence. It can be mentioned that „Violence destroys lives and destinies, violence can be found in every country, at any level of society, regardless of the level of education or the level of economic development. Violence is often a taboo subject, and those involved avoid openly discussing, tolerating and silently enduring these violent actions. Every time, violence makes a good home with fear and leaves emotional scars for the whole life" (Irimescu & Rădoi, 2017, p. 10).

2. Defining the concept. Theories on violence in general and domestic violence as a common form

Starting from the concept of violence, it can be stated that „Violence describes behaviours that are not acceptable in society, which are disapproved and sanctioned by rules that establish not only the general rules of conduct for the individual in society but the threshold beyond which society must intervene to maintain order and to defend values such as the right of children to a free and harmonious development, peace, tranquillity, family and respect for others" (Gătej, 2021, pp. 5–6).

If it is not aware, „the phenomenon of violence acts as a perpetual motive in the life of an individual and a family through transgenerational transmission and by creating an atmosphere that tolerates or even stimulates violence" (Munteanu & Munteanu, 2011, pp.14).

In a generic sense, violence is the use of force and coercion by an individual, group, or community to impose its will on others. The individual can be violent towards himself, towards those close to them, towards another individual, by larger or smaller groups. Violence against neighbours, towards other families, tribes, and clans usually turns into vendettas that are transmitted to

intergeneration, a fact highlighted by Shakespeare in the famous play „Romeo and Juliet", where violence is defeated by love, considered the antidote to hatred.

As a historical course, violence has been known since the beginning of mankind, the Bible (1991, p. 14) mentions in this sense the case of Cain and Abel when „And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother, and slew him."(Genesis 4:8). Abel's death occurred as a result of his brother's violent manifestation.

Starting from the hypothesis that violence is a universal characteristic of human society, infiltrated in all areas of life, sociologists and other specialists in other fields are interested in their research to find its causes. The problem that frequently arises and the question that comes up is why some individuals are more violent than others in similar situations. To find the causes of violence and answer these questions, a series of theories were formulated: non-sociological and sociological. Non-sociological theories have: theories focused on biological factors and theories focused on psychological factors. Social theories have been formulated from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, functionalism and conflict theory.

From a *biological* perspective, Lombroso (1911, pp. 23–24), an Italian physician, concluded, after examining prisoners of war, that violent people are atavists, which implies a return to a lower evolutionary stage. Individuals look different: narrow foreheads, larger ears and retracted chin. His student Ferri (1913) added other causes such as madness, learning behaviours, mentioning circumstances and passions. Anthropologist Hooton (1939) stated that body shape is the response to violence: „Short and heavy men tend to commit sexual crimes" while „tall and thin men tend to be murderers" he concludes. A widespread biological theory was the XYY chromosome, which points out that men normally have an X and a Y chromosome, with some men still having an extra Y chromosome that is believed to be the cause of the violence.

Other doctors mention brain damage as a result of a tumour that can promote violence. Bylinsky (1973) points out that because 10 out of 20 million Americans suffer from various brain injuries, there is a possibility that over 200,000 of them are potential presidential assassins.

Theorists also support the explanations of violence based on the fact that in the struggle for existence, the individuals who survived were violent, so the genes that were passed on to offspring also contained this characteristic. The anthropologist Balandier (1986) concluded that by human nature we are violent but that the lack of its manifestation is determined by the ability to retain this natural tendency.

Psychological theories claim many of them that violence is innate. Dollard et al. (1939) proposed the frustration-aggression theory of violence. People get frustrated when they can't reach their goals.

Lorentz (1966) stated that in general individuals are poorly equipped for very aggressive lethal behaviour and therefore have not developed an inhibitory mechanism - as in the case of wolves and baboons (in the animal world) - that prevents killing by automatically stopping violence when an enemy becomes

submissive. In humans, in the absence of a locking mechanism, when anger or the desire for domination arises, they have at their disposal the weapons that can be used to destroy each other.

Another psychologist, Skinner (1948), points to learning as the cause of violence. Theorists point out that if people are rewarded when they are violent, the negative behaviour is „reinforced" and they tend to become violent again.

Bandura and Walters (1963), argued that violence is learned by modelling, and copying another person's behaviour, so children are prone to imitate them.

Most sociologists are not impressed by these theories of violence; they look for their causes in the social space. Sociologists mention that not all men, for example, with XYY chromosomes commit acts of violence, and if biological factors are involved, they are largely influenced by social factors.

Sociologists explain violence starting from the social context that is more extensive, they do not look for causes of violence within the individual, whether they are genetic predisposing factors or inhibiting or favouring psychological mechanisms. Of particular interest to sociologists is the determination of the causes for which some societies are more violent than others, and how some societies channel their violence in specific forms of manifestation in social roles: warriors, boxers or footballers.

From this perspective, three such theories have been developed:
– symbolic interactionism;
– functionalism;
– conflict theory.

Symbolic interactionists point out that groups have different ways of managing problems. In this sense, we can mention two theories developed by interactionists, *the theory of differentiated association* (Sutherland, 1947) and the *theory of violent subcultures* (Wolfgang, 1958).

The first *theory of differentiated association* mentions that violent, even criminal behaviour is learned from interactions with other individuals who are also violent. Associations with individuals who break the law stimulate violence; hence the use of the term *differentiated association* (Henslin, 1996).

The second theory of violent subcultures emphasizes that in subcultures that approve of violent behaviours, there is a chance that violence will be learned faster.

Wolfgang (1958) found that the homicide rate is high among young African-American lower-class men on which the study was conducted. The sociologist concluded that these young people grew up in a subculture of violence that teaches them to be violent (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967).

Functionalists point out the social conditions that lead to violence such as the *anomie* mentioned by Durkheim (1897, 1904) who studied suicide rates in Paris and was amazed by the regularity of the figures indicating such violence. The sociologist mentioned that the past can be used to predict the rates of violence (suicides) in the coming years. This violence was called by Durkheim, *normal*

violence and the impulses and desires of individuals in society, the sociologist considered, that they are regulated by the characteristics of a society.

Another functionalist Merton (1968) developed the *theory of tension* that argues that violence tends to be increasing among individuals in groups whose access to important, culturally approved goals. The balance between violence and control and even the attraction to violence that people experience does not always lead to violence, the result is influenced by the control inside or outside (the social environment) of the individual.

Conflict theorists, including Reckless (1973), point out that two systems work to control the attraction and rejection of violence. The first system refers to the inner capacity called *inner insulation* to withstand the pressures of being violent. The second system, *external isolation* refers to close groups such as family, friends and the state that presses the individual to give up violence. The likelihood of a person being violent depends on the power of these two systems to exercise control over the individual's tendencies. If control is weak, violence occurs.

Conflict theorists point out that the exploitation of social classes underlies individual violence. The working class is found to have higher rates of violence against oppressors. It is noteworthy that violence is less among the oppressors because they hold the levers of power and use them to protect themselves and occupy privileged positions. Those in control use this power to suppress riots and strikes as well as abroad to control the army and use it to protect markets and resources (Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Haiti, etc.).

3. Domestic violence and its forms of manifestation

Domestic violence, as mentioned by the *Legal Resource Center* and Institute for Research and Crime Prevention (2003) includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence), verbal violence and economic violence (by encouraging the economic dependence of the victim).

According to Romanian law 217/2003, domestic violence can be defined as „physical or verbal action committed intentionally by a family member against another member of the same family that causes physical, mental, sexual suffering or material harm. Domestic violence also prevents a woman from exercising her fundamental rights and freedoms. For the law, a family member means a spouse, close relative and persons who have established relationships similar to those between the spouses or between the parents and the child, proven based on the social survey" (According to Council of Europe documents No. R (85) on domestic violence).

The term „domestic violence" includes „domestic violence (violence that occurs between partners, whether they are spouses or cohabitants, including cases of violence against the ex-spouse or conflict situations within consensual relationships) and violence against children, the elderly and other family members". Depending on the characteristics of violence against women in the case of domestic violence that is included in the concept of domestic violence, the U.S.A.I.D. (1999) classified these manifestations into six categories: physical

violence, sexual violence, psycho-emotional violence, economic violence, relational violence and moral violence.

Physical violence is a high indicator in all research, being visible in all situations and representing violent reactions causing mental trauma and physical injury, directed against a family member. Violence against women is deeply rooted in the popular mentality in some areas there are even certain dogmas, customs and cultural norms that allow women to be beaten.

To these customs are added forms of female masochism to endure physical violence and even to silence it.

Other causes of violence can add the education of the man (which can be limited), the exercising authority only through violence or taking over the conflict model from the family of origin to the newly created family, favouring the occurrence of divorce.

An extremely severe case of physical violence is the vitriol or acid attack of a person mentioned in the literature, causing great physical and mental suffering; few people manage to survive these inhuman attacks. A few drops, a bottle, or whole litres thrown at a woman, turn the victim into an anonymous, faceless person. The survival of these people is the chance at the second life that takes place in a new, deformed, mutilated body. This form of violence makes victims in Uganda, Ethiopia, Zambia, Yemen, South Africa, Colombia, Bangladesh, India, Cambodia, Nepal, Malaysia, Great Britain, Nepal, Bulgaria and so on.

An example in this sense, in the literature, is the case of Naziran, a 20-year-old victim who, after an acid attack and atrocious suffering, completely changes his life. This woman's story is a flagship of the struggle for freedom, tolerance and modesty.

> „I wake up suddenly, and a liquid is flowing on my face, it burns me, I rub my face, but my skin crumbles under my fingers, and the pieces of meat come off. I scream in pain; I scream but I see nothing. I don't understand what's happening to me. I cry for help; I scream that I am burning alive! My face is washed with water....”

The problems that arise in the case of these victims are with accommodation with their deformed faces.

> „In the days after the transplant, the nurse removes my bandages. I ask her if I have regained my features. She doesn't say anything. I touched my head. I have a shock. I don't have a face anymore. My traits melted. I feel the seams, the sewn pieces of skin, the knots and the swellings. My nose almost disappeared, only the bone line remained. One of the orbits is open, the other eye glued under the eyelid.” (Mercier, Naziran, 2020)

Depending on the medical and social effects, Mitrofan (1996) considers two forms of aggression: *chronic* and *explosive (familial violence).*

Chronic violence has its roots in norms, traditions, and level of education, while explosive violence comes from the impossibility of controlling one's violent behaviour

Gelles (1987) mentioned a particular form of violence directed against the pregnant woman, favoured by several factors: „sexual frustration; family transition and stress; biochemical changes in the wife's body; prenatal abuse of the child; inability to defend the wife".

Sexual frustration is favoured by incorrect information on sex life during pregnancy. Here comes what has been called the 'myth of Chronos' generated by the man's fear of being emotionally replaced by the newborn.

Family transition, stress and fatigue refer to the fact that a pregnancy implies a new role, a new status with norms and tasks that can appear as a constraint, a stress for the family, favouring the emergence of conflicts.

Biochemical transformations in the woman's body can accentuate states of nervousness, irritability that sometimes led to conflicts. Violence against pregnant women is derived from prenatal child abuse.

The inability to defend the wife as a result of altered physical conditions may encourage violence.

Affective violence cannot be quantified, research in this regard highlights six behaviours of this abuse: degradation, fear, economic and social deprivation, overloading with responsibilities and distortion of reality by inoculating doubt in one's perceptions (Kirkwood, 1992).

Economic violence is another form of constraint on women, consisting in controlling the resources intended for the household, not involving the partner in maintaining the family, preventing the wife from obtaining a job and selling common or personal things by the partner.

An example of economic violence is also the story of Betty Mahmoody who had a painful life experience (2018). Betty is a woman born in the United States, a mother of two children from a previous marriage, and remarries an Iranian doctor who worked in America. After seven years of marriage and the birth of a child, she decides with difficulty to pay a visit to her husband's parents in Iran. Betty opposes this visit because of the place occupied by women in Iranian society as well as the existing relations between the United States and Iran at that time.

The woman feared that once „my husband took me and Mahtob (their daughter) to Iran, he would try to keep us there forever. He had lived in the United States for two decades. All his affairs, his medical practice – the sum of the present and the future – were in America, why would he think of resuming his past life?"

However, the first form of economic violence was the confiscation of the American passport by the husband under the pretext of possible searches because he is an American citizen. „They will search your purse because you are American. Leave them to me, for they are less likely to search me."

Not knowing the Farsi language, the lack of friends and passports, the cultural differences between the two worlds, the different food, the impossibility of making phone contact with her relatives in America, the relational violence

through isolation, the ignorance of her husband's relatives, are all problems that make Betty she wants and even succeeds in very difficult conditions, after countless physical and mental violence endured, to return as soon as possible together with her daughter, to America.

Relational violence consists of isolation from friends, family of origin, sequestration and invasion of intimate space.

Moral violence can take the form of severe constraint to adhere to a different religious system or the imposition of another religious system.

An example of the significance of religious violence and the imposition of adherence to other spiritual systems and practices is the story of Asia Bibi, who became the symbol of those who fight against violence committed in the name of religion. The story takes place in Pakistan in the year 2009 when four women who toil to collect the harvest in a heat of 40ºC bring water for others. Asia Bibi is a Christian who „quenched her first thirst" and was accused of „contaminating the water of the well that was reserved for Muslims". A conflict arises for this reason and the woman is accused of blasphemy; a fact equivalent to a death sentence. Almost lynched by a mob of ultra-radical Muslims, she is arrested and after a year and a half receives the verdict of death sentence and execution by hanging. Attempts are made by various Pakistani officials to help her, but they are assassinated by religious fanatics. Anne-Isabelle Tollet, a French journalist manages to get the heroine released after 8 years in prison, after which she receives refugee status in Canada, her life being in danger in Pakistan (Bibi, Tollet, 2019).

4. Victims of domestic violence in action

In Romania, the victims of domestic violence must go through a series of steps to receive help from competent institutions in society. If a victim faces a situation of domestic violence, they can contact: *the 112-emergency service*, informing the operator that they are being assaulted by a family member; at *the police station* to which it belongs, by filing a criminal complaint against the aggressor, and there is also a *Call Center* service with a continuous schedule, with a free telephone line intended for these victims of domestic violence.

Police agencies register the victim's complaint and refer it to the *Forensic Medicine Service* or a hospital emergency unit. Provisional protection orders are also issued at the *Police Agencies* (https://projurista.ro/ preventing-and-combating-violence-in-the-family/).

Within the prosecutor's office, the prosecutor confirms the need to maintain the protection measures ordered by the police body through the provisional protection order, applying an administrative resolution. At the same time, it can order, if necessary, the termination of protective measures with the mention of the moment. The prosecutor may communicate confirmation of the need to maintain protection measures to the protection unit that submitted the provisional order and issues the protection order.

The judge is meant to issue the order and states that the duration of the measures should not exceed 6 months. The application for the issuance of the order

can be submitted by the victim personally or by the legal representative and can be introduced on behalf of the victim, by the prosecutor, the representative of the local authority with powers to protect victims of domestic violence or by the representative of the social services in this field, accredited according to the law and accepted by the victim (https://projurista.ro/prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-in-familie/).

Through this protection order, a series of measures imposed by the court are issued with a provisional character: „obligations or indications of the temporary evacuation of the aggressor from the family home regardless of whether he is the owner of the property right; reintegration of the victim, children into the family home, limiting the aggressor's right to only one part of the home, obliging the aggressor to keep a minimum distance from the victim, children, residence, workplace, educational institution. Prohibition for the aggressor to move to certain localities or determined areas frequented by the protected person, prohibition of any contact, including by telephone, by mail or any other form with the victim, obliging the aggressor to hand over the weapons in possession to the police and entrusting minor children or establishing their residence" (https://projurista.ro/ prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-in -family/).

Another institution authorized to help these victims is the *Emergency Reception Unit* or the *Forensic Medicine Service*, to which the victim can go if he has suffered any physical or mental trauma, and the emergency medical consultation is free. This institution must issue a medical letter for the victim that will help her obtain the medical-legal certificate (https://projurista.ro/prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-in-familie/).

If the protection order is violated, the victim can make a new request for issuing a new protection order, the procedure being similar to the previous one.

The victim can turn to the following social assistance institutions for advice, psychological support and information: the general social assistance and child protection departments in each county residence, the social assistance departments attached to the town halls, the public social assistance system and non-governmental organizations. Victims can also turn to counselling services to be accommodated with their children in a shelter (Emergency Reception Centers, Recovery Centers) and can also call a law office for guidance, protection order and divorce action. In these situations, legal assistance is free and people who cannot financially cope with the costs of a divorce can request the granting of public judicial aid according to the provisions of OUG no. 51/2008 (https://dgaspc4.ro/ servicii/prevenirea-violen-ei--n-familie).

5. Field research. Methods and results

To highlight the difficult problems generated by domestic violence, research was carried out based on a qualitative analysis conducted on 200 victims selected from a *Women's Shelter* from Iaşi (we preferred to use this generic name to keep data and location confidential) and the *Spiridon Hospital* form the city of Iasi, over two years and a half (from March 2018 to September 2020). In certain cases,

the quantification of the cases also allowed specific quantitative analyses. Our research has three main axes:

– recording the traumatic experiences of women exposed to domestic violence and how they came to turn to specialized organizations even though the risks remain high;

– evaluation of the general level of education and how specialized help is sought depending on it;

- identifying the additional difficulties generated by the Covid 19 pandemic.

The type of interview used was structured and focused on personal experiences, educational level and the consequences of the pandemic (surprise in the beginning period). The sample was homogeneous with victims from rural and urban areas.

The physical consequences of domestic violence are difficult to reproduce or to be detailed. The interviews (and the participant's sociological observations) revealed that physical violence can have serious consequences such as fractures of bones, disfigurements or can take the form of real torture. Some declarations are revealing:

–„...he beat me for no reason, out of the blue, when he was drunk...he broke my eardrum the last time he beat me. My eye and face are livid even now. Because of fear, I don't even respond to challenges anymore. Our little girl is sick, she has heart disease and she is not allowed to be under stress, so I decided to get a divorce...” (female, born in 1996, worker);

–„... when he comes drunk he beats me very often.... I was hit with a club, with the tail of an axe and burned with a cigarette... once he poured alcohol on me and tried to set me on fire....” (female, born in 1980, housewife).

From these examples, it appears that the aggression is directed only at the wife and can take different forms with serious bodily harm that can go up to attempted murder.

From the point of view of the level of education of the victims (the second axes of the research) we used three levels of completed studies: superior (university diploma), secondary level (maximum high school diploma) and elementary level (maximum eight years of school or unfinished education). We made a difference between victims who chose the hospital as a strategy for protection and the victims that choose specialized institutions of protection. We observed that 27.7% of the victims from hospitals has higher education while only 5.6% of the victims with higher education were sheltered in special institutions. From the field research, we noticed that rather the victims with higher education consider that admission to the hospital can bring them additional documents that certify their health status to open possible legal actions. For secondary (secondary) studies, we observed the same concentration: we found 68.1% of the victims in the hospital, while only 27.1% identified them in protective institutions. On the other hand, 66.6% of the victims constituted the largest percentage of the persons questioned by the protection institutions. In other words, the lower the level of education, the more there is the possibility that conflictual social problems will persist and the more likely it is that

these victims will look for a place to withdraw from the family (a situation that cannot be ensured by the hospital regime). We also tested these assessments through the following statistical hypothesis:

H1. There are statistically significant differences in the choice of victim protection strategy depending on the level of education.

To test the hypothesis, we applied an association analysis (Chi-Square). The crosstabulation operation offered next results:

studies * Strategies Crosstabulation

			Strategies		Total
			Hospital	Specialized institution	
studies	Superior level	Count	30	5	35
		Expected Count	19.3	15.8	35.0
		% within studies	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
	Secundary level	Count	75	25	100
		Expected Count	55.0	45.0	100.0
		% within studies	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	Elementary level	Count	5	60	65
		Expected Count	35.8	29.3	65.0
		% within studies	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	110	90	200
		Expected Count	110.0	90.0	200.0
		% within studies	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%

We concluded that there was a significant association between the variables (Chi Square=88.2, df=2, p=.000). The strength of the effect was also high (Phi=.664, p=.000). In other words, there was a strong influence between the level of education and the type of protection strategies chosen: if the education is advanced, there are more chances that the victims will be found in hospitals, and if the level of education decreases, the strategies focus on identifying specialized institutions (because they can also offer temporary shelter). The hypothesis is confirmed.

Our results confirm the research carried out by Gelles (1987) and Pegelow (1981). We draw attention that the research was limited to cases that are officially registered, with a large number of cases remaining unknown. (see for details Mândrilă, 2009).

Another important conclusion resulting from the interviews was that the level of education influences women's decision to maintain the abusive relationship, the level of schooling being associated with a professional status that gives them material independence.

Regarding the beginning of the pandemic in Romania, we found a series of additional difficulties declared by the interviewed victims:

− an alarming increase in the intensity of violence with the ban on leaving homes (we remind you that starting from March 16, 2020, a state of emergency was established in Romania, which was then extended by several official acts);

− the obligation for the victim and the aggressor not to leave the homemade that in some situations the victim left the home at any risk to save his life;

– the victims interviewed confirm that they used the emergency telephone lines more often (something also confirmed by official statistics);

– the number of requests for temporary protection has increased (we have found numerous statements confirming the violation of Law 217/2003 in which consistent punishments are stipulated for aggressors);

– in many situations, the physical violence was accompanied by rape (due to the forced physical proximity).

Most of the research conclusions confirmed a series of data collected at the national level (for example the report produced by the FILIA Center entitled „Women during and after the coronavirus: Information, Research and Advocacy for Gender Equality" and published in 2021). In fact, during the Covid pandemic, a report published by the European Commission in March 2021 mentioned the fact that the rate of domestic violence increased in many states of the European Union. Thus, in the spring of 2020, 32% more victims were registered in France, with almost 20% more than the previous reports in Lithuania and Romania a report published by the *Filia Center* for the year 2021 indicates that 33 women were killed by their partners, former partners or family members between January and August 2021 and in the last 8 years approximately 426 were killed - it was mentioned that there are 16 times more victims in peacetime than the total number of Romanian soldiers killed in the war in Afghanistan.

During the same period, 1212 calls from victims of domestic violence were taken by operators and 7120 temporary protection orders and 6901 protective orders were issued of which 2206 were violated by the abusers.

The executive director of the *Filia Center*, an NGO that fights against gender equality, stated: „Very often, the aggressors took advantage of the fact that if they had left the house at night or during the day without the completed declaration, they would have received a fine. Or in the case of that form, until 2021, no point could have been ticked in the situation where they had a safety problem," said A. Rusu for the site *Free Europe* (https://romania.europalibera. org/a/drama-femei-abuz-domestic/ 31521522.html).

Another impediment to accessing services and programs for judgment or court applications during the Covid pandemic, although they have been moved online, has been that women from disadvantaged backgrounds lack access to electronic means.

For the period of the pandemic, the lockdowns had to allocate a special room for isolation according to the law and offer tests, everything is supported by NGOs and the social workers had to work in shifts of two weeks, one at the centre and the other at home.

In conclusion, it can be mentioned that combating and preventing domestic violence faces problems regarding the lack of information about these women, the quality of services that cannot adapt quickly enough to a new situation, such as that determined by Covid, and an insufficient number of shelters.

6. Conclusions

In practical research we followed only three research axes: the experiences of the victims of domestic violence, the relevance of the level of education in choosing the protective environment and the possible additional costs caused by the recent pandemic situation. We formulated hypothesis H1 (There are statistically significant differences in the choice of victim protection strategy depending on the level of education) which was confirmed.

Our article is a plea for the continuation of research in the field, primarily because the magnitude of the phenomenon is far from diminishing in Romania. By the way, the statistics for Romania about domestic violence remain worrying, the Prosecutor's Office attached to the *Bucharest High Court of Cassation and Justice* published the following data for 2020 (the year of our research): the total number of victims of family violence was: 1331 (defendants sent to court for family violence); 1512 (victims of domestic violence); 619 (among the victims of domestic violence were minors); 158 (parents); 13 (grandparents); 236 (husbands); 552 (sons, daughters); 465 (sons, daughters that are minors); 117 (brothers, sisters); 14 (brothers, sisters that are minors); 118 (other relatives); 43 (among the relatives are minors); 23 (father-in-law, mother-in-law); 13 (sons-in-law, daughters-in-law); 82 (spouses) [see on mpublic.ro/sites/default/files/PDF/Vf_2020.pdf].

In this context, the sociological and social assistance analyses must be continued and corroborated with the required legal measures. Perhaps the new context of research and action at the European level already has new dimensions: from the improvement of the methods and techniques of action of all those involved in protecting victims (with the establishment of complex databases regarding both victims and aggressors) up to the contribution brought by the new digital technologies (with remarkable results in the GPS identification of the victim's location or by equipping the victim with additional electronic devices to alert the Police). In this context, the phenomenon can be easier to control if it cannot be eradicated

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