SOCIOLOGIE
ŞI ASISTENŢĂ SOCIALĂ

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

Tom XVII / Nr. 1   **JULY, 2024**

Aims: *Analele Ştiinţifice ale Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iaşi. (Seria nouă) Sociologie şi Asistenţă Socială* aims to promote the remarkable results of scientific and empiric researches of professorates, researchers, students, and practitioners in the field of humanist sciences in order to stimulate the optimal functioning of academic and social fields. Analyses and theoretical-methodological sociological explanations as well as the exemplification of their values at the political and social work strategies and interventions level are welcome.

SUMMARY

BOOK REVIEW

EDITORIAL

Violența împotriva femeii este o realitate dureroasă, cu consecințe pentru victime și pentru societate în ansamblu. Statisticile oferă o imagine îngrijorătoare, iar cifrele vorbesc de la sine. Astfel, una din trei femei din România a suferit cel puțin o formă de violență fizică sau sexuală din partea partenerului de viață, aproape jumătate dintre femei (47%) au fost victime ale violenței psihologice în relația de cuplu și doar una din zece femei victime ale violenței domestice, apelează la ajutorul autorităților. (Băluță, Tufiș, 2022) Dar, dincolo de cifre, se ascund povești de viață cutremurătoare, femei umilite, controlate și amenințate de „cei dragi", femei care își pierd încrederea în sine, autonomia, femei care nu dezvăluie abuzul din teamă, rușine sau lipsa sprijinului.

Combaterea violenței împotriva femeilor este o responsabilitate care necesită o abordare integrată. Eforturile trebuie concentrate pe prevenție: (1) prin educație, promovând relațiile bazate pe respect și egalitate; (2) prin sprijin pentru actorii implicați în actul agresiv: servicii medicale, psihologice, juridice adecvate, adăposturi sigure, programe de reintegrare socială și aplicare mai eficientă a legii prin norme metodologice și (3) nu în ultimul rând prin prevenirea recidivei.

Dezbatem problematica violenței asupra femeii de cinci ediții în cadrul Conferinței „Violența asupra femeii. Ipostaze, Explicații, Intervenții" și aducem în atenția publicului cititor, lucrările științifice susținute, fie prin volume de conferință, fie prin numere tematice în cadrul acestei reviste. Numărul actual, dedicat aceluiași eveniment, reunește lucrări ale teoreticienilor, practicienilor, dar și studii ale tinerilor doctoranzi și masteranzi preocupați de această tristă realitate, lucrări grupate în trei secțiuni: ipostaze ale violenței asupra femeii, explicații cu privire la înțelegerea acestui fenomen și modalității de intervenție.

Numărul se deschide cu articolul scris de Diana-Mihaela Cheptene-Micu. Autoarea, prin cazuistica analizată, arată că se produc recidive ale violenței asupra aceleiași femei, din partea aceluiași agresor, infracțiunea de „încălcare a ordinului de protecție" fiind realizată în mod repetat, îmbrăcând astfel forma unei recidive speciale. Acest aspect i-a oferit autoarei oportunitatea de a analiza eficiența instrumentelor juridice aplicate în limitarea si diminuarea fenomenului violenței asupra femeii.

Mădălina Frunză, pe baza studiului realizat în cadrul unui adăpost pentru victimele violenței domestice, a urmărit identificarea factorilor declanșatori ai violenței domestice, determinarea principalelor tipuri de violență la care sunt supuse victimele și identificarea rolului și importanței serviciilor sociale în viața victimelor.

Oana-Lăcrămioara Bădărău și Sergiu Lucian Raiu, prin studiul pe care îl propun identifică factorii care inhibă sau provoacă dezvăluirea abuzului sexual. Caracterul secret care domnește în legătura abuzivă precum și vulnerabilitatea, obligă victima la tăcere și permite repetarea abuzului. Teama victimelor de a fi

blamate sau învinuite, sentimentele de frică și rușine contribuie la întârzierea divulgării secretului, spun autorii după analiza interviurilor realizate.

Nadji Rahmania și Cristina Teodorescu, prin studiul lor își propun să identifice și să analizeze critic factorii de risc relevanți în situațiile de violență în familie, să identifice și să analizeze modelele cele mai utilizate în lupta împotriva acestui tip de violență. Prin integrarea factorilor de risc în protocoalele de screening, menționează autorii, se poate identifica un număr mai mare de femei abuzate sau cu risc mare de abuz.

Ancuța Elena Păduraru și Camelia Soponaru, aduc în atenție violența împotriva femeilor ca o problemă cu implicații ascunse. Lucrare este o analiză narativă care își propune să evidențieze legătura dintre violența împotriva femeilor și bolile somatice cronice. Deși nu este la fel de larg recunoscută și ușor de vizualizat de ceilalți, boala cronică poate fi, menționează autoarele, o consecință a violenței, cu impact pe termen lung asupra vieții victimei, acționând ca o amintire a ceea ce s-a întâmplat chiar și mult timp după ce abuzul a încetat.

Lucia Stan, aduce în prim plan, în lucrarea inclusă în acest număr, faptul că violența își poate avea rădăcina în relațiile dintre părinte – copil, copilul învățând de la acesta un rol pe care ulterior îl replică ca adult, în relațiile sale. Subiectul abordat în articol vizează neglijarea emoțională, iar autoarea explorează universul și trăirile intense ale copilului de vârstă mică, precum și modalitățile acestuia de adaptare în fața indisponibilității parentale urmărind ulterior modul în care aceste mecanisme se mențin în viața adultă și cum determină poziționarea persoanei la unul dintre rolurile din triunghiul dramatic al violenței.

Marilena Geanina Bîrsan, în articol său examinează consecințele violenței domestice asupra vieții și educației copiilor, adolescenților și tinerilor, evidențiind, totodată, modalitățile prin care aceștia pot beneficia de sprijin în cadrul sistemului educațional. Rezultatele lucrării subliniază necesitatea implementării unor soluții ce vizează sprijinul educațional pentru a-i ajuta pe aceștia, victime colaterale, să depășească traumele și să se dezvolte armonios.

Mihaela-Andreea Stamate, completând gama efectelor analizate de alți autori ce au contribuit la realizarea cestui număr, aduce în prin plan, prin studiul calitativ realizat, efectele violenței asupra femeii în plan fizic, emoțional, social și economic.

Studiul autoarelor Oana Lavinia Bercsenyi, Lavinia Elisabeta Popp, Gabriela-Felicia Georgevici prezintă dificultățile cu care victimele violenței domestice se confruntă atunci când intenționează să părăsească locuința pentru a pune capăt relației agresive. Normele sociale care perpetuează ideea că bărbații sunt superiori femeilor creează un mediu propice pentru violență, justificând abuzul și controlul. În opinia autoarelor, lipsa de acces la resurse, educație și oportunități, limitează capacitatea femeilor de a se apăra și de a-și construi o viață independentă, făcându-le vulnerabile la exploatare și abuz.

Nina Mihaela Mihalache ne aduce în atenție genosociograma, o tehnică utilizata de altfel de mulți asistenți sociali în intervenții. În accepțiunea autoarei, genosociograma facilitează o înțelegere comprehensivă a factorilor de risc privind

comportamentele antisociale dar şi a originii acestora pentru o intervenţie de calitate şi o colaborare complexă în echipa interdisciplinară. Aceasta abordare se configurează în noile tendinţe ale asistenţei sociale moderne, axate pe învăţare şi pedagogie socială, tendinţe care aduc în prim plan exersarea competenţelor profesionale de gândire critică şi creativitate.

Petronela Polixenia Nistor, în lucrarea sa abordează, la nivel teoretic, rolul psihoeducaţiei şi al serviciilor de asistenţă socială profesionalizate din cadrul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române în prevenirea violenţei domestice, ca fenomen social contemporan. În opinia autoarei, intervenţia Bisericii, la nivel familial şi societal, în prevenirea violenţei în familie se orientează spre cele trei dimensiuni ale psihoeducaţiei: dimensiunea spiritual-pedagogică, dimensiunea psihologică şi dimensiunea comportamentală, care au ca obiectiv schimbarea de perspectivă asupra scopului şi existenţei vieţii, reducerea manifestărilor agresive şi promovarea unor comportamente respectuoase şi nonviolente în relaţiile interpersonale.

Alexandra-Elisa Mereuţă evidenţiez strategiile de coping activate de femeile victime ale violenţei şi subliniază gradul de dificultate al situaţiilor de risc cu care se confruntă femeile care au un partener violent.

Numărul actual se încheie cu un studiu amplu realizat de Ciprian Iftimoaei, studiu care aduce în atenţie o propunere de politică publică ce descrie un cadru general de acţiune care implică diverse părţi interesate, cum ar fi instituţii publice, organizaţii neguvernamentale şi grupuri profesionale. Propunerea stabileşte scopuri şi obiective aliniate cu principiile, standardele şi valorile Agendei 2030 pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă şi este organizată în cinci secţiuni, iar subiectul violenţa asupra femeii este amplu tratat.

Prin articolele de final, scrise de Mara Sânzianu Pascu şi Natalia Cojocaru, deschidem seria unui nou număr al revistei şi vă invităm să parcurgeţi cele două articole ce aduc în prin plan educaţia.

Prin realizarea acestui număr, aşa cum reiese din articolele scrise de autori, putem concluziona că, violenţa împotriva femeilor rămâne una dintre cele mai dureroase şi persistente probleme ale societăţii româneşti, iar lupta împotriva acestui fenomen necesită o abordare integrată.

Bibliografie:

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Editorii invitaţi

EDITORIAL

Violence against women is a painful reality with consequences for victims and society. Statistics paint a worrying picture, and the figures speak for themselves. Thus, one in three women in Romania has suffered at least one form of physical or sexual violence from their partner, almost half of women (47%) have been victims of psychological violence in their relationship, and only one in ten women victims of domestic violence seek help from the authorities. (Băluță, Tufiș, 2022) But, beyond the figures, there are hidden heartbreaking life stories, women humiliated, controlled, and threatened by their "loved ones", women who lose their self-confidence and autonomy, and women who do not disclose the abuse out of fear, shame, or lack of support.

Combating violence against women is a responsibility that requires an integrated approach. Efforts should focus on prevention: (1) through education, promoting relationships based on respect and equality; (2) through support for those involved in the aggressive act: adequate medical, psychological, and legal services, safe shelters, social reintegration programs, and more effective law enforcement through methodological norms and not least (3) by preventing recidivism.

We have been debating the issue of violence against women for five editions of the "Severe Violence Against Women. Hypostases, Explanations, Interventions" Conference and we bring to the attention of the reading public the scientific papers presented, either through conference volumes or through thematic issues of this journal. The current issue, dedicated to the same event, brings together papers by theorists, and practitioners, but also studies by young doctoral students and master's students concerned with this sad reality, papers grouped into three sections: hypostases of violence against women, explanations for understanding this phenomenon and intervention modalities.

The issue opens with an article written by Diana-Mihaela Cheptene-Micu. Through the case studies she analyzes, the author shows that there are recurrences of violence against the same woman, by the same aggressor, the offense of "breaching a protection order" being repeated, thus taking the form of a special recurrence. This aspect allowed the author to analyze the effectiveness of the legal instruments applied in limiting and reducing the phenomenon of violence against women.

Mădălina Frunză, based on a study conducted in a shelter for victims of domestic violence, aimed to identify the triggering factors of domestic violence, determine the main types of violence to which victims are subjected, and identify the role and importance of social services in the lives of victims.

Oana-Lăcrămioara Bădărău and Sergiu Lucian Raiu, through the study they propose, identify the factors that inhibit or provoke the disclosure of sexual abuse. The secrecy that prevails in the abusive relationship as well as the vulnerability, forces the victim to remain silent and allows the repetition of abuse. Victims' fear of being blamed, and feelings of fear and shame contribute to delaying the disclosure of the secret, the authors say after analyzing the interviews. The fear of being blamed or blamed, the feelings of fear and shame have contributed to the delay in disclosing the secret, the authors say after analyzing the interviews conducted.

Through their study, Nadji Rahmania and Cristina Teodorescu aim to identify and critically analyze the relevant risk factors in family violence situations and identify and analyze the most used models in the fight against this type of violence. By integrating risk factors into screening protocols, the authors mention, a larger number of abused women or women at high risk of abuse can be identified.

Ancuța Elena Păduraru and Camelia Soponaru draw attention to violence against women as a problem with hidden implications. The paper is a narrative analysis that aims to highlight the link between violence against women and chronic somatic diseases. Although not as widely recognized and easily visualized by others, chronic disease can be, the authors mention, a consequence of violence, with a long-term impact on the victim's life, acting as a reminder of what happened even long after the abuse has ceased.

Lucia Stan brings to the fore, in the work included in this issue, the fact that violence can have its roots in parent-child relationships, the child learning from the parent a role that he later replicates as an adult, in his relationships. The subject addressed in the article is emotional neglect. The author explores the universe and the intense experiences of the young child, as well as how he adapts to parental unavailability, then follows how these mechanisms are maintained in adult life and how they determine the person's positioning on one of the roles in the dramatic triangle of violence.

Marilena Geanina Bîrsan, in her article, examines the consequences of domestic violence on children, adolescents, and young people's lives and education, also highlighting how they can benefit from support within the education system. The study's results emphasize the need to implement solutions and educational support to help collateral victims, overcome trauma and develop harmoniously.

Mihaela-Andreea Stamate, completing the range of effects analyzed by other authors who have contributed to the creation of this issue, brings to the fore, through the qualitative study carried out, the effects of violence on women in physical, emotional, social, and economic terms.

A study by Oana Lavinia Bercsenyi, Lavinia Elisabeta Popp, and Gabriela-Felicia Georgevici presents the difficulties faced by victims of domestic violence when they intend to leave their homes to end the abusive relationship. Social norms that perpetuate the idea that men are superior to women create an environment conducive to violence, justifying abuse and control. In the authors' opinion, the lack of access to resources, education, and opportunities limits

women's ability to defend themselves and build independent lives, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Nina Mihaela Mihalache brings our attention to the genosociogram, a technique used by many social workers in interventions. From the author's point of view, the genosociogram facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the risk factors for antisocial behaviors and their origins for a quality intervention and complex collaboration in the interdisciplinary team. This approach is configured in the new trends of modern social work, focused on learning and social pedagogy, trends that bring to the fore the exercise of professional skills of critical thinking and creativity.

Petronela Polixenia Nistor, in her work, addresses, at a theoretical level, the role of psychoeducation and professionalized social assistance services within the Romanian Orthodox Church in the prevention of domestic violence, as a contemporary social phenomenon. In the author's opinion, the Church's intervention, at the family and societal level, in the prevention of violence in the family is oriented towards the three dimensions of psychoeducation: the spiritual-pedagogical dimension, the psychological dimension, and the behavioral dimension, which aim to change the perspective on the purpose and existence of life, reduce aggressive manifestations and promote respectful and non-violent behaviors in interpersonal relationships.

Alexandra-Elisa Mereuță focuses on the coping strategies activated by women victims of violence and emphasizes the degree of difficulty of the risky situations faced by women who have a violent partner.

The current issue concludes with a comprehensive study conducted by Ciprian Iftimoaei, which brings attention to a public policy proposal describing a general framework of action involving various stakeholders, such as public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and professional groups. The proposal sets goals and objectives aligned with the principles, standards, and values of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and is organized into five sections, with the subject of violence against women being extensively addressed.

Through the final articles, written by Mara Sânzianu Pascu and Natalia Cojocaru, we open the series of a new issue of the journal that brings education into the spotlight.

Finally, as evidenced by the authors, we can conclude that violence against women remains one of the most painful and persistent problems of Romanian society, and the fight against this phenomenon requires an integrated approach.

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Băluță, I., Tufiș, C (2022) *Barometrul violenței de gen. Violența împotriva femeilor din România: reprezentări, percepții*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Editura Dota

Guest Editors

CURRENT LEGAL PERSPECTIVES
OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Diana-Mihaela CHEPTENE-MICU[1]

Abstract

The judicial proceedings that are generated by violence against women registered significant increases at the level of the courts of the Court of Appeal Iaşi, from 2019 to 2023, according to the statistical data provided by the ECRIS computer application, used for the efficient management of cases.

In the case of domestic violence crimes, statistics have shown that women are the victims in most of the cases, whether there is an injury to bodily integrity or health, or even their death. Thus, at the level of the local courts in Iaşi and Vaslui counties, it was found that, within 5 years, 82% of the family violence crimes had women as victims.

There are many cases in which violence against women takes on forms of high danger, both by the materiality of the acts done by the aggressors and by their extension in time, and the recent casuistry has revealed that there are recurrences on the same victim by the same aggressor.

Although the protection orders are increasing significantly and their number has been double, the criminal persistence, by violating the protection order repeatedly, indicates the need to analyze the efficiency of the current legal instruments in reducing domestic violence against women.

Keywords: gender violence, domestic violence crimes, legislative measures, recurrence of violence against the same woman.

Résumé

Les procédures judiciaires générées par la violence contre les femmes ont enregistré des augmentations significatives au niveau des tribunaux de la Cour d'Appel de Iaşi, de 2019 à 2023, selon les données statistiques fournies par l'application informatique ECRIS, utilisée pour la gestion efficace des affaires.

Dans le cas des crimes de violence domestique, les statistiques ont montré que les femmes sont les victimes dans la plupart des cas, qu'il s'agisse d'une atteinte à leur intégrité physique ou à leur santé, voire même de leur mort. Ainsi, au niveau des tribunaux de

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premiere instance des comtés de Iaşi et Vaslui, on a constaté qu'en 5 ans, 82 % des crimes de violence domestique avaient des femmes pour victimes.

Il existe de nombreux cas dans lesquels la violence contre les femmes revêt des formes de grand danger, par la matérialité des actes commis par les agresseurs et par leur extension dans le temps, et la casuistique récente a révélé qu'il y a des récidives sur la même victime par le même agresseur.

Mots-clés : la violence de genre, les crimes de violence domestique, les mesures législatives, la récurrence de la violence contre la même femme

Abstract
Procedurile judiciare care sunt generate de violenţe asupra femeilor au înregistrat creşteri semnificative la nivelul instanţelor judecătoreşti arondate Curţii de Apel Iaşi, din 2019 până în 2023, conform datelor statistice furnizate de aplicaţia informatică ECRIS, utilizată pentru gestionarea eficientă a dosarelor.

În cazul infracţiunilor de violenţă în familie, statistica a demonstrat că cele mai multe cauze au ca victime femeile, fie că se produce o vătămare a integrităţii corporale sau a sănătăţii, fie chiar decesul acestora. Astfel, la nivelul judecătoriilor din judeţele Iaşi şi Vaslui, s-a constatat că, în decurs de 5 ani, 82% din infracţiunile de violenţă în familie au avut ca victime femeile.

Există multe cazuri în care violenţa asupra femeilor îmbracă forme de ridicată periculozitate, atât prin materialitatea acţiunilor exercitate de agresori, cât şi prin întinderea în timp a acestora, iar cazuistica recentă a relevat că se produc recidive ale acesteia asupra aceleiaşi victime, din partea aceluiaşi agresor.

Cu toate că ordinele de protecţie sunt într-o creştere semnificativă, înregistrându-se o dublare a numărului acestora, perseverarea pe cale infracţională, prin încălcarea ordinului de protecţie în mod repetat, indică nevoia de analiză a eficienţei instrumentelor juridice actuale în diminuarea violenţei domestice exercitate majoritar asupra femeilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: violenţă de gen, infracţiuni de violenţă în familie, măsuri legislative, recidive ale violenţei asupra aceleiaşi femei

1. Introduction

The first international instrument that was developed to approach the problem of violence against women was the Declaration adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization in December 1993. It defines this phenomenon as „any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to cause harm or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women", including in their category verbal aggression, harmful practices (such as genital mutilation), any kind of coercion or the arbitrary freedom deprivation, regardless of whether it is carried out in the public life or the private one.

As violence against women is an extreme form of manifestation of gender-based discrimination and a serious way of violating human rights, rooted in the wrong belief of the inequality between men and women, its main foundation is the aggressors' refusal to recognize the victims' right to freedom, decision, and respect, the reason why, even nowadays, this phenomenon continues to be an impediment to the development of the human society.

The phenomenon of violence against women has been pointed out during many centuries as serious damage to most of the prerogatives registered by the Charter of the Fundamental Rights, as brutal violations of the rights to life and human dignity, the interdiction on the use of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to non-discrimination and the right of access to justice. It marks a deep inequity between women and men, as a disproportionate ratio of forces based on old gender stereotypes, related to „the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society consider adequate for women and men" [art. 3, paragraph (3), letter c) from the Istanbul Convention, adopted by the Council of Europe on 11th May 2011, in force since 1st August 2014].

From a criminal perspective, violence against women encompasses crimes such as femicide, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion or refused sterilization, trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, harassment, hate arousing speech, and gender-based discrimination offenses, as well as various forms of cyber-violence, including refused sharing or handling of intimate material, cyber-stalking and cyber-bullying.

2. Legislative measures adopted internationally

Violence against women is widespread throughout the world and, in varying percentages, in the member countries of the European Union. It must be fought, and this fight is also currently considered as a priority on the list of objectives of the European Commission. It is materialized in measures that propose to ensure respect for the community values and the fundamental rights of all people, regardless of gender.

It is worth noting that, in the past three decades, there has been a tendency to multiply collective actions by which states and international bodies have taken care to prevent, to stop and to sanction gender-based violence, by mobilizing political and decision-making factors, law specialists, sociologists and representatives of the civil society in a joint action to eradicate it, to educate and to raise awareness of the incompatibility of such a phenomenon with the principles and the operating way of the contemporary world.

The Convention on the Elimination of All the Types of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations by Resolution no. 34/180 of 18th December 1979, in the member states of the Council of Europe. Important steps were taken for the regulation and implementation of effective legislation to prevent gender-based violence and to protect the rights of its victims, by taking „the necessary measures to modify the schemes and the means of social and cultural behavior of men and women", in order „to eliminate prejudices and customary practices or of any other kind, based on the idea of inferiority or superiority of one gender or the template image on the role of men or women" [Art. 4, paragraph 2, letter a) of the Convention on the Elimination of All the Types of Discrimination Against Women].

Then, in 1993, the Declaration on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence was elaborated by the United Nations and, later, the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Fight against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention. It is recognized as the most important legal instrument with the force of law, which clarifies that the issue of gender violence and the issue of domestic violence transcend the personal framework and belong to the competence of public authorities. It imposes a standard of rules intended to guide the efforts of the member states of the Council of Europe in fulfilling the joint objective of preventing aggressive behaviors based on gender considerations, eliminating their main cause, supporting and protecting victims, criminalizing and sanctioning the various forms by which the abuses committed against women take place. Thus, by a series of provisions regarding gender stereotypes considered inequality factors between men and women, the Convention suggests the promotion of non-violence and mutual respect in interpersonal relationships, and it emphasizes the fundamental role of governments in promoting these values (Moț, 2018).

As it results from the statement of reasons of the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence, up to the present moment, no specific legislative act has been carried out in the European Union, by which to regulate, with a binding character, the social phenomenon of gender-based violence. However, in an adjacent way, the issue was approached by various normative provisions issued in other areas, such as judicial cooperation in criminal matters, the right to asylum, and non-refoulement. The accession procedure of the European Union to the Istanbul Convention was complete, too, by submitting two instruments[2] of approval that determined the entry into force of this act as of 1st October 2023.

3. Statistical data on gender-based violence committed in the European space

The Directives 2012/29/EU on the rights of victims, 2011/99/EU on the European protection order, 2011/93/EU on the sexual abuse of children, 2004/80/EC on compensation, and in the Directives on gender equality include general norms that also apply to victims of gender-based violence. Nevertheless, it is currently necessary to adopt a European instrument designed specifically to regulate and

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[2] With reference to Council Decision (UE) 2023/1075 of the 1st of June 2023 on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, regarding the institutions of the Union and the public administration, JO L 143 1, 2,6,2023, p. 1 and the Council's Decision (UE) 2023/1076 of the 1st of June 2023 on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, regarding aspects related to the judicial cooperation in the criminal matters and regarding asylum and non-refoulement, JO L 143 I, 2,6,2023, p. 4.

sanction this „manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men and preventing the full advancement of the latter" (Convention Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011). It is justified by the worrying statistical data that, despite the social evolution and the efforts made by international bodies, continue to reveal alarming conclusions regarding the number of cases where women are abused.

From this point of view are relevant the results of the extensive research conducted by the Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union in 2014, prove that 13 million women, representing 7% of those aged between 18 and 74 in the European Union, have been subject to physical violence during the past 12 months before the interviews conducted as part of the survey, that one in 10 women had suffered a type of sexual violence after the age of 15 and that of the women who have or had a relationship with a man, 22% were physically and/or sexually abused. It has been estimated that almost a quarter of victims of sexual assault do not report such incidents to the police or to any other institution or organization because of feelings of shame and fear, feelings favored by the social tendency to blame the victims in such situations. It has been estimated that 50 women lose their lives every week due to domestic violence, that two out of five women (43%) have experienced a form of psychological violence by their partner, that one in 10 women has been stalked for the purpose of harassment and that between 74% and 75% of women in professional or managerial positions have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime (FRA – European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights, 2014, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey).

4. Legislative measures implemented nationally

In the national legislation, there are legal provisions aimed at the legal protection of women who become victims of violence, in terms of domestic violence with immediate limiting intervention, and also in terms of gender-based aggression.

For example, with a general characteristic of Law no. 211/2004 on some measures to provide the information, support, and protection of victims of crimes. This law determines several elements imposing obligations of the state authorities to victims, including women subject to acts of violence, which are circumscribed to the crimes of attempted murder and qualified murder, to the crimes of bodily harm, rape, sexual assault, as well as other intentional crimes that resulted in their bodily harm.

Among the measures established by this law, we find the legal assistance offered free of charge to the victims of these crimes and the granting of financial compensation by the state in case the perpetrator is insolvent or disappeared. These material compensations usually include, among other things, hospitalization expenses and other categories of medical expenses paid by the victim in the healing and recovery process, lost earnings, and moral damages, to the extent that they

have been awarded by judicial means after the court determines the guilt of the aggressor.

As for domestic violence, Law no. 217/2003 regulates another legal instrument by which Romania understood the need to promote the policy elaborated at the international level in the matter of fight against violence in the family, regardless of their nature: physical, mental, verbal, sexual, economic, social or spiritual. The celerity of the response of the state authorities in order to stop these aggressions is the fundamental attribute of the protection order, incident in the event that there is an imminent risk that the life, physical integrity or freedom of a person will be endangered by a violent action in the family, because this legal instrument is assigned an essential role in reducing the possibility of the transposition of such a risk into reality.

The temporary protection order is the responsibility of the police bodies and it is justified by their ability to intervene immediately. Thus, temporarily, for a period of five days, there is one or several protection measures capable of contributing to the suppression of the identified imminent risk, and it may be decided to temporarily evict the aggressor from the joint home even if he is the owner of the property right over the dwelling, the reintegration of the victim and, as the case may be, of the children into the joint home, by ordering to the aggressor to keep a minimum distance from the victim, from the members of her family, residence or workplace, the obligation to wear an electronic surveillance device permanently and, possibly, to hand over to the police all the weapons that he owns (Law on the prevention and combat of domestic violence (2003)).

According to the procedural rules, it is imposed within 24 hours after the issuance of the temporary protection order, the police station must ensure its submission to the prosecutor's office, and then the prosecutor will verify whether it is necessary to continue the protection measures, by applying an administrative resolution on its original copy.

Moreover, pursuant to art. 38 of the previously mentioned normative deed, the person whose life, physical or mental integrity or freedom is endangered by an act of violence done by a family member can request to the court that, in order to remove the danger, the latter will issue a protection order to impose, for a temporary period, one or more of the measures – obligations or interdictions – mentioned above, as well as, additionally, to limit the aggressor's right to use the joint home when it can be shared, the accommodation of the victim and, as the case may be, of the children, in a social assistance center that provides protection, accommodation, care and counseling for victims of domestic violence, the interdiction for the aggressor to travel to certain localities or certain areas allegedly known by the protected person, the interdiction of any contact with the victim, including by telephone, by mail or in any other way (Law on the prevention and combat of domestic violence (2003)).

The usefulness of the protection order derives from the enforceable character of this legislative instrument, given that the implementation of the measures established by the police or ordered by the court does not require a

summons or the passage of any period of time, there is a series of legal consequences in case of its non-compliance.

5. The efficiency of the current national legislative instruments

The General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police provided public information that certifies that in the year 2020, there were 8,393 temporary protection orders and 8,210 protection orders, of which a third were violated. Their number has increased considerably: 10,336 protection orders and 11,047 temporary protection orders registered in the year 2021, with 25.89% and 31.62% respectively more than the previous year. Among the 10,336 protection orders ordered by the Romanian civil courts, 4,870 came from temporary protection orders, issued pursuant to art. 28 of Law no. 217/2003 by the police bodies, in order to reduce the risk found in the exercise of their duties regarding the life, physical integrity or freedom of the victims of domestic violence. According to the same data, in 28% of the cases in which the police intervened, they found the existence of a high risk, and in 40% of these situations, the victims refused to proceed with the issuance of the temporary protection order (Network for the prevention and combat of violence against women, 2021).

At the Court of Appeal Iași, the statistical data show that the number of protection orders issued by the courts in its constituency in the past 5 years has been doubled. It increased from 277 in 2019 at the Local Court Iași to 547 in 2023 at the same court. Thus, from the graph below (Figure no. 1) it results that, in the period 2019–2023, from the total of 2,108 cases whose subject was the request for the issuance of protection orders, registered at the Local Court Iași, 1,897 of these files had female victims.

These indicators show that the percentage of women in Iași city who use this legal defence instrument is placed at the level of 90% of the total protection orders issued by the judicial bodies, which supports its effectiveness in the fight against gender-based violence in the family.

At the Local Court Vaslui, in the same period of 5 years, the increasing number of the protection orders is equally worrying, from 18 in 2019 to 307 in 2023, where women were victims of domestic violence in 52% of these cases. According to the statistical information shown in the attached graph (Figure no. 1), in the period 2019–2023, a total number of 946 files were registered by the Local Court Vaslui who was requested to order the issuance of protection orders, 491 of these requests were made by women who became victims of domestic violence (according to the data provided by the ECRIS computer application, used by all the Romanian courts for the efficient case management).
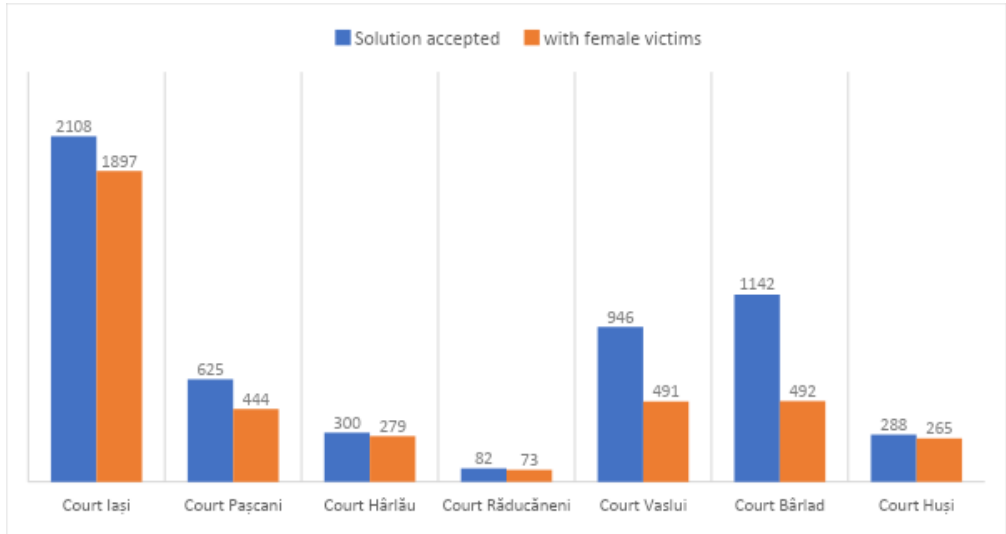
Figure 1. Total of the cases registered in the period 2019-2023 in the courts located in the territorial district of the Court of Appeal Iași, having as a subject requests on the issuance of the protection orders, according to the data provided by the ECRIS computer application, used by all the Romanian courts for the efficient case management

The violation of the protection order, pursuant to art. 47 of Law no. 217/2003, is considered a crime and may be punished by imprisonment from 6 months to 5 years. The courts in Iași and Vaslui counties, in the period 2019-2023, registered cases in which people who committed this crime were sent to court, in an increasing number from year to year, and the peak was reached in 2022, with the mention that, in 2023, the statistics are made until 15.11.2023.
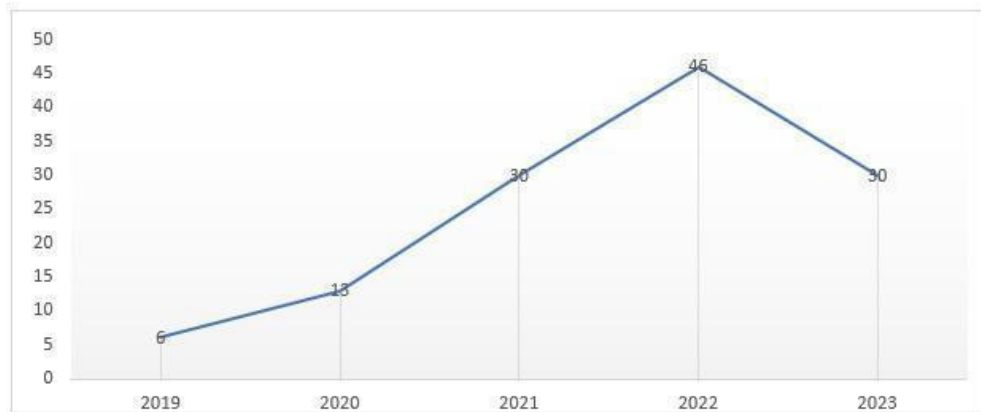
Figure 2. Total of the cases registered by the local courts located in the territorial district of the Court of Appeal Iași, having as a subject committing the crime of non-compliance with the protection orders, according to the data provided by the ECRIS computer application, used by all the Romanian courts for the efficient case management
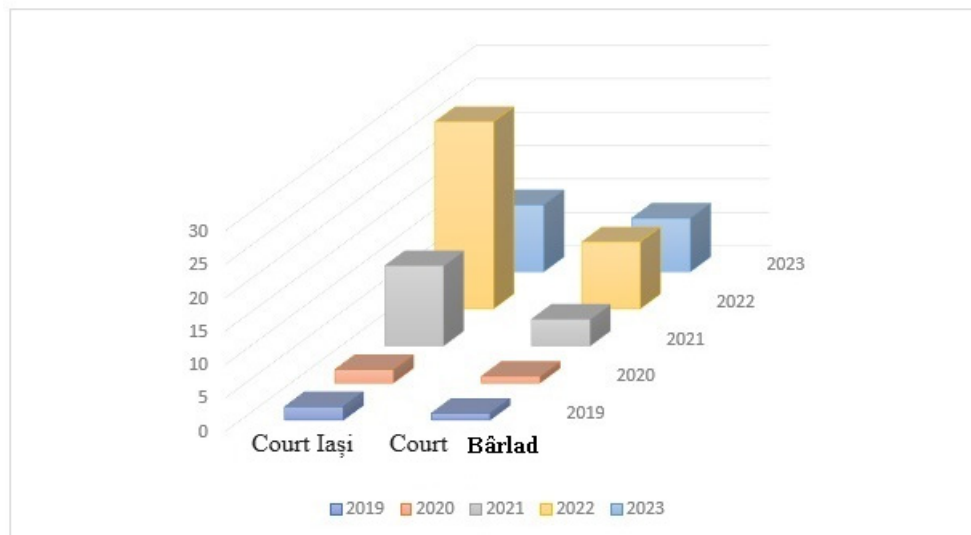
Figure 3. Cases registered by the Local Court Iași and by the Local Court Bârlad, having as a subject committing the crime of „the failure to comply with the protection order", according to the data provided by the ECRIS computer application, used by all the Romanian courts for efficient case management

A comparative look at the criminal cases registered by courts with a different workload shows that the year 2021 was the beginning of a period of increase in the number of crimes that consisted in the violation of the protection order, given that the measures imposed at the global level during the pandemic with the SARS-Cov2 virus isolated women together with their aggressors, which increased the number of cases of violence against them and also the number of protection orders issued by the authorities during that period.

The recent casuistry at the trial courts registered in the territorial circumscription of the Court of Appeal Iași demonstrates numerous situations in which there are recurrences of violence against the same woman by the same aggressor, and there is repeatability in committing the crime of „violating the protection order", despite the measures applied by the authorities. This aspect indicates the need to analyze the effectiveness of the current legal instruments in limiting and diminishing the phenomenon of gender violence.

For illustration, we want to show that by Criminal Judgement no. 2195/2023, pronounced on 13.10.2023, the Local Court Iași ordered to convict a defendant to a sentence of 3 years and 3 months imprisonment for having committed the crime of „violating the protection order". It was noted that, on 9th March 2023, on 16th April 2023, and on 20th April 2023, he illegally entered the house and the yard of his concubine, including when the injured person was at home, so he violated the provisions of the protection order issued against him, on 20th February 2023, by which the court ordered him to keep a minimum distance of 50 m from the injured person and from her home for a period of 6 months.

Previously, the defendant was also sentenced to 1 year and 3 months imprisonment, after having committed the same type of act, as it was known that he had committed other acts of violence against his concubine. The solution of the first court was confirmed by the court of appeal, by Criminal Judgement no. 1141/2023 of 19.12.2023 of the Court of Appeal Iasi.

There are many cases in which violence against women is dangerous by the materiality of the violent actions and also by their length of time.

The Local Court Bârlad faced such a situation in 2021 when, by Criminal Judgement no. 349/2021, pronounced on 12.11.2021, it ordered the sentencing of a defendant to a sentence of 2 years and 6 months imprisonment because he was found guilty in the intentional commission of the crimes of „violation of the protection order" and „domestic violence".

In this case, it was noted that, after the moment when he was notified of the obligations imposed by a protection order issued against him, the defendant went to his concubine's home, by violating the interdiction to approach her home and her person at a greater distance less than 50 m. In this circumstance, the defendant by domestic violence, grabbed the woman by the neck and knocked her on the ground, after which, he used a piece of roof tile and he hit her hard on the head. When he saw that the victim was trying to get up, the defendant continued to use acts of violence against her, kicking her in the ribs and hitting her with a bucket on her head, in that moment a witness intervened and the injured person ran away to the public road. The defendant did not give up and chased his concubine, and as they ran, he punched her, causing her to fall to the ground. He continued to hit her in various areas of the body, with his fists and also with his feet, causing the victim traumatic injuries that needed 7-8 days of medical care to heal, according to the forensic report in the file case.

The defendant requested the reduction of the sentence and the suspension of its execution, but the appeal he filed was rejected as unfounded by the Court of Appeal Iași. For this purpose, by Criminal Judgement no. 296/2022, pronounced on 12.04.2022, the judicial control court stated that „the defendant is known in the community as a violent person, who becomes aggressive after the alcohol consumption, and from 25.04.2021 to 23.06.2021, the emergency number 112 was notified of five other similar events, regarding the domestic violence he had shown, from which it results that the criminal episode for which he is judged was not only one, an isolated one, the defendant frequently had violent conduct to his concubine, in relation to whom he should have had feelings of affection and respect".

Relevant in assessing the reiteration risk of the criminal behavior by the defendant was also the statement he gave before the criminal investigation bodies during his hearing as a suspect, when he said: „I was violent with her from jealousy. I've hit her before. And when a protection order was issued, I beat her". Thus, despite the attitude of admission and apparent regret shown by the defendant during the criminal trial, the judicial control court did not leave unsanctioned the wrong way in which he preferred to behave to the person with whom he had relations similar to those of his spouses and to comply with the criminal norms and

the rules of social coexistence, it was obvious that he was not really aware of the seriousness of the criminal behavior and the negative consequences it generated.

This type of reprehensible conduct seems to be more and more common in practice as criminal judicial proceedings involving acts of violence against women have registered substantial increases in a period of only 5 years, from 2019 to 2023, in 10 courts in Iași and Vaslui counties, located in the territorial district of the Court of Appeal Iași.

As for domestic violence crimes, most cases have women as victims, whether there is an injury to their bodily integrity or health or even their death. From this point of view, it is worth noting that in the courts subordinated to the Court of Appeal Iași, in 5 years, a percentage of 82% of all the crimes of domestic violence reported to the judicial authorities indicate that women were victims.

Art. 199 of the Romanian Penal Code, with the marginal name of „domestic violence", regulates a veritable aggravated form of the crimes of murder, qualified murder, assault or other violence acts, bodily injury or assault or injuries causing death, to the extent that it is established that, in relation to the accused person, the passive subject of the crime has the quality of a family member. Such a deed is considered to be more severe, justified by the particularity of the passive subject to whom the antisocial behavior is shown, which is why the criminal law provides for the increase of the special maximum of the punishment provided by the law by a fourth.

The murder of a family member is one of the most severe crimes that can be committed against a woman, and the case history certifies that, in time, situations of this type have taken on different ways of committing them.

For example, currently, the County Court Iași registered a case in which a defendant is tried for having committed the crime of aggravated murder against a family member. He was charged with having repeatedly acts of physical violence against his wife from July 2016 to December 2021 (committed specifically on 8th July 2016, 29th September 2020, 4th March 2021, 30th April 2021, 24th May 2021 and 14th December 2021). He hit her with his fists and feet in several areas of the body and, especially in the head area, causing multiple cranio-cerebral traumas that led, by their intensity and frequency, to the constant alteration of her health condition, complicated in evolution with bronchopneumonia, and finally led to the violent death of the victim on 7th March 2022. The criminal prosecution bodies showed that the defendant often used to apply physical corrections to his wife, because he personally lost amounts of money in gambling, also generated by the consumption of alcoholic beverages and drugs, and the decreasing income obtained by the victim from the video chat activity, especially since he had set her amounts of money that she should have earned daily and the amount of which was constantly increased.

In support of the request to hold the defendant criminally liable, it was also noted the terror that he caused to his ex-wife and that prevented her from supporting and completing the legal proceedings that the mother and her close

relatives took into account started, asking the courts on various occasions to order protective measures against the violent man.
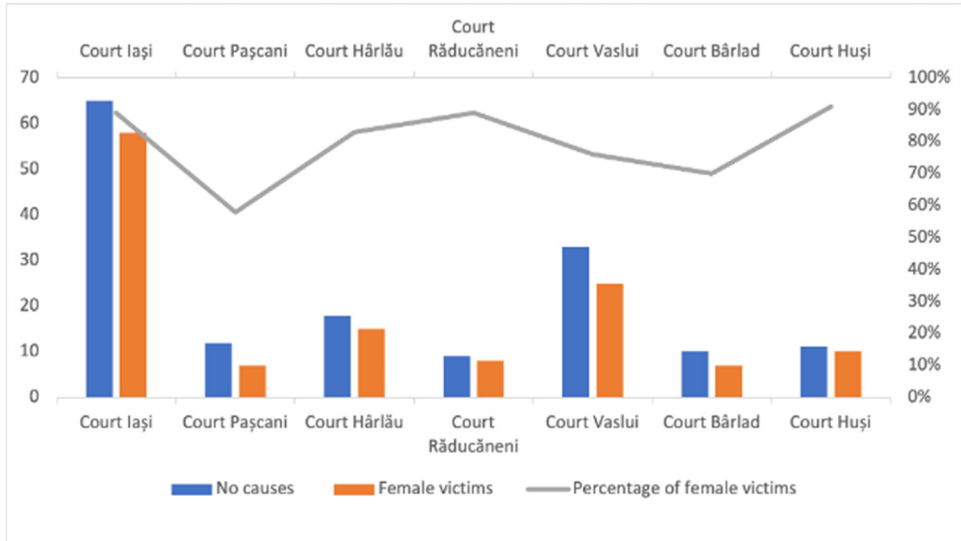
Figure 4. The total number of cases registered in the period 2019-2023 at the courts located in the territorial district of the Court of Appeal Iași, having as a subject the crime of domestic violence, according to the data provided by the ECRIS computer application, used by all the Romanian courts for the purpose of efficient case management

From the previous graph presented, it can be seen that the percentage of female victims in the cases registered by the Local Courts of Pașcani, Huși, Bârlad, and Vaslui with the subject of domestic violence crimes is much lower, and the decreased rate of notification of this type of crime can be found among the possible reasons.

The reluctance of women to inform the authorities about the commission of violence acts against them and, particularly, of those committed in the family, is a frequent problem in practice, not only at the national level. The tendency to cover up the abusive episodes in which the women are involved involuntarily, as well as the negative effects they experience physically, psychologically, and socially, is determined by social stereotypes and various cultural factors, by the emotional or economic dependence that women often have in front of men, their insufficient trust in the effectiveness of the measures ordered by the authorities, the lack of motivation to do what is necessary to bring the aggressors to criminal responsibility, the fear of stigmatization and the fear of being considered the only responsible for the marital problems or for causing the conflict episode, the habit or the lack of information on the rights legally conferred on them.

The children's attachment to the aggressor parent and the apparent regret he shows to the victim, with the empty promise of the non-existence of chances of repeating such behavior, as well as the false sense of self-blame are other

discouraging factors that women who become victims of violence face all around the world.

However, this fact represents an insurmountable impediment in capturing the real dimension of the phenomenon of gender violence and, implicitly, in the way of combating it, including the numerous cases in which women are abused by members of their own families. In this way, significant discrepancies are determined between the factual truth and the statistical data available to the authorities, with the consequence of creating a wrong overview of the efficiency of the measures implemented and the solutions already provided.

In an attempt to encourage abused women to report such facts and to request the assistance of the state authorities, there are various information and education campaigns for the population, intended to raise the awareness of the victims and to strengthen their confidence in the help provided by the specialized bodies. Among these, we mention, as an example, the annual international campaign, entitled „16 days of activism against violence against women", coordinated by the United Nations Organization, the prevention campaign of domestic violence „In Ioana's world organized in Romania by the Police Inspectorate of Sibiu County, by the Department for the Analysis and Prevention of Crimes, in partnership with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and the National Police Corps as well as „The campaign for awareness of violence against women among young people, at the university level", launched by the Romanian Institute for Human Rights and the Centre for the Human Rights within ''Titu Maiorescu" University in Bucharest, in rallying them to the international efforts for the Campaign of „16 days of activism; Stop the Violence!".

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the effects of the legal instruments derived from the specific legislation regarding the phenomenon of violence against women indicates a good level of the efficiency of Romanian criminal justice regarding the imposed responsibility of the aggressors and in terms of the procedural guarantees offered to the female victims.

However, even only from the statistical indicators of the specific cases of violence committed against women, it results that it is still not fully reported or notified to the state authorities, a fact for which it continues to be imposed, with priority, to find methods or means with maximum efficiency so that the judicial mechanisms will be implemented, in order to activate the legal guarantees regulated by the national legislation.

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Biodata

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VIOLENCE WITHIN THE FAMILY

Mădălina FRUNZĂ[1]

Abstract

Violenţa domestică reprezintă o problemă întâlnită la nivel mondial, fiind prezentă în intimitatea multor familii. Problematica este privită şi tratată în mod diferit, de la o ţară la alta, în funcţie de codurile sociale, juridice, culturale şi politice ale societăţii.

Necesitatea cercetărilor empirice în domeniul acordării serviciilor victimelor violenţei domestice este evidenţiată atât de numeroasele modificări care au fost impuse prin intermediul cadrului normativ, cât şi pentru a avea o imagine de ansamblu asupra calităţii serviciilor oferite de către sistemul de stat.

Cercetarea mixtă (cantitativă şi calitativă - s-a utilizat analiza secundară de date şi metoda studiului de caz) s-a desfăşurat la Centrul de Servicii Sociale pentru Persoane Adulte în Dificultate din cadrul Direcţiei Generale de Asistenţă Socială şi Protecţia Copilului Iaşi pe parcursul anului 2022. Scopul acesteia a fost identificarea consecinţelor violenţei domestice asupra familiei nucleare. Studiul şi-a propus să determine care sunt factorii declanşatori ai violenţei domestice, să identifice principalele tipuri de violenţă la care sunt supuse victimele şi să identifice rolul şi importanţa pe care o au serviciile sociale în viaţa victimelor. Lucrarea aduce în atenţie importanţa şi rolul serviciilor sociale oferite victimelor, care se vor cuantifica în timp, dar şi necesitatea îmbunătăţirii sistemului actual.

Cuvinte cheie: familie, violenţă, consecinţe, resurse, servicii.

Abstract

Domestic violence represents a worldwide problem, being present in the privacy of many families. This issue is viewed and treated differently, from one country to another, depending on the social, legal, cultural, and political codes of the society.

The necessity of empirical research in the field of providing services to victims of domestic violence is highlighted both by the numerous changes imposed through the regulatory framework and by the need to have an overview of the quality of services offered by the state system.

The mixed research (quantitative and qualitative - utilizing secondary data analysis and the case study method) was conducted at the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty within the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection in Iaşi throughout the year 2022. The present research aimed to identify the consequences of

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domestic violence on nuclear families. The study aimed to identify the triggering factors of domestic violence, determine the main types of violence to which victims are subjected, and identify the role and importance of social services in the lives of victims. The paper highlights the importance and role of social services offered to victims, which will be quantified over time, as well as the need to improve the current system.

Keywords: family, violence, consequences, resources, services.

Résumé
La violence domestique représente un problème mondial, étant présente dans l'intimité de nombreuses familles. Cette question est perçue et traitée différemment, d'un pays à l'autre, selon les codes sociaux, juridiques, culturels et politiques de la société.

La nécessité de mener des recherches empiriques dans le domaine de la prestation de services aux victimes de violence domestique est soulignée à la fois par les nombreux changements imposés par le cadre réglementaire et par la nécessité d'avoir une vue d'ensemble de la qualité des services offerts par le système étatique.

La recherche mixte (quantitative et qualitative - utilisant l'analyse des données secondaires et la méthode des études de cas) a été menée au Centre de services sociaux pour adultes en difficulté au sein de la Direction générale de l'assistance sociale et de la protection de l'enfance à Iași tout au long de l'année 2022. La présente recherche visait à identifier les conséquences de la violence domestique sur les familles nucléaires. L'étude visait à identifier les facteurs déclenchants de la violence domestique, à déterminer les principaux types de violence auxquels les victimes sont soumises et à identifier le rôle et l'importance des services sociaux dans la vie des victimes. Le document souligne l'importance et le rôle des services sociaux offerts aux victimes, qui seront quantifiés au fil du temps, ainsi que la nécessité d'améliorer le système actuel.

Mots clés: famille, violence, conséquences, ressources, services.

1. Introduction – about Domestic Violence

The concept of *violence* is defined as aggressive behavior inflicted upon a physically and morally weaker individual by a stronger one. Here, we refer to the mistreatment of minors (abuse), acts of physical violence, or even actions such as robbery, rape, and homicide (Turliuc et al., 2009).

According to the World Health Organization (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002, page 23), *violence* involves „the intentional use of force/power, actual or in the form of threats, against oneself, another person, or a group/community, resulting in/or having a high probability of producing an injury, death, psychological harm, developmental harm, or deprivation".

The primary purpose of violence in the family environment is to exert power and control over the other person. The aggressor often uses physical force and control tactics (threats, isolation, coercion, disregard, economic abuse, etc.) to intimidate, humiliate, and dominate the victim.

Domestic violence has certain characteristics compared to other types of violence, including (Muntean, 2003, cited in Neculau & Ferreol, 2003):

- The aggressor has constant access to the victim, considering they share the same living space or the aggressor knows the victim's exact address.

- The cyclical nature of violence, with multiple episodes and an escalation of severity.
- The presence of direct and indirect victims within the family (children, witnesses).
- Personality changes for all involved parties - the direct victim exhibits low self-esteem and isolation, indirect victims are often children with poor academic performance, illiterate, or delinquent, and the aggressor presents social integration disorders, substance/alcohol abuse, unemployment, etc.
- The existence of a deviant emotional relationship, such as the Stockholm syndrome, where the victim develops a pathological attachment to the aggressor.
- The private nature of events and the fear of victim stigma.
- Non-interventionism, where bystanders adopt a neutral stance, tolerating the violence.

As can be seen from the definition and descriptions presented above, violence (in all its forms) describes reprehensible behaviors that do not align with societal values, norms, and rules, which is why they are or should be severely condemned.

Unfortunately, statistics show that violence is tolerated, more or less, worldwide, being identified in any type of family, regardless of socioeconomic status, educational level, race, sexual orientation, or religion.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 clearly states that all people have the right to a life free from violence, as it represents a violation of human rights. Studies have found that victims of domestic violence can be women, children, the elderly, men, and even extended family members.

Research has shown that ***violence against women***, regardless of the form of aggression, has negative effects both in the short and medium to long term, and the repercussions take various forms, from visible marks on their bodies to psychosomatic disorders.

The reasons why women continue to cohabit with the aggressor are multiple and diverse: fear of reprisals, lack of alternative means of economic support, lack of support from extended family and close friends, fear of stigma, losing custody of children, but also the hope that the partner will change.

In recent years, Romania has seen an increase in the number of women who have become victims of their partners. Year after year, women gain the courage to verbalize and report the abuses they endure. Throughout the year 2022, 2162 calls regarding domestic violence were registered at the national hotline dedicated to victims of domestic violence, discrimination based on sex, and human trafficking, provided by the National Agency for Gender Equality (Agenția Națională pentru Egalitate de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați – ANES). Most calls reported psychological violence, followed by acts of physical and verbal violence.
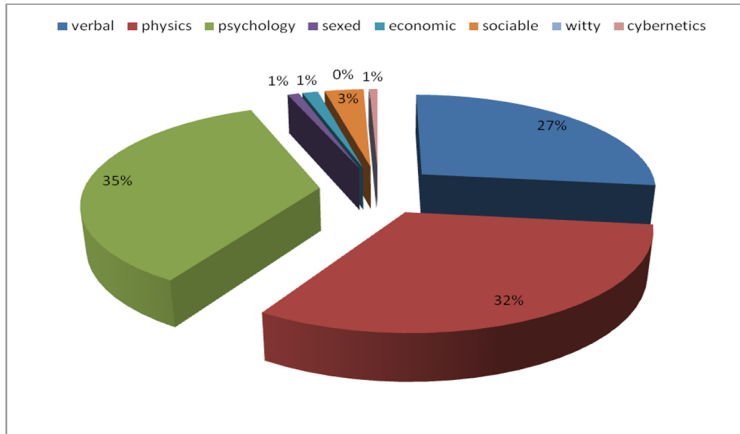
Figure 1: Types of domestic violence reported to the Helpline − 0800.500.333
Source: National Agency for Gender Equality, 2022

Although over 11,000 protection orders and over 20,000 provisional protection orders were issued throughout the year 2022, 42 women and 4 children died as a result of beatings and abuses within the family.

Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights establishes the main forms of ***violence against children***: abuse, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking.

Article 19 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to „be protected from all forms of violence, injury, physical or mental abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of par ents, a legal guardian, or any other person who has the care of the child."

However, the reality shows otherwise. The National Authority for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, Children, and Adoptions (Autoritatea Națională pentru Protecția Drepturilor Persoanelor cu Dizabilități, Copii şi Adopţii - ANPDPDCA) recorded a total of 17,175 cases of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of children for the year 2022, an increase of approximately 7.3% compared to 2021.

Violence against children in the context of domestic violence causes physical and psychological traumas, including fear, distrust, insomnia, nocturnal enuresis, shame, speech disorders, behavioral disorders, nightmares, anger, as well as feelings of helplessness.

Studies have shown that abuses experienced in the family environment by a child are the main cause of developing pre-delinquent behaviors such as lack of friends, aggressive language/behavior, socialization difficulties, school dropout, vagrancy, use of hallucinogenic substances, alcohol, etc.
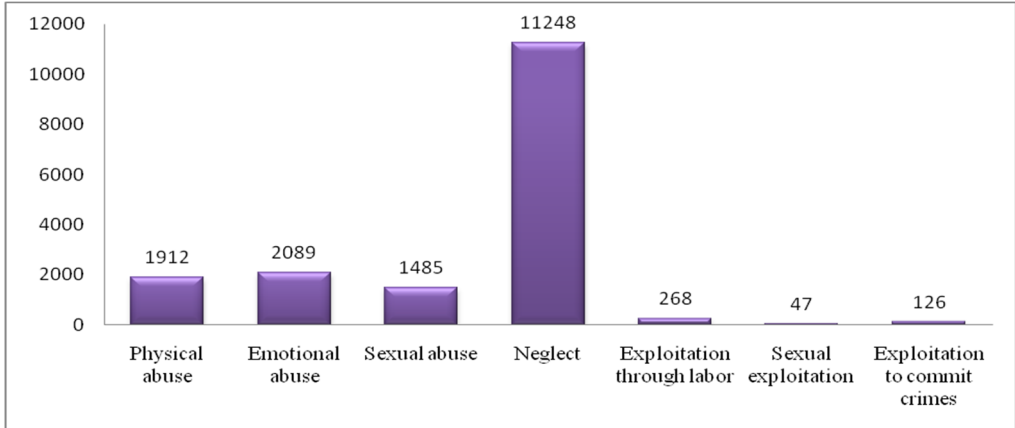
Figure 2: Situations of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation
Source: National Authority for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, Children, and Adoptions, 2022

Although statistics depict men as aggressors, there is a smaller percentage (up to 20%) that demonstrates *that males can also be victims of domestic violence.* The main reason why men refuse to report the aggressions they suffer in the family environment is the fear of blame.

Aggressions by women against men are studied by specialists in terms of their reactions to the violence they have been subjected to. There are cases where victims can no longer bear the abuse and resort to extreme gestures, such as killing their partner (Irimescu, 2005).

Currently, in Romania, there are 16 counseling and assistance centers for aggressors. Through specialists, they primarily receive psychological, social, and vocational counseling, support for developing life skills (non-violent communication, anger management), support for social reintegration, facilitating access to specialized treatments, etc.

Gătej (2021) mentioned another form of *family violence*, namely, violence directed *against the elderly*, which consists of neglect, abuse, or mistreatment by their children or close relatives. Often, the elderly are abused by a family member with whom they live, by people in their social circle, or by employees of dedicated centers. They are perceived as a burden by those who care for them, for several reasons: economic difficulties, additional activities that the family must perform, the lack of the elderly person's occupational status, the aggressor's problems, the different mentality and behavior of the elderly, etc. (Crudu, 2021). The most commonly abused individuals have the following characteristics: mostly single women over 75 years old, who have no roles in society, with poor health (chronic/acute conditions, diminished mobility).

Unfortunately, worldwide, one of the most widespread and devastating violations of human rights is domestic violence, poorly reported due to fear of stigma and blame. To reduce this problem, the following should be done:

- More specialists should be trained;
- More awareness and education programs should be implemented within communities;
- Victims should have access to more services (rehabilitation, prevention, support, and charity) for a longer period;
- Various research initiatives should be initiated to help combat/eradicate the phenomenon;
- Various legislative changes should be approved.

Following studies, it has been found that victims of domestic violence can utilize both internal (coping strategies, resilience) and external resources (tools and services provided by current legislation, NGOs, etc.) to cope with and/or exit their adverse situations.

Specialized literature, Lecompte, (2020), Petrova Dimitrova (2021), Greitens (2020), and Pânișoară (2024) provide a wide range of definitions for *resilience*, but they all lead to an individual's capacity to cope with adversities or stressful situations. The concept of resilience has been studied over time in terms of traumatic events that could easily lead to psychopathological manifestations, such as depression, post-traumatic stress, and excessive consumption of alcohol or psychotropic substances. Thus, resilient individuals cope with these events without their subsequent development being affected.

Regardless of the level at which it is applied, resilience has several distinctive characteristics:

- ✔ Even if the level of risk is high and the experienced events are destabilizing, the victim's capacity for psychological development is positive;
- ✔ They demonstrate sustained skills to confront stress and do not develop mental disorders over time;
- ✔ Despite the trauma suffered, the victim goes through a process involving various protective factors that help them recover.

We can thus conclude that resilience simply helps a person who has faced an adverse event to develop, and appreciate interpersonal relationships and intensify them, be more empathetic, cope successfully with daily difficulties and stress, etc. The resilience of a person exposed to risks or adversities (domestic violence, natural disasters, physical/mental illnesses, poverty, etc.) should represent the main goal of all interventions performed by specialists. These interventions should not lead to dependence on the person providing support but to an improvement in the victim's autonomy, the development of trust in others, and even the development of creativity.

Another internal resource that victims of domestic violence can rely on is *coping*. Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 141) define coping as „a continuous adjustment process, with a personal character, which allows individuals to maintain their functioning during periods of stress, a specific, deliberate process of thought, feeling, and behavior, to reduce/eliminate stress, maintain well-being, and develop as a person."

Therefore, in the event of a highly stressful situation or when a traumatic event occurs/is inevitable, the person involved will mobilize various coping strategies learned, developed, and planned over time to control and solve the situation of suffering/ subsequent suffering feelings after experiencing the unfavorable event.

Any victim of domestic violence will develop various strategies to resist, cope with abuse, or leave the aggressive environment, with as few negative consequences on their physical and mental health as possible. Specialists consider that the coping process should be dynamic, changing, and evolving constantly so that the person in question does not use only one style because this would lead to a blockage that would limit their flexibility and freedom to respond to changing situations.

As mentioned earlier, a victim of domestic violence in Romania can also use external resources. They can resort to various tools/institutions to request information/services to overcome the crisis they are in:

- Information obtained from official websites (www.anes.gov.ro, www.politiaromana.ro) indicating the correct procedure in such situations;
- The BrightSky phone application provides assistance and information to victims, concerned individuals, and specialists in the field;
- Call the National Emergency Call System – 112;
- Call the toll-free hotline for victims of domestic violence provided 24/7 by ANES, call center – 0800 500 333;
- Call 119 – the national UNICEF number for children, for cases of abuse, neglect.
- Providers of social services, both public and private (General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection or within the Public Social Assistance System, non-governmental organizations).
- Visit any emergency reception unit or forensic medicine service (when there are visible injuries or psychological traumas) to obtain the medical-legal certificate documenting the aggressions.
- The local police department filed a complaint against the aggressor.
- The court for the issuance of a protection order.
- The prosecutor's office attached to the court for filing a criminal complaint.

For their safety, victims of domestic violence can request, according to the law, a protection order against the aggressor for a maximum period of 12 months and electronic monitoring of the aggressor.

2. Study Design. Method, Sample, Data Collection Instruments

The research spans a period of 12 months, namely January-December 2022, and was conducted at the Emergency Reception Center for Victims of Domestic Violence - Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty within the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection Iași.

Based on **secondary data analysis** and **the case study method**, I synthesized the information obtained and conducted **mixed research** – **quantitative** and **qualitative**.

Secondary data analysis is defined as a subsequent analysis of a set of data that had already been collected, with the aim of answering a different research question from the one for which the data were initially collected and generating new interpretations and conclusions.

R.K. Yin (2005) defines *the case study* as a „research strategy that requires empirical investigations into a particular contemporary phenomenon, in a real-life context, and using multiple sources of information (interviews, questionnaires, testimonies, evidence, documents)". The same author described the case study as a concrete, precise investigation that examines a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not delineated, and to obtain viable results, multiple sources of data must be used.

I used *an exploratory case study* in the research because I aimed to obtain information about a frequently encountered phenomenon, that of domestic violence, and to preliminarily understand this social issue.

To collect as much data and information as possible for the elaboration of this work, I used complementary work tools: **documentation, participatory observation, and interviews.**

3. Results – The Role of Social Services in the Lives of Domestic Violence Victims

To obtain a comprehensive and accurate overview, I analyzed all cases recorded at the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty during January - December 2022 from multiple perspectives, and I presented the results statistically, graphically, and proportionally, according to the figures below. Thus, following the analysis, it was found that during the year 2022, 188 individuals passed through the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty. Among these, 61 were adults (60 women and 1 man), direct victims of domestic violence, while the remaining 127 individuals were minors accommodated with their mothers. All beneficiaries of the center came from rural areas.

The majority of cases brought to the attention of the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty were referred by the City or Rural Police of Iași County or by the Iași County Ambulance Service. A significant number of victims, 21 in total, directly sought assistance from the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection from Iași, either at the institution's headquarters or through the 119 service - the National UNIQUE number for children.
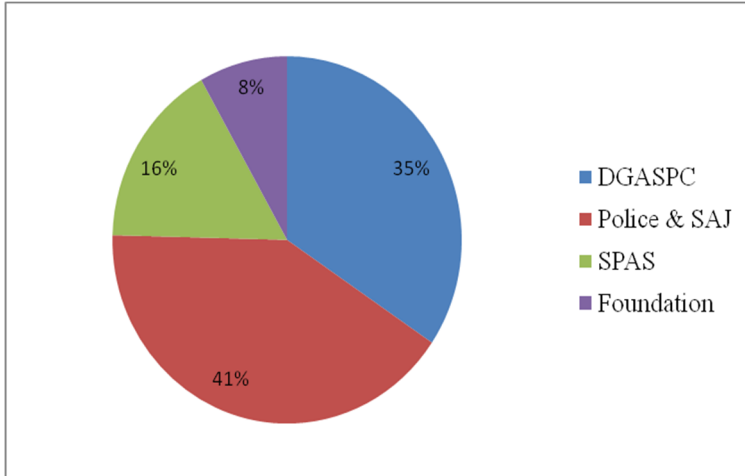
Figure 3: The institution that referred the domestic violence case
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

A percentage of 16% of cases were referred by the Public Social Assistance Services (SPAS) at the village level. Additionally, foundations played an important role, getting involved and assisting a total of 5 cases to benefit from the center's services.

As you can observe in the figure below, the majority of abused individuals who were admitted to the center were between the ages of 25 and 34, followed by those under the age of 25.
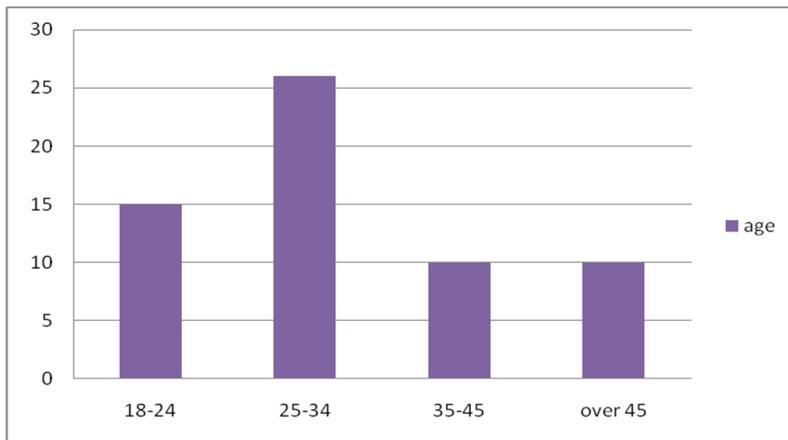
Figure 4: Beneficiaries by age group
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

Approximately 62% of domestic violence victims were in a consensual union, while 38% had a formalized relationship with the aggressor.

Individuals with completed or ongoing primary education represented the largest proportion of adult victims admitted to the center during the year 2022. On

the other hand, there was only one victim who had completed a higher education cycle.
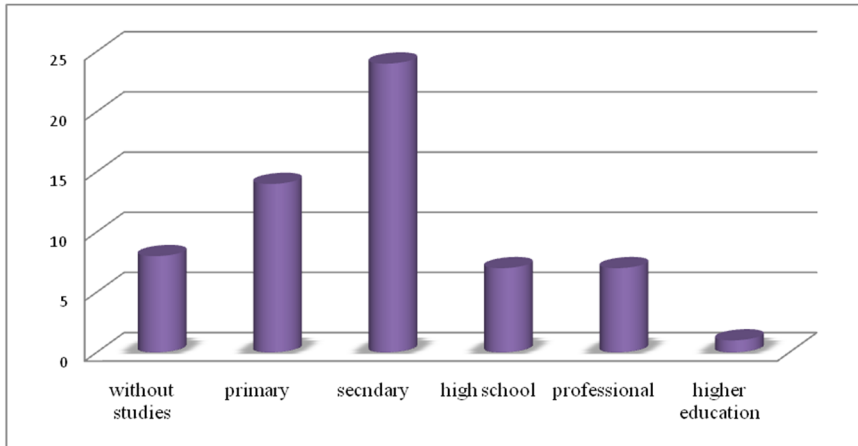
Figure 5: Education level of victims of domestic violence
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

Out of the total of 61 cases, 54 women were assaulted by their partner, husband, or cohabitant. There were also a few isolated cases where the aggressor was a family member (son, brother, brother-in-law) or a former partner.
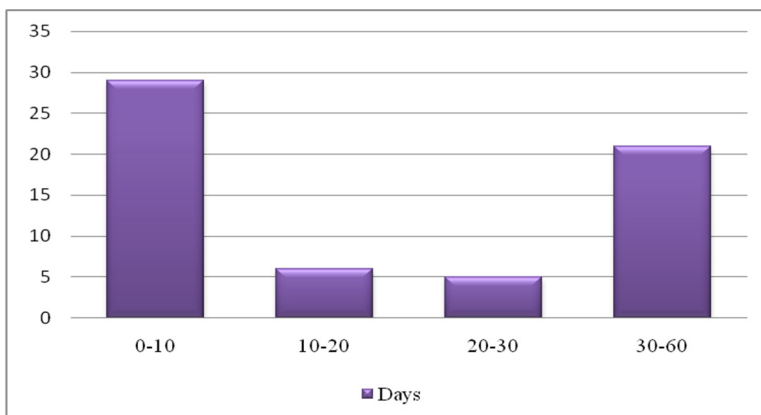
Figure 6: Period of stay in the center
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

Over 88% of the victims housed at the center were accompanied by children (from 1 up to 6 minors). Within the first 10 days of their stay, 29 beneficiaries requested discharge from the center as they quickly identified a new housing solution, turning to extended family, relatives, and friends, or returning to the aggressor's home. 21 cases required more than 30 days to overcome the difficult situations they had faced.
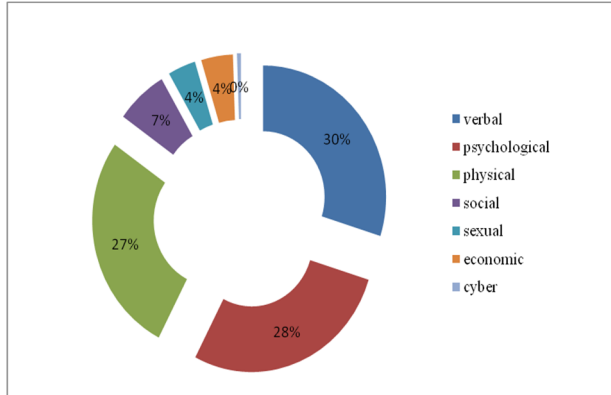
Figure 7: The type of domestic violence inflicted on the victims
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

As it can be seen in Figure No. 5, the most common form of domestic violence experienced by beneficiaries hosted in 2022 is verbal abuse, closely linked to physical and psychological abuse. More often, victims suffer from multiple types of abuse.

The majority of aggressions occurring in the family environment were caused by excessive alcohol consumption. Over 70% of the beneficiary victims at the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty were assaulted by their partners when they were intoxicated with ethanol. Jealousy crises also play an important role in the aggressors' behaviors, as illustrated in the figure below. A smaller proportion consists of individuals who become aggressive due to mental health conditions they may or may not have been diagnosed with.
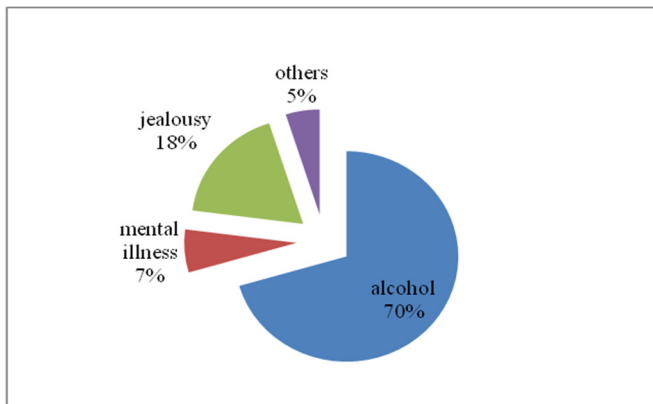
Figure 8: Causes of domestic violence
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

Out of the total of 61 adult victims, only 27 beneficiaries requested a protection order against the aggressor, while the remaining 34 did not want it issued, justifying their decision as follows: they immediately returned to the

aggressor's home, left home „to teach their partner a lesson," or „do not wish to harm their partner." Although they were counseled about the risks they face, some victims do not want or are not ready to make a real change in their lives.

Unfortunately, even those who obtained protection orders violate them (approximately 44%), returning to the aggressor, who manages to „lure" them back through various methods: abstaining from alcohol for a period of time (usually as long as they are in the center), reaching out to extended family/relatives/friends to convey messages of remorse, expressing feelings of longing for the children, threatening self-harm, etc.

The aggressor's behavior changes for a short period of time, and the couple experiences that „honeymoon phase," after which they return to old habits, leading to the repetition of the cycle of domestic violence. In 2022, 9 victims were re-admitted to the center (some of them were beneficiaries for the fourth time).
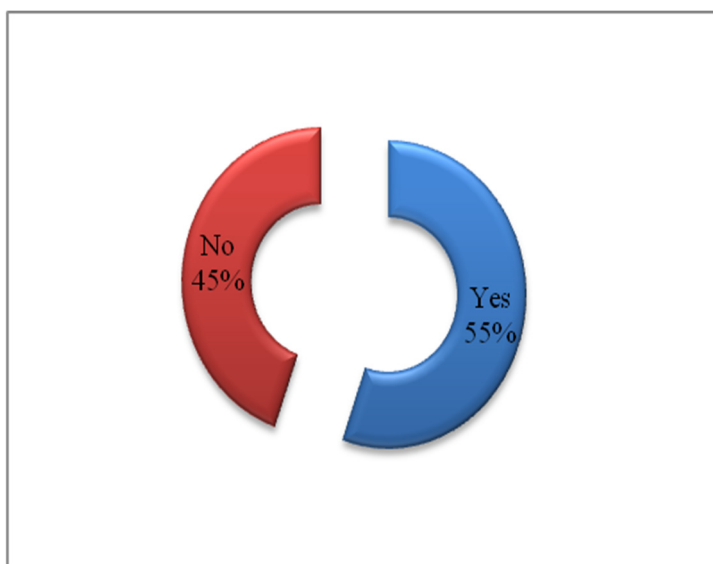
Figure 9: Recidivism rate
Source: Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty, 2022

As we can see in the above figure, in 2022, a percentage of 55% of the cases recorded at the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty returned to the aggressor, whether they had a protection order issued or not. The remaining 45% managed, with the help of resource persons and specialists from the center (social workers, psychologists, educators), to identify new living spaces to start a new life.

Some victims were assisted by extended family members, some went to work abroad, and others were taken in by various foundations (such as the „Glasul vieții" Association, the Hecuba Foundation, the „Casa Vieții" Center), and a few were included in the Protected Housing of the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty.

4. Conclusions

Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon worldwide, affecting women, men, children, and the elderly alike, regardless of age, level of education, socio-economic status, cultural background, or religious beliefs. It produces negative effects on victims, both directly and indirectly, as well as on the aggressor, in the short, medium, and long term.

As discussions about domestic violence increase in civil society and both national and international media, victims have begun to gain courage and seek help from authorities. In 2022, 41% of beneficiaries admitted to the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty sought assistance from the Police or Ambulance Service, 35% turned to the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection in Iași, either through the 119 Child Helpline or at the institution's headquarters, 16% sought help from the Public Social Assistance Service in their communities, and a relatively small number, 8%, sought assistance from associations and foundations.

Over 60% of the assaulted individuals hosted at the center were under the age of 35 and were in consensual unions with the aggressor. Those without education or with primary/gymnasium education, whether completed or not, represent the largest proportion of adult victims admitted (over 75%).

Out of a total of 61 cases, 54 women were assaulted by their spouse or partner. There were also isolated cases where the aggressor was a family member (son, brother, brother-in-law) or former partner.

More than 88% of the victims housed at the center were accompanied by children (from 1 up to 6 minors). Approximately half of the beneficiaries requested discharge within the first 10 days of their stay, as they quickly identified alternative living arrangements, either with extended family, relatives, and friends or by returning to the aggressor's home. Unfortunately, over half of the victims did not request a protection order against the aggressor, even though they were counseled about the risks, both for themselves and their children. Some victims do not wish or are not ready to make a real change in their lives. Many of the protection orders issued are violated within the first month, as the aggressor temporarily changes their behavior, followed by a return to old habits, thus restarting the cycle of violence. In 2022, 9 victims were readmitted to the center (some of them were beneficiaries for the fourth time, with a recurrence rate of almost 15%).

Through the research conducted, it can be concluded that the most common form of domestic violence experienced by beneficiaries hosted in 2022 was verbal abuse, closely linked to physical and psychological abuse. Often, both direct and indirect victims suffer from multiple types of abuse. The repercussions of domestic violence are observed over time on the victim (anxiety, substance abuse, psychological problems, etc.), on children (behavioral problems, adaptability issues, language difficulties, etc.), and the aggressor (protection orders, separation, divorce, etc.).

The causes of aggression within the family are multiple. A significant percentage, over 70%, consists of victims who were assaulted by their partners

when they were intoxicated with alcohol. Jealousy crises also play an important role in the behavior of aggressors. A smaller proportion consists of individuals who become aggressive due to psychological disorders, whether diagnosed or not.

Through the services provided by the center (social, psychological, legal, and educational counseling), approximately 30% of beneficiaries managed to break away from the aggressive and toxic environment in which they lived. Some victims were assisted by extended family members, some went to work abroad, others were taken in by various foundations (such as the „Glasul Vieții" Association, the Hecuba Foundation, the „Casa Vieții" Center), and a few were included in the Protected Housing of the Center for Social Services for Adults in Difficulty. The importance and role of social services offered to victims of domestic violence will be quantified over time through the regaining of psychological balance and social reintegration of the victims. The support they receive will help them reintegrate into society, regain confidence in themselves, and be certain that they will be able to cope on their own.

Although domestic violence is punishable by law in Romania, this scourge is still frequently encountered. In recent years, a series of measures have been taken to prevent and combat domestic violence, including improving the legal framework, developing social services, implementing projects aimed at increasing public confidence in relevant institutions, conducting programs to raise awareness in civil society, and allocating the necessary resources for the effective functioning of institutions fighting against violence.

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Biodata

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CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE: FACTORS INHIBITING OR TRIGGERING THE DISCLOSURE OF THE SECRET

Oana Lăcrămioara BĂDĂRĂU[1], Sergiu-Lucian RAIU[2]

Abstract

The secret character in the abusive relationship, as well as the child's vulnerability, forces him to remain silent and allows the abuse to be repeated. The objective of this paper was to identify the factors that inhibit or cause disclosure of child sexual abuse. The study is based on the opinion of six young women between the ages of 19 and 27, victims of intrafamilial sexual abuse, who benefited from special protection measures.

Based on the interview method, the following were analyzed: individual and family history; the age of onset of sexual abuse, its duration and type; the strategies used by the aggressor in keeping the secret; the way of disclosure and the results obtained afterward. In four of the six cases, the perpetrator was the biological father, and the „secret of sexual abuse” was secured through repeated threats, terrorizing, and physical abuse. Three of the young women revealed the sexual abuse to a friend, respectively to the foster mother (intentionally), one other young woman confessed what happened to them during counseling sessions, and therapy (requested/supported), and one young woman spoke when she was a child to the educator from kindergarten (accidental). One of the participants spoke for the first time about childhood sexual abuse during the present study. Fear of being blamed or held responsible, and feelings of shame contributed to the delay in disclosing the secret.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, special protection measure, disclosure of the secret, sexual abuse accommodation syndrome.

Résumé : Le caractère secret dans la relation abusive, ainsi que la vulnérabilité de l'enfant, l'obligent au silence et permettent la répétition des abus. L'objectif de cet article était d'identifier les facteurs qui inhibent ou provoquent la divulgation d'abus sexuels sur des enfants. Six jeunes femmes âgées de 19 à 27 ans ont participé à la présente étude, victimes d'abus sexuels intrafamiliaux, qui ont bénéficié de mesures de protection particulières.

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Sur la base de la méthode d'entretien, ont été analysés: les antécédents individuels et familiaux; l'âge du début de l'abus sexuel, sa durée et son type; les stratégies utilisées par l'agresseur pour garder le secret; la nature et la qualité des relations primaires/significatives dans l'enfance et l'adolescence; le mode de divulgation et les résultats obtenus par la suite.

Dans quatre des six cas, l'auteur était le père biologique et le «secret des abus sexuels» a été préservé grâce à des menaces répétées, à la terreur et à des violences physiques. Trois des jeunes femmes ont révélé l'abus sexuel à un ami, respectivement à l'assistante maternelle (intentionnellement), une jeune femme a avoué ce qui lui était arrivé lors de séances de conseil, de thérapie (demandée/soutenue) et une jeune femme a parlé à l'institutrice de maternelle quand elle était enfant (accidentellement). L'une des participantes a parlé pour la première fois d'abus sexuels durant l'enfance au cours de la présente étude. La peur d'être blâmée ou accusée, les sentiments de peur et de honte ont contribué au retard dans la divulgation du secret.

Mots clés : abus sexuel sur enfant, mesure spéciale de protection, révélation du secret, syndrome d'accommodement de l'abus sexuel.

Rezumat: Caracterul secret în legătura abuzivă precum şi vulnerabilitatea copilului, îl obligă pe acesta la tăcere şi permite repetarea abuzului. Obiectivul acestei lucrări a fost identificarea factorilor care inhibă sau provoacă dezvăluirea abuzului sexual asupra copiilor. Studiul se bazează pe opinia a şase tinere cu vârste cuprinse între 19 şi 27 de ani, victime ale abuzului sexual intrafamilial, care au beneficiat de măsuri de protecţie specială. Pe baza metodei interviului au fost analizate: istoria individuală şi familială; vârsta debutului abuzului sexual, durata şi tipul acestuia; strategiile folosite de agresor în păstrarea secretului; modul de dezvăluire şi rezultatele obţinute ulterior. În patru din cele şase cazuri făptuitorul a fost tatăl biologic, iar „secretul abuzului sexual" a fost asigurat prin ameninţări, terorizări şi abuzuri fizice repetate. Trei dintre tinere au dezvăluit abuzul sexual unui prieten, respectiv asistentei maternale (intenţionat), o tânără a mărturisit ce i s-a întâmplat în cadrul şedinţelor de consiliere, terapie (solicitat/susţinut), iar o tânără a vorbit când era copil educatoarei de la grădiniţă (accidental). Una dintre participante a povestit pentru prima dată despre abuzul sexual din copilărie cu ocazia studiului de faţă. Teama de a fi blamate sau învinuite, sentimentele de frică şi ruşine au contribuit la întârzierea divulgării secretului.

Cuvinte cheie: abuzul sexual al copilului, măsură de protecţie specială, divulgarea secretului, sindromul acomodării cu abuzul sexual.

1. Introduction

Child sexual abuse is often difficult to identify because many children find it difficult to talk about (Paine and Hansen, 2002). There are victims who only in adulthood dare to denounce the acts they were subjected to in childhood. For example, London et al. (2005) conducting a review of 11 retrospective studies in adults, despite the differences in definitions of abuse, the methodology used, and the characteristics of the population studied, noted that in 10 of the 11 retrospective studies, only one-third of the adults who experienced childhood sexual abuse disclosed it at that time.

In scientific literature, the term disclosure of sexual abuse is approached from several perspectives. Generally, most researchers consider that the disclosure

of sexual abuse is not a simple act, but an active, interactional process, which often takes place sequentially and entails a series of consequences on a personal, family, or community level (Reitsema, Grietens, 2016). Some authors believe that disclosure of sexual abuse has a certain „life course" depending on each person because attitudes and willingness to disclose change over time. Other authors approach the disclosure of sexual abuse as a request for help, as an important step in the recovery process, to let go of the sense of shame, guilt, and sense of responsibility that many survivors feel (Livesey, 2002).

Other authors emphasize how information is transmitted within a disclosure: through *verbal or non-verbal means (letters, drawings, gestures), directly or indirectly, partially or fully, determined or accidental* (Alaggia, 2010).

At the same time, a disclosure may have an informal recipient (for example, a family member or friend), or a formal recipient (such as the social worker or psychologist working in child protection services). Factors that influence disclosure in one context are not necessarily the same as those that influence disclosure in a different context (McElevay, 2008). Telling a friend is not the same as telling a parent. Telling in an informal context is different from telling a professional what happened, in an investigative interview or a therapy session. Grandgenett et al. (2021) showed that informal disclosure was most frequently to a parent (n=754; 60%), a family member who did not have childcare responsibilities (n=117; 9%), school staff (n =114; 9%) or the child's therapist (n=114; 9%), and one hundred and ninety young people (15%) told another person (e.g., a friend, a doctor, a babysitter, or any of the law).

However, many child sexual abuse survivors delay or fail to disclose their abuse, even when they appear for formal investigative interviews. Caregivers are more likely to believe allegations when young people have disclosed before the interview and less likely to believe if the alleged perpetrator lives at home (Grandgenett et al., 2021).

In professional relationships, disclosures can be influenced by: the personal approach of the specialist, his knowledge and experience, the time given, etc. In the scientific literature (Paine and Hansen 2002; Alaggia, 2004) the patterns of disclosure of sexual abuse most frequently used are:

- *Accidental disclosures*: when abuse is revealed by chance, it does not imply a deliberate effort on the part of the child. It often involves discovery by third parties (for example, during medical examinations).
- *Requested/sustained disclosure*: appear only in response to direct questions, often determined by a certain verbal or non-verbal behaviour of the child; were typically described as occurring in supportive settings (investigative interviews, counseling, therapy, etc.)
- *Intentional disclosures*: when a child consciously decides to tell someone else; involves memories recovered in adulthood, awareness of what happened.

Alaggia (2004), in the qualitative study of 24 male and female survivors of child sexual abuse, developed an expanded conceptualization of disclosure

patterns. This included four categories: (1) *Purposeful disclosure* to describe direct and indirect verbal attempts and intentional behavioural attempts to disclose; (2) *Behavioural manifestations* to include intentional and unintentional behavioural attempts to reveal behavioural effects or symptoms; (3) *Intentionally withheld disclosures*, to include willful withholding, false denial, accidental discovery, and prompt or sustained disclosure; and finally, (4) *Triggered disclosures of delayed memories*. The latter refers to the disclosure following retrieving memories that may have been inaccessible due to developmental factors.

In the case of sexual abuse, the term **latency** (time delay in disclosure) refers to the period between the beginning of the abuse and the moment when a child or young person discloses or attempts to disclose that abuse. Researchers examining latency to disclosure report a long period, with an average delay of 3 to 18 years (London et al., 2005). Delay in disclosure may indicate feelings of responsibility for the abuse itself, but also the impact of the disclosure on those around them. It can be seen as both a symbolic loss (loss of innocence) and a fundamental loss of control over sexuality (forced sex), including a sense of loss of bodily integrity, confusion about sexual orientation, or an inability to have satisfying sexual relationships (Alaggia, 2005).

Research suggests that ***several factors*** can influence a child or young person's decision to disclose sexual abuse. For example, in some studies, extrafamilial sexual abuse is more frequently reported than intrafamilial sexual abuse (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003).

The age of the child at the onset of the abuse was also identified as a predictor of disclosure of sexual abuse in some studies, but nonsignificant in others (London et al., 2005). However, studies indicate that the disclosure rate of sexual abuse in children younger than 6 years old is lower compared to other age groups and that developmental factors may explain young children's inability to intentionally disclose (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Paine and Hansen, 2002). School-aged children are more likely to confide to a parent than to a friend or peer, and adolescents are more likely to confide to another adolescent (London et al. 2008). Grandgenett et al. (2021) show that older age at the forensic interview also predicted disclosure.

The likelihood of **intentional disclosure** increases with age, when girl victims between differs7 and 13 are more likely to confess to an adult or a friend as opposed to those aged 14-17 who are more likely to confess to an adult (McElvaney, 2008). Older children and adolescents tend to intentionally disclose sexual abuse as opposed to younger children who tend to disclose what happened to them spontaneously. Younger children are more vulnerable to delayed confession due to immaturity, language difficulties, being more easily manipulated, and not realizing the gravity of the facts (London et. al. 2008)

The scientific literature differentiates between individual characteristics (gender, age of the victim), family characteristics (dysfunctional families, the existence of other forms of violence in the family, families with alcohol consumption, drugs, crime, child abuse, and neglect) and the specifics of the abuse

(severity, frequency, duration) that influence disclosure. The victim's relationship with the perpetrator can also affect disclosure.

Victims *who decide to confess the abuse* do so for emotional reasons, but they are those of anger, fear, and confusion because they are asked directly or because of being involved in a conversation about the abuse. They may also feel compelled to disclose because they know they have done wrong or want to prevent future abuse of themselves or others (Winters et al., 2020). Most victims who disclose to others do so because they have a close or trusting relationship with that person. In other cases, victims chose to tell a particular person because they hoped that person could help them or stop the abuse, or the person witnessed or suspected the abuse (Winters et al., 2020).

Family factors were also found to influence disclosures. Families characterized by chaos and aggression, the presence of other forms of child abuse, violence, and dysfunctional communication, can affect children's decisions to confess sexual abuse (Alaggia, 2010).

Disclosure may occur as a result of overwhelming family conflict, accidental discovery by another person, or community awareness and awareness of sexual abuse. If family conflict does trigger disclosure, it is usually only after several years of continuous sexual abuse and after an eventual failure of the child's coping mechanisms (Summit, 1983).

Relationship with the perpetrator is another factor cited in the literature that explains why some child (children) victims keep sexual abuse a secret. The closer the victims are to the perpetrator, the less likely they are to disclose the sexual abuse. When the perpetrator is a significant family member, attachment issues, traumatic bonding, and the child's need to protect family integrity are suggested as possible explanations for maintaining secrecy and delaying disclosure (Paine & Hansen, 2002; Summit, 1983). Children may feel fear of the perpetrator and the potential consequences of disclosure. Therefore, to survive sexual abuse by a family member, i.e. a trusted person, children try to accommodate the situation by putting great effort into accepting and keeping the secret (Summit, 1983).

Structural factors such as discrimination, migration, and poverty have been identified as potential deterrents to disclosure of sexual abuse. Children may also fear their marginalization in the community and other negative consequences related to cultural attitudes and beliefs (Alaggia, 2001). Disclosure of intrafamilial sexual abuse can be more complicated in cultural communities that place a high importance on preserving the family and avoiding its breakdown (Paine & Hansen, 2002).

Among the reasons most often cited by children who did not disclose sexual abuse are: shame (London et. al, 2005), the belief that the incident was not serious enough, lack of evidence (Winters et al., 2020), feelings of guilt (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003), fear of negative consequences (London et al., 2005), fear of not being believed (McElvaney, 2008). Winters and colleagues (2020) also list the following internal barriers to disclosure of sexual abuse: emotional distress (fear and embarrassment), avoidance, and confusion about the abuse or what others will

say. Among the external or environmental barriers are elements such as: not wanting to upset others, avoiding problems that may arise, the belief that reporting would not lead to any significant change, or threats from the aggressor.

At the same time, it must be taken into account the fact that the reasons for non-disclosure change over time due to the child's cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development, but also due to changes in the systems (educational, social, medical, etc.) with which he interacts (McElvaney, 2008). Sometimes actual disclosure is preceded by several prior attempts, but fear of consequences may significantly predict delayed disclosure (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003).

In 1983, Roland Summit, a renowned psychiatrist, published a formal description of how sexually abused children disclose abuse. Summit's model, called *child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome*, included five elements: *(1) keeping the secret (secrecy); (2) helplessness (feeling helpless); (3) blocking and accommodation; (4) delayed, unconvincing disclosure, and (5) retraction.* The purpose of this model was to highlight that some children may be reluctant to disclose sexual abuse. According to this model, this occurs because of the physical and psychological constraints that the perpetrator exerts on the child to maintain secrecy. Thus, the author states, „He is most often fearful, insecure, and confused about the nature of continuing sexual experience and the outcome of its discovery (disclosure)" (Summit, 1983, 178).

Roland Summit's 1983 work was highly regarded among specialists. The model proposed by the above-mentioned author is considered very sensitive from a psychological point of view because it tries to describe the internal dynamics of the child in his efforts to cope with the experience of abuse (McElevay, 2008).

2. Research methodology

The purpose of this qualitative research was to identify the factors that inhibit or cause the disclosure of sexual abuse of children and young people. Six young women between the ages of 19 and 27 years old participated in the present study, victims of intrafamilial sexual abuse, who benefited from special protection measures.

The research questions we started from, are:
(1) What is the socio-familial profile of sexually abused children and young people?
(2) What is the specificity of sexual abuse in the case of children and young people (age of onset, duration, and type of abuse)?
(3) What intimidation strategies do the aggressors use on child and young victims for not disclosing the sexual abuse they are subjected to?
(4) How and to whom do child and young victims disclose sexual abuse?

Based on the interview method and using a semi-structured interview guide, the following aspects were analyzed: individual and family history; the age of onset of sexual abuse, its duration and type; the strategies used by the aggressor in keeping the secret; the nature and quality of primary/significant relationships

in childhood and adolescence; the way of disclosure (intentional, accidental or requested) and the results obtained afterward.

Subjects were identified by the snowball method. A recruitment ad has been posted on a social media[3] non-profit organization group whose members are young people from the special protection system. The researchers were contacted by two people, who, in turn, recommended other people to be part of the study. By providing the information used in this study, the participants agreed by giving their consent to be used in this scientific research under anonymity. The young women who are the subject of this study ended up in the protection system with special protection measures, due to various forms of abuse and/or neglect (including sexual abuse) to which they were subjected in the nuclear or extended family of origin. The age of entry into the protection system of the participants in the study is the period of middle childhood, between 7-10 years old, and in the case of three of the respondents the age of entry into the system is the period of adolescence 14, 17 years old. The length of stay in the special protection system varies between 1 and 9 years old (see Table 1).

The interviews were conducted between September 25-30, 2023. The average duration of the interviews was M=42 min.66 sec., the shortest interview being 27 min.15 sec., and the longest interview being 1h 05 min. The interviews were conducted by telephone, recorded with a tape recorder, then transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically.

Table 1. Data on sexual abuse and period history
from the study participants' protective system

Interview code	Age (years completed)	The reason for entering the protection system / Perpetrator	Age of onset of sexual abuse/ Duration of sexual abuse	Disclosure type/ confidant	Special protective measure	Age of entry/exit into the protection system
I1	21 years old	abuse (physical, emotional, **sexual**) and neglect/ **biological father**	4 years old/ Over 5 years	**Intentional** disclosure/ foster mother	1. Family foster care 2. Institutional care	entry-10 years old exit-19 years old
I2	27 years	sexual abuse/ **biological father**	11 years old/ 5 years	**Intentional** disclosure/ high school friend	1. Institutional care	entry-17 years old exit 19 years old

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[3] It is about the "Council of Institutionalized Youth" Association https://www.facebook.com/ConsiliulTinerilorInstitutionalizati which aims to represent institutionalized children and youth at local, national and international level and to defend and promote the rights of those who have benefited from a special protection measure intended for children deprived, temporarily or permanently, of the protection of their parents, to increase their active participation in the life of the communities in which they operate, according to the association's website https://consiliultinerilor.ro

Interview code	Age (years completed)	The reason for entering the protection system / Perpetrator	Age of onset of sexual abuse/ Duration of sexual abuse	Disclosure type/ confidant	Special protective measure	Age of entry/exit into the protection system
I3	20 years	neglect **sexual abuse/ first cousin and husband of the foster mother**	10 years old/ Over 5 years	**Intentional** disclosure/ researcher	1. Institutional care (Mother and child center) 2. Family foster care 3. Institutional care	entry-10 years old exit-19 years old
I4	21 years old	**abuse (sexual,** physical, emotional/ **biological father**	6-7 years old/ 1 year	**Accidental** disclosure/ kindergarten teacher	1. Family foster care 2. Institutional care	entry-7 years old exit-18 years old
I5	21 years old	**abuse (sexual,** physical)/ **maternal uncle)**	13-14 years old/ 1 year	**Requested, sustained** disclosure/ psychologist	1. Institutional care	entry- 14 years old exit-18 years old
I6	19 years	**sexual abuse** and physical, emotional/ **biological father**	17 years old/ months	**Intentional** disclosure/ friend from high school	1. Institutional care	entry-17 years old exit-18 years old

Source: Table made by the authors based on the information obtained from the respondents

3. Study results

3.1. Individual and family history

The study participants come from disorganized families (alcohol consumption, unstable income, domestic violence, etc.)

Separated from the maternal figure from a young age, raised by an abusive and alcoholic father, one of the participants in the study came to the attention of the authorities, after the precarious conditions in which she and her brother grew up, were reported by the neighbors: *„My biological father was very aggressive and alcoholic. We grew up in bad conditions (...) our father raised us until I was 9 years old and my brother was 11 years old (...) Some neighbors reported this and the people from child protection came to check and after that, they took us (...) I met my mother one time. I can't say that I felt incredibly connected to her... it was a meeting I made of curiosity, to see who she is, and what she looks like and that's it. (...) I saw her once more, we exchanged phone numbers, and she called me"* (I1).

Another respondent declares that she ended up in the care of the state after her father sexually abused her: *„I ended up in the residential center (...) at the age of 17. When it all started, my mother was hospitalized, she was hospitalized for a long time"* (I2).

In the case of respondent I3, the unfavorable conditions in the family are noticeable: the father went to work abroad, the mother had to move with the children from one place to another, and she could no longer cope with the difficulties. So I3 confesses: *„I'm 20 years old, but I'm still a high school student because of the unfavorable environment in which I grew up, I went to school later (...) I stayed with my mother at a mother-child center, and then a protection measure was instituted for me (...) I had shortcomings in my family (...) I also come from a Roma family and the environment in which I grew up was not a favorable one (...) my father had left, in Italy, as if all the difficulties started from there. When he left, my mother was left alone, then my mother quarreled with her in-laws, that is, my father's parents, and they kicked her out of the house where I was staying (...) my mother was alone with three children after her and I was still staying at my mother's sisters' turn until the protection was notified"* (I3).

One of the interviewees says that both the mother and the father had problems with alcohol, and when the parents separated, each of the children stayed with one of the parents. In addition to physical abuse, he also suffered sexual abuse: *„I started first grade at the nursery school. At the age of 7, I entered the protection system (...) Cause: parents. (..) My mother was an alcoholic, and my father was also an alcoholic, he beat us, made us undress, and touched me and my older sister in certain areas. (...) And when my parents split up, my mother left with my sister and I stayed with my father (...) My mother worked during the day, and my father was always at home (...) My parents split up because of (...) Alcohol, beatings"* (I4).

Orphaned as a child, one of the interviewees says that her uncle is the one who tried to abuse her sexually and thus ended up in the protection system: *„The parents are deceased. I was 5 years old... about that when my father died and 7 years old when my mother died (...) I was left in the care of my aunt, my mother's sister (...) What age did I enter the system? I think at 14 years old. (...) I was in the 9th grade"* (I5).

Tired of being physically assaulted by her father and witnessing fights caused by him, one of the interviewees declares that she chose to leave home: *„I ran away from home and had some pretty big problems with my parents, or rather parents... (...) Only the father is biological, the mother, isn't"* (I6).

The family history of sexually abused children shows that they came from disorganized families, with a precarious material situation, in which the lack of a maternal figure, paternal figure, or even both parents, led them to grow up in improper conditions. Thus, some children were taken from their families by the authorities following reports made by various people, and others chose to run away from home to end the verbal, physical, and sexual abuse they were subjected to.

3.2. The age of onset of sexual abuse, its duration and type

One of the victims of sexual abuse states that she was abused from a very young age and that she always had to grow up in a tense environment. Unfortunately, the abuses (including sexual abuse) were committed by the biological father himself, for five years: *„The father was abusive... physically, sexually... The sexual abuse started as long as I know myself... I have memories since*

around the age of four and I know clearly that even it was happening (...) A sexual act. It happened when I was four years old and continued for five years when I was removed from my biological family and placed in foster care" (I1).

Having to cope with the trauma, some of the abused children are unable to recall the details of what happened in the family. This is also the case of respondent I2 in which the sexual abuse (by the biological father) started at the age of 11 and continued for 5 years. The young woman does not remember a series of details regarding the abuse, only that it usually happened in her own home, in the absence of her mother: „*It started, I was in the 4th grade, I was very young, and it lasted until I reached high school (...) The first time he abused me was when I was 11 years old, yes. For five years (...) Sexual abuse by the natural father (...) happened, when the mother was absent... in the house, yes. With what frequency? I don't have clear memories of that time. And during the investigation, it was difficult for them to get everything from me, because it was deleted automatically. I was probably stuck, and it was difficult for me to remember, to be able to give details"* (I2).

An extreme situation was shared by one of the young women who was sexually abused as a child by one of her older cousins: „*Then I couldn't say that it was serious, nor normal what was happening because the environment where I came from was already used to it, I was used to this kind of thing, for cousins to touch each other or I know... there were moments of sexual abuse between cousins (...) My mother had a sister and that sister had a child and that child was giving me no peace (...) I was about ten years old then, I think he was over five, six, seven years older, something like that".* (I3). Later, this young woman benefited from a special protection measure, placement with a foster nurse but, unfortunately, she was sexually abused again, even by the foster nurse's husband. The man was using licentious language and exposing his genitals in front of her and her sister: „*I don't know exactly... to tell you about those abuses, they were related and only done by the nanny's husband and when he was alone at home. Without his wife he started to be very... he started to be very abusive, he made sexual remarks to me and these things happened several times (...) Several times it happened (...) he would come and watch us at night sleeping (...) when my sister and I were alone at home with him, the man became very sexual (...) he was very open to what it meant, I don't know sexual things (...) he had no problem to talk to 10-year-old children (...) to take off his pants, it was an example that still marks me (...) with both of them he did the same (...) No. No sexual contact, just the thing, I told you with my pants (...) the man was very sexual (...) if my sister asked him something like a child who had access to the Internet and was watching, I don't know, at pornographic things for example, if she asked him something, he had no qualms about explaining to her what it meant or look, let me show you or... so... pedophilia, I consider it pedophilia and it is pedophilia"* (I3).

At a young age, individuals do not differentiate between the limits of showing affection and what constitutes sexually abusive behavior on the part of someone, especially when it is a familiar person, a person who offers them protection and safety. This is also the case of respondent I4 (abused by her father around the age of six). Although there was no sexual intercourse with penetration,

touching in the intimate areas happened several times a week: „*I was around six years old (...) I saw him, I can say, as a normal one. At that age. I didn't know how to tell the difference (...) If by attention you can understand, I don't know... let me kiss you, obscenely caress you (...) Sexual contact, no. Penetrative sexual contact, no. To put it this way (...) Yes. Intimate, touch using his sexual organ in my private area (...) Night. It happened quite often. 3 times a week (...) About 2-3 times a week, so to speak*" (I4).

Exhibitionist gestures from adults are also reported by respondent I5, who, in her teenage years, testifies that her uncle ended up giving her the impression that he was in love with her, showing jealous behaviors. From her accounts, it can be deduced that she was subjected to several forms of abuse: „*Sexual abuse by my aunt's husband (...) At 14 years old (...) It started when I was about 13 years old, I think. The reason? The sexual abuse (...) didn't manage to do anything to me, but he tried (...) my aunt was at work, and he was trying.... he was trying to hit me just to shut up, not to say nothing. He would undress in front of me, thinking that who knows what I'm going to do, things like that (...) In addition to sexually abusing me (...) he would hit me many times, lock me out, and tear my clothes, he thought I had someone else or who knows what, I don't know what he was thinking.* She confesses that her uncle provoked her, tried his best to attract her attention to bring her closer to him and expose her to various acts of exhibitionism: „*These things happened, usually in the evening, but nothing happened in the evening, only while he was trying to get me out of the room, to draw my attention to what he was doing when his boy was in the room (...) he was trying to get me out of the room by unplugging my TV or... and to annoy me, because he was probably trying to do something and show his penis (...) I was lucky from God that I didn't suffer anything more serious...*" (I5).

Respondent I6 was also subjected to several forms of abuse from the father, whose abusive behavior continues even today, as she testifies: „*At 17 and a half years old I entered the system (...) Rape attempts, beatings, scandals, threats, and humiliations that even today, continue (...) This happened in December... 17 years, yes, something like that. Thereabouts. And a month later, I ran away from home (...) I was 17 and a half years old when I finally managed to leave home. It was then that I got up the courage... (...) From the biological father (...) they were physical, emotional and sexual*".

Near the age of majority, one of the interviewees was subjected to an attempted rape by the biological father who abused her both verbally, and physically: „*It was all of them. On the sexual side, for example, there was an attempted rape and it happened to, I don't know... end in time. I mean, he didn't get to do a big thing to me... it was an attempt to molest (...) in beatings, shouting, swearing. Yes, because of the beatings I have serious back problems. I risk being paralyzed and I have medical evidence, black on white. I have dislocated ribs, also because of the beatings (...) One time, attempted rape (...) and emotional and physical abuse were almost daily, which still happens now. So even now it happens, including insults, including no... but, yes they are (...) He had joked before, or at least that's what he insinuated, to put his hand on my breasts, on my ass, to call me mother what big breasts you have, mother*

what ... big you have, not to put it another way, things like that... but when I got into bed with him, yes, it was only once" (I6).

The age of onset of sexual abuse among the interviewed young women was distributed as follows: two during early childhood (at the age of 4 and 6-7 years old respectively), two during middle childhood (at the age of 10 and 11 years old respectively) and two during adolescence (13-14 years old, respectively 17 years old). In most cases, the perpetrator was the respondents' biological father (4 out of 6 cases). Regarding the duration of the sexual abuse, it varies from a few months to and more than 5 years.

3.3. The strategies used by the aggressor in keeping the secret

The „secret of sexual abuse" was secured through repeated threats, intimidation, and physical abuse. The fear of being blamed and shame contributed to the delay in disclosing the secret. One of the young women interviewed confesses that she was threatened with death by the very person who gave her life: „*he told me he was going to kill me, he simply told me that if I told anyone, he would take him I don't know where and he will take me to the orphanage with bars on the window and that I will be beaten there and mistreated and things you say to a child and he believes you".* (I1). Respondent I2 confesses that she loved her father so much and was very attached to him that she agreed not to tell anyone about the sexual abuse she was subjected to: „*when I was a child, a little girl, I was very attached to him. And I thought he loved me very much (...) He had put a lot of emphasis on shame. And... the fear of him was a... I was afraid (...).*

Having access to information, from sources read through the Internet, she came to the knowledge and realized that the things that are happening to her are not natural and made her take a stand so that she could escape from the trap in which she was caught: „*Now with this mind, I would have reacted differently, I wouldn't have stayed, but then I didn't have internet, I didn't have information, no... no... until I got to the institution, I didn't know that such a thing existed (...) I didn't see anyone to whom I could ask for help (...) my only escape was to leave there, in my mind there was only to learn, learn and leave"*(I2).

One of the respondents states that both she and her sister did not remain passive to the advances and exhibitionist behavior coming from the nanny's husband and reacted so that the man avoided repeating the abusive behaviors: „*When he took off my pants, she understood that it was too much and even me and my sister reacted badly and I think she got scared then, and said to keep our secret or something like that, don't let your wife find out and nah... I think that stopped him from going further"*(I3). We can also talk about the attitude and firm reaction in the face of obscene gestures in the case of another respondent, who, being close to the age of majority, decided to leave the family home and take her life into her own hands. She says, moreover, that her father was known to everyone as a difficult, aggressive person: „*There was a confrontation between me and my father (..) my father, I don't know how to tell you, invents certain stories (...) has serious problems (...) almost everyone knew who my father is"*(I6).

Other strategies used by one of the aggressors were: spying, harassing, and insulting in public: „*he was following me on the street, insulting me in front of the world... verbal aggression"* (I5).

In conclusion, we can summarize that although the aggressors used different strategies to intimidate the victims, some of them dared to react, not to remain passive, and to look for solutions to get out of the abusive situation.

3.4. Method of disclosure and choosing the confidant(s)

Next, this study tries to answer the following questions: „When did the first disclosure take place?", „What was the context?", „Who was the trusted person chosen?". Thus, out of the six respondents, two revealed the secret to a friend, respectively to the foster mother (mode of intentional disclosure), and two other young women confessed to the counselor/psychologist (mode of disclosure requested/supported), and a young woman spoke about abuse to her kindergarten teacher (random, accidental mode of disclosure). In particular, one of the participants talked about childhood sexual abuse, for the first time, during the present study (mode of intentional disclosure).

Arrived in the child protection system, with placement measure, I1 says that although it was not easy for her, feeling guilty for what had happened to her (sexual abuse by the biological father), after gaining trust in the foster family, she was able to reveal her secret: „*after I got attached to the people there, I went one evening and sat in my mother's arms and told her I wanted to tell her something. I did this with difficulty because I still had the impression that something was wrong with me and that I was to blame. That maybe after what I tell them, they won't want me anymore".* Benefiting from the support of specialists (psychologist and psychotherapist), she managed to overcome the trauma and talk much more freely about what happened to her: „*After what I said, I had sessions with the psychologist, after with a psychotherapist, I did meetings for about 6 years and they know each other... I don't know if you notice, but when I talk, I can say lightly about this topic. I try not to let it affect me anymore or... I buried it in there somewhere and these sessions are important. It helps you. The more you talk, the more you open up, although it hurts at first, it helps a lot"* (I1).

Family members often question children's claims when it comes to domestic sexual abuse, so in the case of two of the respondents, the confidant for disclosure was chosen from among the group of friends they felt close to closer: „*I found a source of trust in someone and that's where it started... I confessed to a friend from high school (...) that friend had a cousin who was a lawyer, that lawyer took me to the police, and from there it all started the investigation that lasted until I reached the 11th grade, so there were some difficult years (...) there was no one with me from the family, because no one believed me"* (...) *I suspect that they were afraid of him because she (mother) also took a lot of beating.* (I2). Subject I6 was in the same situation: „*I raised some alarms at school (...) One of my best friends knew what was going on. Because I was bruised all the time and he saw me crying and suffering. Instead, he couldn't do anything, so I preferred to run away from home because I*

couldn't find any other solution. He is a very old friend with whom I grew up (...) we were the closest people (...) we had a lot of trusts, and it seems that sometimes the proverb also has a reality: a friend in need is a friend indeed" (I6).

The family was not offering support even in the situation of respondent I3, who admits that she could not rely on her mother to reveal the abuse, because she says: *„My mother was abusive, I didn't know how to talk with her about it (...) To talk to someone about this thing with the foster carer, I didn't. I don't think I ever talked to anyone." „No. Nobody knows these events. I'm only talking to you now. That's it"* (I3).

A form of accidental disclosure can be observed in the case of one of the research respondents, who testifies the following: *„The person I told was in kindergarten, the teacher, educator, I only know her name, and as a result measures were taken. (...) Me, telling them then with some nonchalance, thinking it was something correct"* (I4).

Solicited disclosure occurs in response to direct questions, often prompted by specific child behaviour or nonverbal communication, and in supportive environments, was mentioned by one respondent. Arriving in the protection system, I5, attracted the attention of the people around her, the specialists at the moment when she ended up self-mutilating: *„I was going to a psychologist because I was depressed and in the end, I still talked with the psychologist and in the end the psychologist talked to someone from the police, something like that, some acquaintance and otherwise in return they helped me and I know that one day I went to the police to file a complaint. They also called him and his wife from work. He didn't wait for her. They didn't know anything about what was going to happen. That's how I managed to get out of there (...) The psychologist who deals with the children in the system (...) the psychologist (...) saw that something was wrong because I was depressed, I started cutting my hands, things like that"* (I5).

4. Discussions and conclusions

Synthesizing the information for each of the four research questions, it can be stated that regarding the socio-familial profile of sexually abused children and young people, they come from disorganized families (alcohol consumption, domestic violence), with poor economic situations, single-parent families as a result of parents' separation, one of them going to work abroad or even death. All respondents ended up in the child protection system because of neglect and/or various forms of abuse to which they were subjected.

The second research question concerned the specifics of sexual abuse, namely: age of onset, duration, and type of abuse. In all six cases of the interviewed respondents, the form of abuse they were subjected to was intrafamilial sexual abuse. But it can be concluded that the subjects of the research also suffered other forms of abuse such as physical and emotional as well as neglect. In four cases sexual abuse was done by the biological father, in one case the perpetrator was the victim's cousin and the nanny's husband, and in one case, the aggressor was the young woman's uncle. If we refer to the age of onset of sexual abuse, it took place in early childhood 4-6 years old (two cases), in middle childhood 10-11 years old

(two cases), but also in adolescence 13-14 and 17 years old (two cases). In the present study, one of the aggravating factors of sexual abuse, namely the duration, varied from a few months (in the case of one of the respondents) to a year (in the case of two of the respondents) and more than 5 years (in the case of three of the respondents).

Regarding the strategies used by the aggressors to keep the secret, the following were identified: threat, intimidation, inducing feelings of fear and shame, spying, offending, manipulation, and even physical violence.

A final question of the study referred to the patterns of disclosure of sexual abuse (accidental, solicited, or sustained and accidental) of the children and young people in the research group. The most frequently mentioned form of disclosure was intentional. Three of the young women disclosed the sexual abuse to a friend, respectively to the foster mother (intentionally), one young woman confessed what happened during counseling sessions, and therapy (requested/supported), and another young woman accidentally spoke to the educator, when she attended kindergarten (accidentally). One of the participants spoke for the first time about childhood sexual abuse during the present study (intentionally). This is in line with the results of some specialized studies which estimate that between 30-80% of victims do not intentionally disclose sexual abuse until adulthood (Alaggia, 2004; Alaggia, 2005).

Disclosure is an important act no matter if occurs in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. The present study highlights the importance of understanding how contextual and individual factors interact to inhibit or stimulate disclosure in a child's life, including the relationship with the perpetrator, the child's age, cultural issues, family dynamics, the availability of social support, and the responsiveness of those in the environment. On the one hand, disclosure can stop victimization from continuing, alleviate stress and associated symptoms, prevent hypervigilance around secrecy, and create new opportunities and perspectives for remediation. On the other hand, investigations into disclosures of sexual abuse show that they can have negative consequences, the victim can be blamed and/or accused of false accusations, and the reaction of those close to them can be inappropriate, which could lead to the exacerbation of the symptoms related to the abuse (Paine & Hansen, 2002; Summit, 1983).

Some of the cases presented above confirm that, especially if they are young, children do not understand the mistake and abuse that was committed against them (Katz and Field, 2020). Katz and Field (2020) also highlight the essential role that the type of relationship plays in the child-perpetrator dynamic in ensuring the continuation or cessation of abuse, which was also addressed in this article.

The study was conducted to provide a better understanding of the context and experience of sexual abuse disclosure and can be a starting point for initiating other research on this topic, conducted with a representative sample of subjects.

5. Limitations of the study

For a study involving only six participants, we do not claim to generalize the results obtained.

The biggest limitation of this study was its retrospective design. Asking people to recount childhood events can be prone to failure, especially when memories have been repressed for long periods. Event distortion can also be a potential problem in data collection. At the same time, talking about sexual abuse, about an uncomfortable, traumatic secret is an effort with a great emotional charge that can influence the accuracy of the information provided.

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USING MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS FOR BETTER EXPLAIN AND PREDICT INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Nadji RAHMANIA[1], Cristina TEODORESCU[2]

Abstract: This study is intended to be educational and is of particular interest to young researchers. It first aims to present and analyze the most relevant risk factors of intimate partner violence (IPV), then to highlight the most used models in the fight against IPV, and, finally, to discuss them. By incorporating partner-related risk factors into standard screening procedures, we can potentially detect a higher number of women experiencing abuse, as well as those at greater risk of experiencing abuse or physical harm in the future.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Predicting domestic violence, Risk factors, Multivariate analysis, Structural equations modeling.

Résumé : Cette étude se veut pédagogique et s'adresse aux jeunes chercheurs; elle vise dans un premier temps à présenter et analyser de manière critique les facteurs de risque les plus pertinents de la violence conjugale, puis à identifier les modèles les plus utilisés dans la lutte contre ce type de violence et à les discuter. Grâce à l'intégration des facteurs de risque dans les protocoles de dépistage, nous pouvons ainsi identifier plus facilement de femmes maltraitées et celles qui courent un plus grand risque de maltraitance et de blessures.

Mots-clés : Violence domestique, Prédiction de la violence domestique, Facteurs de risque, Analyse multivariée, Modélisation d'équations structurelles.

Rezumat: Acest studiu se doreşte a fi educaţional şi se adresează tinerilor cercetători; îşi propune să prezinte şi să analizeze cei mai relevanţi factori de risc pentru violenţa în familie, să identifice modelele cele mai utilizate în lupta împotriva acestui tip de violenţă şi să le discute. Prin integrarea factorilor de risc în protocoalele de screening putem identifica un număr mai mare de femei abuzate sau cu un risc mai mare de abuz şi rănire.

Cuvinte cheie: Violenţa în familie, Predicţia violenţei în familie, Factorii de risc, Analiza multivariată, Modelarea ecuaţiilor structurale.

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1. Introduction

Different indicators have been highlighted to characterize the main dimensions of IPV. For example, physical aggression « involves dominating behavior such as slapping, hitting, kicking, biting, shoving or dragging, choking, burning or the use or threat of use of a weapon » (Vung et al., 2009), while psychological abuse includes « intimidation, constant belittling or humiliation, and threats, etc. » (WHO, 2012). Other forms of IPV such as forced sexual acts or controlling behaviors – « isolating a person from family or friends, monitoring their movement, and restricting access to information, financial support, or other assistance » (WHO, 2012) have been described. More terms are used to comprehend violence « as an expression of power, control, and domination enacted through a range of ongoing behaviors that often escalate » (Johnson., 2006).

For our analysis, we are going to use the definition of IPV as « physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse » in a broad sense, which « can occur among hetero - or homosexual couples and does not require sexual intimacy » (Bishop and Patterson, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Ellsberg et al., 2008). So, IPV may occur in any intimate relationship: marriage, dating, cohabitation, etc. While men can be victims of IPV, the number of women abused is significantly higher (e.g., in France, in 2022, 82% of deaths within couples are women according to the Ministry of Interior). It's worth noting that most data collected have focused on IPV perpetrated by men against women in heterosexual relationships (Stewart et al., 2021, and the references therein).

International studies conclude that the IPV phenomenon exists in all countries, religions, and societies (Isaac, Enos., 2001; Hoffman, et al., 1994; Walton-Moss et al., 2005). Reported data show all social groups are affected. Despite the efforts of associations and stakeholders in the fight against IPV, there is a gap between the frequency of acts of violence and the number of victims' statements. Police statistics do not provide real data because victims do not always report or report their abuse late. This is particularly the case in France, which stands out for the regular publication of data on IPV. The fight against IPV is a real challenge for French public authorities.

In France, combating all forms of gender-based and sexual violence is the first pillar of the five-year Great Cause for Equality between Women and Men. The commitments made by the President of the Republic, on November 25, 2017, and the Government during the Interministerial Committee of Equality between Women and Men (CIEFH, 2018) on March 8, 2018, have led to accelerated awareness and significant progress for all women who suffer violence. Among the concrete advances, the following can be mentioned:
- Evolution of the legislative framework
- Improved understanding of this phenomenon through specific studies
- Development of systems facilitating freedom of speech and support for victims
- Consolidation and development of victims' care and protection systems

- Strengthened presence of social workers in police and gendarmerie services
- A comprehensive training plan for all concerned professionals

    These measures aim to:
- Prevent: eliminate sexist stereotypes from an early age, as these contribute to the perpetuation of violence; this approach aims to reduce society's overall tolerance for such behavior
- Protect: ensuring the highest level of safety and security for victims and their children
- Punish: to end the culture of impunity surrounding these acts and to implement measures that deter repeat offenses

    All measures to combat violence are useful but are not enough to reduce acts of domestic violence. To support these measures, it is important to determine the risk factors of violence and to develop models that make it possible to predict IPV (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011).

2. Risk Factors for IPV Perpetration

In the literature, several multivariate approaches have been deployed to model IPV. It is important to note that some risk markers are not necessarily causal factors. Indeed, a correlation does not necessarily reflect a causal relationship.

As previous research shows, the risk of becoming a perpetrator of IPV results from a combination of individual, community, and societal factors. A study conducted in South Africa in 1998 (Jewkes et al., 2002) highlighted different risk determinants associated with violence against women: violence during childhood, low education, drinking alcohol, financial support, and so on; but the strongest relationship was found between women's status in society and the use of violence in conflict or power situation.

Social policies or intervention approaches to prevent violence could be better developed by understanding men's risk factors. Two studies carried out among men in Thailand and India found an increased risk of physical violence against wives associated with lower levels of education and living in poverty among men (Hoffman, Demo, and Edwards, 1994; Martin et al., 1999) or cultural factors such as transgression of gender roles (Martin et al., 1999).

Multivariate analysis was used by Tausch (Tausch, 2019) to investigate the acceptability rates of male intimate partner violence (IPV) in different societies around the world. This comparative study, based on World Values Survey data from 72 countries, found that disrespect of property rights and traditional values emerged as major drivers of high IPV acceptability rates, alongside attitudes on gender equality. It also highlighted geographic variations – there are higher rates of IPV acceptability globally in some countries (e.g., Mali, Serbia, Montenegro, Zambia, India, Egypt, etc.) than in others (e.g., Canada, Italy, Georgia, etc.).

Recent research carried out in France during the COVID-19 pandemic found that changes in anxiety/insomnia symptoms during lockdown increased the

risk of abuse, especially among socially vulnerable women (Peraud, Quintard, Constant, 2021).

Risk factor identification for intimate partner violence (IPV) has been a gradual process conducted by several researchers across multiple countries. While several typologies have been proposed in the literature, some fail to fully explain how specific risk factors contribute to IPV perpetration. Studies indicate that while certain factors consistently correlate with an increased risk of violence against women globally, others are context-dependent, varying between and even within countries (for instance, between urban and rural areas). Interestingly, some risk factors may be common to both victims and perpetrators, such as low educational attainment and exposure to parental violence during childhood. However, other factors may differ; for example, young age is a known risk factor for women experiencing IPV but not necessarily for men committing it.

Historically, research has primarily focused on individual-level factors, including low education, childhood abuse experiences, and problematic alcohol use. However, there's recognition of the significance of community and societal risk factors. These include traditional gender norms, women's unequal social, legal, and economic status, the broader use of violence in conflict resolution, and inadequate community sanctions against violent behavior.

Recent research confirms that domestic violence may be correlated with social and demographic factors (Varcoe, et al., 2011). Economic difficulties can increase the risk of violence by intensifying conflicts, altering power dynamics between partners, and challenging traditional (masculine) roles. Conflict-ridden relationships, particularly those involving financial disputes, jealousy, or perceived violations of gender norms, tend to experience higher rates of violence. Additionally, excessive alcohol consumption is associated with an increased likelihood of violent behavior. Women with high levels of educational, economic, and social empowerment generally face lower risks of domestic violence. However, the relationship between empowerment and violence risk isn't straightforward for women below this threshold. Men may resort to violence as a means of addressing identity crises, often triggered by financial struggles or a perceived loss of control over their partners. Societies that broadly accept violence as a norm tend to see higher rates of domestic abuse. To address these issues, experts recommend focusing preventive efforts on enhancing women's social status, challenging societal norms that condone violence, and reducing poverty and alcohol consumption (Campbell, 2002; Burke et al., 1989).

To synthesize, studies have highlighted four main categories of factors associated with an increased IPV risk:

Psychological/ Individual factors:

- Psychological traits (e.g., low self-esteem, impulsive or antisocial behavior, poor self-control, emotional insecurity, dependency, impulsiveness, etc.)
- Behavioral patterns (e.g., previous experiences of abuse, juvenile delinquency or aggression, substance abuse, lack of conflict resolution skills, etc.)

- Attitudes and beliefs (e.g., misogynistic attitudes, desire for relationship power and control, acceptance of violence, rigid gender roles beliefs, etc.)
- Mental health (depression, borderline personality disorder, etc.)
- Socio-economic resources (age, educational level, financial difficulties, unemployment, etc.)

Relationship factors:
- Unhealthy family relationships, experiencing poor parenting, witnessing violence between parents as a child
- Interactions with antisocial and aggressive peers
- Experiences of divorce or separation
- Relationship conflicts e.g., possessiveness, jealousy
- Social isolation and limited friendships etc.

Community factors:
- Poverty rates in the community
- Lack of educational, healthcare, and economic resources
- High unemployment level
- High levels of crime and violence in neighborhoods
- Low community engagement
- Low social support networks etc.

Societal factors:
- Traditional gender norms
- Weak policies or laws
- Inequality between men and women
- Acceptance of violence
- Income inequality etc.

The typology of risk determinants presented is a comprehensive reference guide but is not an exhaustive list. This framework must be applied methodically, because specific risk factors may manifest differently across diverse communities and contexts depending on the cultural, religious, social, and economic characteristics.

3. Multivariate Analysis Models

The question is: what elements contribute to a higher likelihood of women experiencing violence? The occurrence of violence against women results from a complex interaction of personal, relational, societal, cultural, and environmental influences. To comprehend this dynamic, researchers often use the ecological model. This framework considers both individual characteristics and the interactions between individuals and their environment. In this field, Lori Heise has made significant contributions through her extensive research on IPV prevention. From a multidimensional approach, she proposed a framework that considers the influence of societal and structural factors on IPV to better

comprehend the variation in rates of physical and sexual abuse. She also developed a framework to help identify men at higher risk of perpetrating abuse, as well as to comprehend and predict the circumstances or moments when a potentially abusive man could become violent (Heise, 1998, 2011).

Multivariate analysis allows researchers to simultaneously examine multiple variables and their associations with IPV, providing a more comprehensive understanding of this issue. There are several methods of multivariate analysis to explain violence against women such as *Multivariate Analysis of Variance* (MANOVA), *Multiple Correspondence Analysis (*MCA), and *Multinomial Logistic Regression* (MLR). However, the method most used in the literature is the *Method of Structural Equations Modelling* (SEM) to examine how different factors influence IPV and to better understand the observed conflicting relationships among them (Byrne, 2012).

Precisely, *Structural Equations Modelling* (SEM) is a multivariate statistical analysis method that allows to examination of structural relationships. It integrates elements of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis to explore the connections between observed variables and latent constructs (Kline, 2016; Wang & Wang, 2012).

Studies based on multivariate analyses revealed several important insights:

- Age factors: (e.g., older age has been associated with a decreased risk of violence against women; women who married at an early age (less than 18 years) have a higher risk of experiencing IPV)
- Mental health factors: (e.g. experiencing violence is correlated with anxiety symptoms)
- Individual history factors (e.g. previous experience of abuse is linked to an increased risk of future violence)
- Geographic disparities
- Complex interactions of factors, ranging from individual psychological factors to broader societal and cultural influences.

To concretely illustrate how SEM works statistically, we can provide an example from a study conducted by sociologist Kenneth Bollen (Bollen, 1979), a pioneer of SEM. Bollen modeled the relationships between a measure of development in 1960 (ind60) represented by variables x1, x2, x3, and democracy in 1960 (dem60) and 1965 (dem65) represented by variables y1 to y4 and y5 to y8, respectively. The variables were defined as follows: x1: Press Freedom, x2: Fairness of Elections, x3: Freedom of Group Opposition while y1, y2, etc; denote Energy Consumption per Cap, State's Control of Economy, Percentage of Population Protestant, Black's Timing of Development, Rostow-Collier's Economic Take-off Date etc.

The sociologist hypothesizes the existence of latent variables and the types of relationships between latent and measured variables. SEM analysis calculates which theoretical model is a good „fit".

In the figure below, measured variables are represented by squares, latent variables, which are estimated but not directly measured, are represented by circles, the curved arrows represent the covariances or correlations, and the straight arrows depict the direct effects (regression) between variables.
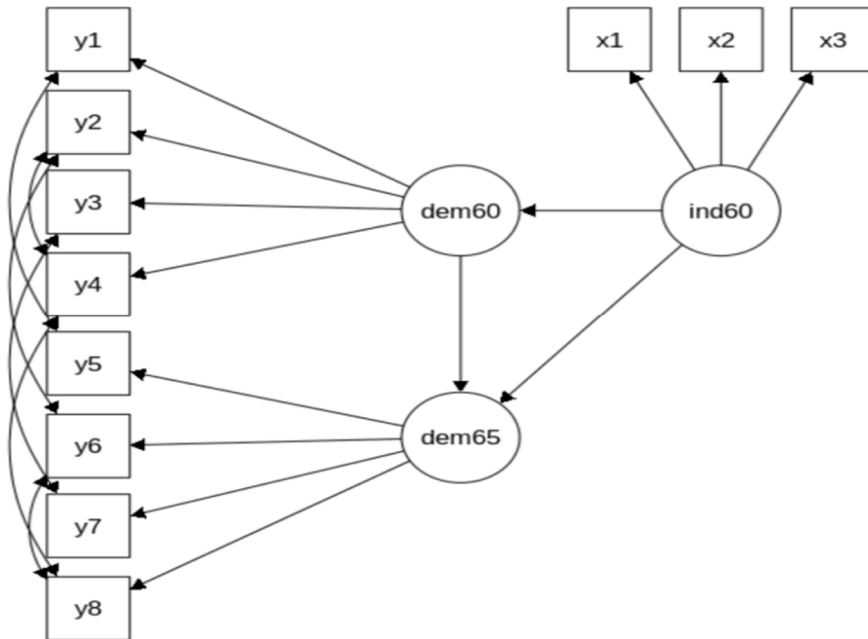
In a particular study of IPV, we could, for example, seek to model IPV as a latent variable influenced by measured variables such as jealousy, alcohol consumption, low economic status, drug use, poor behavioral control impulsiveness, etc. SEM analysis of structural relationships between the latent variable and the measured variables will identify the variables that have the strongest explanatory power for the IPV.

4. Conclusion

The works and research cited in this article lead to the conclusion that the study of violence against women is very complex and difficult to carry out. From a methodological point of view, the researcher motivated by an empirical approach in this field must take several precautions before approaching their work. For example, if he wishes to model IPV, he must consider the societal, community, and individual characteristics of his population. A judicious choice of these dimensions is crucial because it will lead to a relevant choice of risk factors and will determine the quality of the empirical work. There are other difficulties in using multivariate analysis methods such as data collection (because of underreporting of violence) and selection of study samples.

However, there are evident benefits in using this quantitative method: firstly, multivariate analysis allows researchers to identify high-risk groups for interventions; secondly, understanding the complex relationships among different factors of the IPV phenomenon helps in developing more effective prevention and intervention programs as well as in creating better support services.

Developing research on factors that could explain men's use of violence is imperative. That is because transforming supportive attitudes towards violence against women among men and reducing its acceptance play a key role in preventing such violence. Currently, there is limited literature on this topic, making it essential to broaden our understanding in this area.

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VIOLENCE
AND CHRONIC ILLNESS AMONG WOMEN

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Abstract: Violence against women is a problem with significant personal, social, and economic implications that occurs in all countries, regardless of economic level, culture, or religion. Violence against women is often divided into three categories: physical, sexual, and psychological, whether self-directed, interpersonal, or collective. The consequences for victims are both physical and psychological. Although not widely recognized and easily visualized by others, chronic illness can also be a consequence of violence, with a long-term impact on the victim's life, acting as a reminder of what happened even long after the abuse has stopped. This paper is a narrative review that aims to highlight the link between violence against women and chronic somatic illness. In studies addressing and highlighting this relationship, the research methods used have raised important questions about the representativeness of the results obtained, and the extent to which they can be compared, particularly in research addressing intimate partner violence. We highlight gaps in knowledge and propose recommendations for future studies and psychotherapeutic intervention programs for victims of violence.

Keywords: chronic illness; violence; gender-based violence; help-seeking; women's health.

Résumé : La violence à l'égard des femmes est un problème aux implications personnelles, sociales et économiques considérables qui se pose dans tous les pays, indépendamment du niveau économique, de la culture ou de la religion. La violence à l'égard des femmes est souvent divisée en trois catégories : physique, sexuelle et psychologique, qu'elle soit autodéterminée, interpersonnelle ou collective. Les conséquences pour les victimes sont à la fois physiques et psychologiques. Bien qu'elle ne soit pas aussi largement reconnue et facilement visualisée par les autres, la maladie chronique peut également être une conséquence de la violence, avec un impact à long terme sur la vie de la victime, agissant comme un rappel de ce qui s'est passé, même longtemps après que les abus ont cessé. Le présent document est une analyse narrative qui vise à mettre en évidence le lien entre la violence à l'égard des femmes et les maladies

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somatiques chroniques. Dans les études qui traitent et mettent en évidence ce lien, les méthodes de recherche utilisées soulèvent d'importantes questions quant à la représentativité des résultats obtenus et à la mesure dans laquelle ils peuvent être comparés, en particulier dans les recherches portant sur la violence entre partenaires intimes. Nous soulignons les lacunes dans les connaissances et proposons des recommandations pour les études futures et les programmes d'intervention psychothérapeutique pour les victimes de violence.

Mots clés : maladie chronique; violence; violence fondée sur le genre; recherche d'aide; santé des femmes.

Rezumat: Violența împotriva femeilor este o problemă cu implicații personale, sociale și economice semnificative, care apare în toate țările, indiferent de nivelul economic, cultură sau religie. Violența împotriva femeilor este adesea împărțită în trei categorii: fizică, sexuală și psihologică, fie că este autodirijată, interpersonală sau colectivă. Consecințele pentru victime sunt atât fizice, cât și psihologice. Deși nu este la fel de larg recunoscută și ușor de vizualizat de ceilalți, boala cronică poate fi, de asemenea, o consecință a violenței, cu impact pe termen lung asupra vieții victimei, acționând ca o amintire a ceea ce s-a întâmplat chiar și mult timp după ce abuzul a încetat. Această lucrare este o analiză narativă care își propune să evidențieze legătura dintre violența împotriva femeilor și bolile somatice cronice. În studiile care abordează și evidențiază această relație, metodele de cercetare utilizate ridică întrebări importante cu privire la reprezentativitatea rezultatelor obținute și la măsura în care acestea pot fi comparate, în special în cazul cercetărilor care abordează violența partenerului intim. Subliniem lacunele în cunoștințe și propunem recomandări pentru studii viitoare și programe de intervenție psihoterapeutică pentru victimele violenței.

Cuvinte-cheie: boală cronică; violență; violență de gen; căutare de ajutor; sănătatea femeilor.

Introduction

Violence, regardless of its nature, violates fundamental human rights, including safety and dignity. Only by discussing this subject can we help individuals identify warning signs and instances of abuse, while also making victims aware of the resources available to them. According to Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women issued by the UN General Assembly in 1993, violence against women is „any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations, 2023). We are fully aware that men are also victims of violence, but we turn our attention to women as they face higher levels of the phenomenon and more serious and lasting consequences (Oram, Khalifeh & Howard, 2017).

Violence against women has three forms of manifestation (physical, sexual, and psychological aggression), often taking the form of (UN WOMEN, 2023):

(1) *sexual violence and harassment*: rape, unwanted sexual acts, unwanted sexual advances, child sexual abuse, forced marriage, street, and/or online harassment.
(2) *violence caused by an intimate partner*: battering, psychological abuse, marital rape, femicide.
(3) *Trafficking in human beings*: sexual exploitation and abduction.
(4) *mutilation of genital organs*; and
(5) *child marriage.*

The consequences of violence against women are both physical and psychological, some of the most well-known being (Reingle et al., 2014):

- *physical consequences* in the form of bodily harm, trauma, or even death.
- *psychological and emotional consequences*, often seen in the form of depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and other emotional disorders.
- *economic and financial consequences*, particularly felt by victims who have been rendered financially dependent by their abusers, manifested through restricted access to financial resources or even job loss.
- *social consequences*, resulting from isolation from family and friends.

Statistics are also essential in helping us to understand the severity, scale, and costs of this phenomenon. Existing data estimate that, globally, 736 million women aged 15 or older have been physically and/or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner, or intimate non-partner, at least once in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). In other words, one in three women has been a victim of physical and/or sexual violence. This worrying statistic regarding the frequency of sexual violence was also highlighted by the meta-analysis conducted by Li and colleagues (Li, Shen, Zeng et al., 2023).

In recent years, technology has made it easier to inflict violence on females. Across the European Union, one in ten women over the age of 15 has experienced at least one form of cyberbullying, such as receiving unwanted and offensive sexually explicit messages or offensive and/or inappropriate advances on social media (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). In other parts of the world, the percentages are even more worrying, with 60 percent of women in the Arab States (UN Women, 2021) and 49 percent of women in Uganda (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021) experiencing some form of online violence. The victim of gender-based violence can be anyone and anywhere. For example, 82 percent of women in parliament reported some form of psychological violence while in office, 62 percent of whom experienced sexist remarks from male colleagues in parliament themselves (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). Another global survey revealed that 73 percent of women journalists experienced online violence, of which 20 percent were also abused offline over the online violence they experienced (UNESCO, 2022).

The most vulnerable, however, remain young girls, older women, women who identify as other than heterosexual, women who are members of different minorities, women with disabilities or HIV, and those experiencing humanitarian crises (Casey et al., 2013).

1. Violence and chronic effects on women's physical health

Only recently has there been an exploration into the long-term effects on women's health, like chronic illness. Reported physical health issues include functional limitations, increased reliance on diagnostic tests and surgeries, extended periods of bed rest, as well as greater utilization of healthcare services.

One of the most common forms of violence to which women are exposed is intimate partner violence, which exists in all communities (Krug et al., 2002). Intimate partner violence has been linked to a higher likelihood of developing chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, somatic issues, and fibromyalgia. Violence has also been linked to various gynecological disorders, infertility, pelvic inflammatory diseases, complications during pregnancy or miscarriage, sexual dysfunction, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, unsafe abortion, and unwanted pregnancies (WHO, 2005). To escape the pain caused by violence, women can use several distraction strategies. The use of such mechanisms, whereby women seek to escape the pain of previous abuse by consuming alcohol, drugs, or sex, increases the risk of contracting HIV (Li et al., 2014). Patrikar et al. (2017) suggests in their study that the link between HIV and violence is not only mediated by risk behaviors but that violence is also an independent risk factor for HIV. This direct link has also been highlighted by other authors, such as Dunkle & Decker (2013), and is valid both in the general population and among high-risk subpopulations, such as women sex workers. Data showing links between violence and HIV highlight that women who are victims of violence are at higher risk of HIV infection, and those infected with HIV are most likely to have been victims of violence (UNAIDS, 2004). Furthermore, one of the findings of the review by Leddy et al. (2019) is that gender-based violence makes it more difficult for women to access HIV prevention, care, and treatment services.

Several studies examining Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) during pregnancy indicate a significant correlation with femicide (Campbell et al., 2003). Also, IPV can directly harm the fetus, potentially leading to preterm birth, injury, and low birth weight (WHO, 2005; Wathen, 2013). IPV is also associated with urinary tract infections, premature rupture of membranes, preterm birth, and late entry into prenatal care (Pastor-Moreno et al., 2020). Other chronic conditions that are associated with IPV are chronic pain, stomach cramps, headaches, back pain, which are expected to be associated with high levels of analgesic use (Dillon et al., 2013).

Santaularia et al. (2014) found that sexual violence is linked to several adverse health behaviors, chronic health conditions and mental health conditions, even after adjusting for demographic characteristics. Also, not only exposure during adulthood is associated with chronic diseases. Authors such as Carver et al. (2008) have identified that adults who reported being exposed to violence during childhood have an increased likelihood of developing multiple chronic health conditions compared to those who reported not having had such experiences.

2. Violence and its chronic effects on women's mental health

Studies looking at the effects of violence on women's health highlight an increase in women's health problems, especially mental health problems (Tavassoli et al., 2022). Even in women with no psychiatric history, victims of violence can develop major depression, substance abuse, adjustment disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal behaviors. Santos et al. (2018) and Ellsberg et al. (2008) reported that women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence were three times more likely to experience suicidal ideation and four times more likely to attempt on at least one occasion to end their lives compared to women who had never experienced intimate partner violence. Moreover, for female victims of domestic violence and abuse, there is an increase in the likelihood of depressive disorders, a fourfold increase in the probability of anxiety disorders, and a sevenfold increase in the likelihood of post-traumatic stress disorder (Schouler-Ocak & Brandl, 2022). Women report experiencing at least two types of violence, which increases the likelihood of the occurrence and intensity of depressive symptoms (Eshelman & Levendosky, 2012).

Significant links have also been identified between intimate partner violence and symptoms of psychosis, substance abuse, and eating disorders (Schouler-Ocak & Brandl, 2022). The same type of violence also hurts sleep, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Dillon et al., 2013). The main mediators between intimate partner violence and sleep are depression (Walker et al., 2011) and PTSD (Woods, Kozachik & Hall, 2010).

One of the most degrading forms of violence is sexual violence, to which no woman can remain indifferent (Güneş & Karaçam, 2017), and one of the most serious mental health consequences, which more than half of female victims of sexual violence develop, is post-traumatic stress disorder. This disorder often manifests itself in nightmares, images of what happened, self-isolation, and symptoms that increase the likelihood of using coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drug use, or other escape activities (Beijer et al., 2018).

De Berardis et al. (2021) highlight the increased prevalence of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic because of lockdown measures, drawing attention to a possible new pandemic represented by violence against women and the psychiatric consequences caused by this phenomenon. According to Bellizzi et al. (2020), The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) projected an increase of 31 million cases of gender-based violence in the event of a 6-month extension of the lockdown measures, with an additional 15 million cases for each 3-month extension. The results of studies that examined this phenomenon during the COVID-19 pandemic and measures to prevent the spread of the virus show an increase in violence against women during that period. Also, depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms were more present among abused women in Tunisia, Africa, and the Arab world compared to those experienced by women who were not victims of violence according to a study by Sediri et al. (2020). However, the authors mention some important limitations, namely the sampling method used, i.e., snowball, and only included in the study women with internet access. The

increased risk of depression and suicide attempts for women exposed to violence was also highlighted in a systematic review of sixteen longitudinal studies by Devries et al. (2013), along with the increased risk of people with mental disorders being victims of violence.

The relationship between violence and mental health problems is complex. Islam, Jahan & Hossain (2018) proposed four theoretical understandings of the role of violence in mental disorders among women. Violence can predispose the onset of mental illness, sometimes precipitate it, merely maintain it, or be a consequence of it.

De Berardis et al. (2021) encourage mental health professionals to train and watch out for signs such as isolation, strict control of women's money and income from their partner, signs of physical abuse, intimidation, and threats, to recognize victims of violence and refer them to specialist services (De Berardis et al., 2021). This need has been reported among nurses for example, who lack confidence in their ability to identify women victims of violence (Poreddi et al., 2020). Violence prevention programs are also essential, as stopping violence would decrease mental health problems by a quarter (Davies, 2014). Consequently, there is an acute need for research examining how to improve the identification and treatment of victims, as well as perpetrators, who come into contact with mental health services (Oram, Khalifeh & Howard, 2017).

3. Conclusions

This review aimed to highlight the lesser-recognized effects of violence against women in the form of chronic physical and mental illness. Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights that continues to require attention and intervention strategies. Better services for victims of violence require a better understanding of the phenomenon and a more careful exploration of hidden, or less obvious dimensions, such as long-term illnesses. The links between violence and chronic diseases highlight the importance of addressing not only the impact on physical and psychological health but also the potential long-term effects on chronic diseases and the wider influence of violence in all its forms on the health system. Research gaps were identified, such as the need to address a wider range of conditions and forms of violence and acknowledge the differences among heterogeneous health issues. Other recommendations include allowing flexibility and responsibility towards patients/victims in research design, educating about victimization and its health consequences, and improving primary healthcare services.

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Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to preparing this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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EMOTIONAL NEGLECT IN CHILDHOOD – PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF ADAPTATION AND CONSEQUENCES

Lucia STAN[1]

Rezumat

Este cunoscut faptul că violenţa îşi poate avea rădăcina în relaţiile dintre părinte – copil; copilul învaţă un rol pe care ulterior îl replică ca adult în relaţiile sale. Subiectul abordat în articol vizează o formă mai neobservată a violenţei, respectiv neglijarea emoţională. Chiar şi în lipsa asocierii cu alte forme de maltratare, neglijarea emoţională provocă multă durere emoţională, iar consecinţele ei sunt considerabile. Articolul explorează universul şi trăirile intense ale copilului de vârstă mică, precum şi modalităţile acestuia de adaptare în faţa indisponibilităţii parentale. Urmăreşte ulterior modul în care aceste mecanisme se menţin în viaţa adultă şi cum determină poziţionarea persoanei pe unul dintre rolurile din triunghiul dramatic. Explic teoretic neglijarea emoţională din punctul de vedere al teoriilor ataşamentului şi ale traumei psihologice, căutând să ofer o perspectivă mai nuanţată asupra cauzelor violenţei în familie, în special a celor ce ţin de istoricul personal al unui individ şi de transmiterea transgeneraţională a violenţei.

Cuvinte cheie: ataşament, maltratare, traumă psihologică, indisponibilitate parentală.

Abstract

It is well known that violence can have its roots in parent-child relationships; the child learns a role and replicates it in adulthood in their relationships. The subject addressed in the article concerns a more unnoticed form of violence, namely emotional neglect. Even in the absence of association with other forms of abuse, emotional neglect causes a lot of emotional pain, and its consequences are considerable. The article explores the universe and intense experiences of young children, as well as their ways of adapting to parental unavailability. It subsequently examines how these mechanisms persist into adulthood and determines the individual's positioning in one of the roles in the dramatic triangle. The article theoretically explains emotional neglect from the perspective of attachment theories and psychological trauma, seeking to offer a more nuanced perspective of the causes of

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violence in the family, especially those related to an individual's personal history and the transgenerational transmission of violence.

Keywords: attachment, maltreatment, psychological trauma, parental unavailability

Résumé
Il est bien connu que la violence peut avoir ses racines dans les relations parent-enfant; l'enfant apprend un rôle qu'il reproduira plus tard en tant qu'adulte dans ses relations. Le sujet abordé dans l'article concerne une forme de violence plus inaperçue à savoir la négligence émotionnelle. Même en l'absence d'association avec d'autres formes de maltraitance, la négligence émotionnelle provoque beaucoup de douleur émotionnelle, et ses conséquences sont considérables. L'article explore l'univers et les expériences intenses du jeune enfant, ainsi que ses façons d'adaptation face à l'indisponibilité parentale. Il examine ensuite comment ces mécanismes se maintiennent dans la vie adulte et comment ils déterminent le positionnement de la personne dans l'un des rôles du triangle dramatique. Il explique théoriquement la négligence émotionnelle du point de vue des théories de l'attachement et du traumatisme psychologique, en cherchant à offrir une perspective plus nuancée sur les causes de la violence familiale, particulièrement celles liées à l'histoire personnelle d'un individu et à la transmission transgénérationnelle de la violence.

Mots-clés : attachement, maltraitance, traumatisme psychologique, indisponibilité parentale.

1. Introduction

Emotional neglect is a less addressed topic in the specialized literature, unlike other forms of neglect and abuse, perhaps, also, because it is more difficult to observe and quantify – it is complicated „to detect an absence, a void, a nothingness, when there should have been something: a word, an emotion, a reaction, an event, a fact, an appropriate, regulating, stimulating response" (Vasile, 2024, p. 79). A parent/ caregiver may be physically present and provide for some of the child's needs but may be emotionally absent in their interaction with them.

Emotional neglect speaks more about what didn't happen in childhood in interaction with parents/caregivers, talks about episodes when a child's emotions and needs couldn't be accepted, normalized, validated, contained, regulated with the support of parents/caregivers, and this has as much importance and power over a person as events from their personal history (Webb, 2023). Even in the absence of association with other forms of maltreatment, emotional neglect causes a lot of emotional pain, and its consequences are considerable.

Emotional neglect can be defined as a micro-trauma – „a micro-traumatic experience is, something that unfolds subtly, and thus its impact remains unexpressed, dissociated, or repressed. Because the person did not see the blow coming and did not fully register its impact, they did not defend themselves adequately. They also did not take any reparative or protective steps that could have eliminated the wound and its immediate consequences or prevented potential recurrences. As a result, the harm accumulates, leading to a distortion of the sense of well-being, effectiveness, or unity" (Crastnopol, 2019, p. 14).

Currently, at the national level, there are no specific statistics to measure the extent of the phenomenon - all forms of child neglect are reported as neglect

without distinguishing between different forms. However, considering that emotional neglect practically accompanies all forms of abuse and neglect, we can have an idea of its impact.

I mention that all parents/caregivers may occasionally emotionally neglect the child without causing harm, but emotional neglect becomes a problem if it is consistent/ repetitive in the parent-child relationship. „Cultural values and economic constraints force parents to impose certain restrictions on children and ignore legitimate needs, such as the need to express their feelings, to be fully accepted, or to explore freely in a safe environment. The mere fact that newborns survive and grow, becoming capable of perpetuating traditions and the species, does not mean that their fundamental needs have been met or that they have reached their potential in intellectual, emotional, or spiritual development" (Solter, 2020, p. 21).

In the situation where a parent/caregiver fails to be predictable, responsive, affectionate, available, and accessible to the child, meaning when emotional neglect occurs, between parent and child will create an insecure attachment relationship. Subsequently, the child's adaptation mechanisms to parental unavailability persist unconsciously into adulthood, forcing the individual into co-dependency, compelling them to position themselves in relationships with others in one of the roles of the dramatic triangle - victim, persecutor, rescuer.

2. Emotional neglect definition

Emotional neglect is a subjective experience of a person feeling ignored, unnoticed, unloved, unappreciated for their true worth, overlooked, taken for granted, unseen as a distinct individual, barely tolerated, unwanted, rejected, or abandoned (Stauffer, 2022).

The relationship with the parent is described as a lack (of presence, soothing, love, validation, attention, compassion, protection), indifference, or emotional coldness.

J. Young and J. Klosko (2017) define emotional neglect using the term „emotional deprivation", which refers to experiencing a constant feeling of loneliness, emptiness, unfulfillment, and the sense of never being heard or understood as a person.

Classifying types of psychological trauma, Frantz Ruppert defines emotional neglect in three different ways: first, as attachment trauma – in which the individual does not have the chance for secure contact with those to whom they are attached (Ruppert, 2012), second, it is renamed symbiotic trauma – because it occurs in the relationship between mother and child, when the child is dependent on the mother (Ruppert, 2015), third, renaming it love trauma – marking the rupture in the relationship between mother and child in the first years of life, and, at the same time, marking the consequences of this type of trauma which manifest through the person's difficulties in loving and feeling loved by others (Ruppert, 2019).

"Psychic trauma represents the internal experience of splitting, inner rupture, disconnection from oneself, caused by threatening situational factors that

overwhelm personal capabilities of mastery or self-regulation, generating profound feelings of fear, helplessness, unprotected vulnerability, an experience that leads to long-term impairments in vitality, identity, and self-regulatory mechanisms" (Vasile, 2024, p.58). Thus, from the perspective of a baby, who is completely dependent on adults for care and thus survival, „parents who ignore or turn away from the child's calls for attention, connection, or help, abandon them in the face of a quantity of fear difficult to manage, and the child, ultimately, gives up and succumbs to feelings of helplessness and depressing hopelessness, akin to death" (Walker, 2022, p. 41).

The emotional impact of parental unavailability is demonstrated by E. Tronick through the *Still-Face Experiment* (Tronick, 2022). In this experiment, which lasts about two minutes, infants with secure attachments show emotional distress when mothers stop responding to them and only show an expressionless face. In this way, one can deduce how much pain prolonged exposure to such a relational dynamic can cause to a person.

Looking from another perspective, the emotional impact of emotional neglect can be connected to the process of grieving. Thus, when a bond of attachment is severed or lost, a grieving process is initiated, with several stages: anger, despair, and eventually detachment, so that, in the end, the person can accept and live with the pain of such a loss (Bowlby, 2016). In the case of emotional neglect, however, there arises a sense of ambiguous loss, namely the feeling associated with someone who is perceived to be physically present but psychologically absent. The pain of loss in this case is unresolved, hidden, and constant. „How do you mourn a relationship with a mother who was there, but wasn't?" (Boss and Kriesberg, 2023, p. 128).

3. Child's adaptation mechanisms and their impact on his/her adult life

The child is born completely dependent on the attention of the adults who care for him. This dependence is not only physical, through the need to be fed, to ensure a comfortable body temperature, to be diaper changed, to be cared for, etc., but also psychological/emotional. The child has an instinctive need for connection. T. Brazelton and S. Greenspan (2013) identify the need for permanent caregiving relationships as a primary necessity for babies. This type of relationship forms the foundation for the subsequent development of self-confidence, sense of self, empathy and compassion towards oneself and others, language, learning ability, and the way of building relationships with peers and adults.

In situations where a parent fails to mirror the child's feelings, to understand them, to respond to or ignores the child's emotional needs, and is not emotionally available for them, or lacks the capacity to repair the inevitable ruptures that occur in this relationship, then the child is forced to make efforts to adapt. G. Maté pointed out that „when the adult world demands, even involuntarily, that an infant or child suppress parts of their true self - their own desires, feelings, and preferences - the child cannot risk non-conformity so that the

essential attachment relationship is not compromised or threatened. He must develop within himself some mechanisms, forms of self-coercion, to preempt the anxiety that could arise if the caregiver is disappointed or disappears" (Maté, 2022, p. 438). More precisely, the child will be compelled to disconnect from their normal functioning and resort to mechanisms of protection/defense/adaptation in order to survive.

Precisely because they have not developed emotional self-regulation mechanisms and depend on how the parent/caregiver helps them, the newborn or young child is prone to traumatization.

An example of an adaptation mechanism that the child will use to attract the parent's attention is clinging – they will cry, scream, be noisy and agitated, disobedient, have tantrums, manifest through acts of violence towards themselves or others, refuse to comply, refuse to separate from the mother, etc., in other words, they will „make extraordinary efforts to win over their mother, to attract her, and thus to induce her to respond" (Stern, 2019, p. 72).

Such behavior can often be labeled as „problematic" by the parent because at the unconscious level „disorients him, aggresses the caregiver through the sense of helplessness mirrored" (Romano, 2023, p. 56). If the parent is not sufficiently available to respond to the child's need for closeness and patience enough to contain these states and calm them, then inevitably escalation will occur.

As long as the parent remains inconsistent in meeting the child's needs and as long as the child maintains hope that, at some point, the parent will respond, the attention-seeking behavior will persist. In the short term, clinging can offer a maternal type of protection and security for a young child because, in the absence of parental response, their resilience will lead them to seek fulfillment of their needs in other relationships (Stauffer, 2022). „Children notice that people respond to them warmly and instinctively seek emotionally mature adults with whom to relate in order to amplify their sense of security. Such an adult can be a neighbor, a distant relative, a teacher, etc. Others find this emotional support in relationships with friends or pets" (Gibson, 2021, p. 138). However, the child will grow up with the belief that immense efforts are necessary to have and maintain a relationship.

In adulthood, a child who retains this mechanism will live with permanent anxiety, anguish, exhaustion, the feeling of constant effort, the need for self-transcendence, with the feeling that they must run to keep up. Or they will exhibit „a hunger for love, which will lead them to remain in abusive or unsatisfactory relationships because the need is so great that the individual cannot give up their partner" (Cori, 2021, p. 125), they will not want to remain alone and will find it very difficult to become independent. They will also encounter great difficulty in managing a difficult situation on their own, develop an aversion to risk, and a strong resistance to change. Such an adult may be perceived as aggressive through their insistence, overwhelming their partner with demands, excessive requests for evidence of support, appreciation, attention, or love, expressing jealousy, undermining the partner's interests to gain their attention for themselves, or by manipulating to meet their own needs (Crossley, 2022; Kinnison, 2018).

Another adaptation mechanism is one in which the child „will be predisposed to strongly resonate with their caregiver, to tune in with them and reflect their negative emotions, sometimes taking on a part of their personality structure, in an effort to survive, to create a safer relationship and better emotional regulation for themselves" (Stauffer, 2022, p. 140). The baby can do this through „parental tuning", where the attitudes and emotional states of the mother are unconsciously transferred to the child and understood by them without words (Stern, 2019). E. Fromm introduces the concept of symbiosis, seen as the process by which two distinct selves merge so that each loses its individuality and becomes completely dependent on the other (Fromm, 1998). Frantz Ruppert believes that the symbiotic process begins as early as the prenatal period, when the child reflects all the emotional dispositions of the mother, thus altering their psychic structure (Ruppert, 2015).

When this mechanism predominates, there is the risk that, being hyper-focused on the emotional life of the caregiver, the child may reach that point where they can no longer access their own feelings. This will leave the child with a terrible sense of inner emptiness. „Unless the child's emotional suffering can be shared with sensitive adults and validated by them, the developmental narcissism necessary for the child makes them take everything personally" (Maté, 2022, p. 441), thus, the child will live with the impression that they are guilty, unworthy, defective.

As an adult, it can manifest in two different ways:
- Either they may appear as a very enmeshed person, with extremely weak boundaries and often with an uncertain identity; they will seek security by merging with the desires, needs, and demands of others; they will shrink and want to fade into the background, be timid and quiet, with low self-esteem, conformist, diligent, overly adaptable;
- Or they will be unconsciously driven by the belief that power and control can create safety and will learn to respond with anger, with a developed inner and/or outer critic, they will find scapegoats in the weaker ones, they will use intimidation and sarcasm – these manifestations can develop in children who have not been imposed healthy limits by parents or in children who have been allowed to imitate the aggressive parent (Cori, 2021; Stauffer, 2022; Walker, 2022).

F. Ruppert drew attention to the fact that the parental soul structure taken over by the child will be retained by them in the unconscious and will be reactivated later in similar circumstances to the initial traumatic situation. They will react either through self-harming behaviors (self-mutilation, suicide attempts) or through aggressive behaviors towards others (Ruppert, 2012).

Another example of an adaptation mechanism is when the child distances themselves from the caregiver, avoiding contact with them to maintain a more pleasant state. When there is no parent to show the child that their presence brings joy, no caregiver to take care of the child and ensure their safety, and no adult caregiver for the child to turn to when they need help and support, the child learns that they are on their own and must take care of themselves, quickly learning that

it is dangerous to express their desires and needs. (Stauffer, 2022) A child distances themselves from a parent when they are hurt and disappointed when it is too painful to ask for help and be ignored, and when they understand that reacting serves no purpose. Such behaviors usually appear in children who are usually very compliant, do not protest, adapt to what is imposed on them, are easygoing, and adapt to anyone and anywhere, without seeming to encounter difficulty. „Unfortunately, this can encourage their caregivers to continue to ignore them because they do not seem to need anything and always show the world a face that everything is fine" (Stauffer, 2022, p. 79).

As an adult, they will have major difficulties in initiating and maintaining a relationship, and if they do engage in one, they will impose a barrier between themselves and the other, not responding to the other's need for connection, thus perpetuating the aggression to which they themselves were subjected (Kinnison, 2018). Their manifestations fall into two registers, respectively:

- they will have the belief that people and danger are synonymous terms and will have difficulty asking for help, isolating themselves, manifesting social anxiety, developing pseudo-autonomy and independence, seeming to need nothing, being a good observer of others, but hard to read themselves; they will retreat into fantasy/daydreams/sleep/TV watching/online browsing and video games, into addictive behaviors, self-medication, to disconnect from pain; they will numb their feelings; they will feel that it is easier (and more familiar) to live without love than to approach their old wound;
- and/or they will be driven by the unconscious belief that perfection will bring them security and make them worthy of love; they will thus chase achievements, make compulsive plans, worry about what to do, be dependent on their own adrenaline, risky activities, work, stimulant substances, develop a tyrannical inner and/or outer critic, be overanalytical, detached from emotions (Cori, 2021; Stahl, 2023; Stauffer, 2022; Walker, 2022).

One last adaptation mechanism is when the child learns to indirectly satisfy some of their emotional needs by taking care of others, becoming a pseudo-savior. The child is thus „parentified" and takes care of the parent's needs - becoming their source of entertainment, confidant, substitute partner, coach, maid, or babysitter for younger siblings. In the worst-case scenario, the child may be sexually abused (Walker, 2022).

K. Stauffer explains that a child resorts to this mechanism because:

- "it causes a caregiver who is preoccupied or emotionally unavailable to become more affectionate if the child can fulfill some of their needs;
- it gives the child a little power and a bit of a sense of their own goodness, so they no longer feel insignificant and small if they can give something to someone else and, by doing so, make the other person feel good;
- the child can indirectly sense how happy the person they are caring for is, and although it is not the same as being happy themselves, it is close enough;

- it is a way to do something better than what was done to the child: knowing the pain of being ignored, they will not do the same thing to another human being;
- it distances the child from their own lack and inner emptiness; it can satisfy some social and attachment needs." (Stauffer, 2022, pp. 49-50)

As an adult, they will display an exaggerated sensitivity to the needs of others, encounter difficulties in imposing healthy boundaries and saying „no", be helpful and submissive, with low self-esteem, and build an identity of someone indispensable to others to find a purpose in life, demonstrate extreme self-sacrifice for others, suppress their anger, and be excessively concerned with social acceptance. (Stauffer, 2022; Walker, 2022)

The person will try to repair their negative self-perception developed in childhood by identifying partners who need to be saved. They will intuitively recognize chronic suffering or vulnerability. Initially, the person will appear kind and altruistic but later will become increasingly unhappy, disappointed, critical, and powerless because they believe they are not receiving the admiration, validation, and love from their partner. (Lamia and Krieger, 2021) At the same time, they may become aggressive, becoming suffocating in their relationship with others, keeping track of the things they do for others, and when they finally revolt, they will reproach others for their efforts or use them to manipulate (Stauffer, 2022; Crossley, 2022).

This mechanism seems to be adopted especially by women, through transgenerational transmission, from their mothers, who were themselves parentified (Stauffer, 2022, Miller, 2020).

In practice, there is no singular pattern of adaptation to adversity; each individual, depending on their own characteristics and lived experience, will use to a greater or lesser extent all the mechanisms described earlier. „Regardless of whether the outcome is beneficial and productive or unhealthy and destructive, the purpose of any adaptation mechanism is always integration and regulation" (McDonald, 2024, p. 165). However, the use of these mechanisms will tend to lead the individual into a co-dependent role. Furthermore, „these adaptations to adversity, once habitual, cannot discern between major threats, minor ones, and the fact that there is no threat" (Maté, 2022, p. 266). Moreover, they can constitute a personal relational style that remains stable throughout the lifetime.

In the unconscious dynamics that a person chooses in their daily interaction with others, codependency means adopting a role from the drama triangle. Whether one chooses the role of victim, persecutor, or rescuer, assuming this role actually illustrates the lack of personal responsibility in the context of conflict with others, maintaining a dysfunctional power balance in a relationship, and emotional exhaustion. For example, depending on the situation, the same person may go through all points of the triangle without realizing it. „The victim feels the need for a persecutor and someone to rescue them. The fact of needing someone to rescue them and at the same time being treated disrespectfully sometimes makes the victim become a persecutor, but then they feel guilty and

want to rescue the person they just persecuted" (Crossley, 2022, p. 38). Or, both victim and aggressor attitudes will blend into a person, determining a relational style that, although aiming for inner relaxation, actually generates more stress. This leads to a vicious cycle where conflict escalates, both within the individual and externally, involving others in an attempt to find support or relief outside. Then the person from the outside caught in the cycle, initially tasked with regulating, calming, and providing assistance, will gradually be transformed into a victim of the existing conflict and will be compelled to respond with similar attitudes and behaviors (Vasile, 2024).

Both the tendency towards victimization and the tendency towards aggression originate from an attempt to balance the psyche with traumatic experiences and from an inappropriate use of a person's information, abilities, and resources (Vasile, 2024).

The way out of the trap of the drama triangle is self-awareness and addressing the real issues of the individual. The older an unprocessed trauma is, the more time passes, the more the psychic processes are affected, and the greater the need for an increasingly larger consumption of energy to maintain the entire psychic system stable (Ruppert, 2012). Traumatic processing is the process through which an individual works with themselves, with the information of their pain, loss, and traumatic memories, until they can comfortably hold this information within and lead a normal life, experiencing satisfaction and an overall sense of well-being, reclaiming the ability to regulate and adapt to everyday life. (Vasile, 2024)

4. Conclusions

Emotional neglect causes as much harm as any other form of abuse or neglect and it is at the core of a person's suffering; it is the deepest and most denied/unseen/unexplored layer (Walker, 2022). Emotional neglect leads to the development of insecure attachment types and is associated with developmental stagnation concerning self-acceptance, a clear sense of identity, self-compassion, self-protection, the ability to relax, full expression capability, willpower, motivation, inner peace, self-care, self-esteem, relational difficulties, emotional rigidity, difficulties in processing emotions, maladaptive stress responses, a range of physical and mental problems such as depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies and/or self-harm, eating disorders, insomnia, various somatizations, and addictive behaviors (Cori, 2021; Stahl, 2023; Stauffer, 2022; Walker, 2022). Emotional neglect can cause feelings of inner emptiness, unrealistic self-assessment, self-directed anger, alexithymia - poor awareness and understanding of emotions, feelings of inadequacy, and difficulties in establishing healthy boundaries (Webb, 2022; Kriesberg, 2023; Gibson, 2021).

It is crucial for children to have responsive, interactive, and affectionate caregivers who can see them for who they are and care about their well-being. Equally significant is the parents' ability to repair the relationship with their children, to acknowledge mistakes, and to take responsibility for undesirable

behavior when it inevitably occurs. „Raising children in the spirit of nonviolence has become an essential element for our survival, for all of us. We must show children peaceful alternatives for resolving conflicts. We must also raise them so that they do not accumulate repressed feelings of fear or anger, as these emotions often underlie acts of violence. This means being very attentive to the factors that cause them suffering, helping them through periods of stress, and healing their traumas. *We can no longer afford to ignore children's feelings"* (Solter, 2020, p. 22).

Given the impact of emotional neglect on a child's adult life, it would be necessary to reassess the ways parents/caregivers interact with the child, as well as the interaction of various systems (medical, educational, legal, social protection) with the child, prioritizing the satisfaction of the child's emotional needs. The emphasis should be on raising awareness of this phenomenon among professionals and the general public, on sustained information, prevention, increasing the number of social services in the community, and making psychotherapy services more accessible.

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Biodata

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CONSEQUENCES OF EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Marilena Geanina BÂRSAN[1]

Abstract

This article examines the consequences of domestic violence on the lives and education of children, adolescents, and young people, highlighting how they can benefit from support within the educational system (Lloyd, 2018). By applying a systematic research and review approach, we synthetically analyzed studies that precisely evaluated the quantitative and qualitative impact of exposure to family violence on the academic achievements of these age groups. The results underscore the need for implementing educational solutions and support to help them overcome trauma and develop harmoniously. Synthesizing recent studies, we explored how exposure to family violence affects the adaptation and academic achievements of the respondents. The nine examined studies focused on the population of children, adolescents, and young people to assess the relationship between exposure to family violence and academic performance (Supol, 2021). In these research studies, exposure to family violence was treated as an independent variable, while academic success was considered a dependent variable. The conclusions highlight the significant link between family violence and a decline in academic results, emphasizing negative consequences on concentration and learning (da Silva Alves, 2021). Additionally, how a family climate marked by violence influences involvement in school activities, impacting their emotional well-being, is addressed. Through a comprehensive analysis of this topic, the review provides a more detailed understanding of the mechanisms through which family violence can influence the academic trajectory of young people and suggests possible directions for interventions and support.

Keywords: exposure, domestic violence, school performance, family climate.

Resumé :

Cet article examine les conséquences de la violence domestique sur la vie et l'éducation des enfants, des adolescents et des jeunes, en mettant en lumière les façons dont ils peuvent bénéficier du soutien au sein du système éducatif (Lloyd, 2018). En appliquant une approche de recherche systématique et de revue, nous avons synthétiquement analysé des études qui ont évalué précisément l'impact quantitatif et qualitatif de l'exposition à la violence familiale sur les performances académiques de ces groupes d'âge. Les résultats soulignent

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la nécessité de mettre en œuvre des solutions éducatives et un soutien pour les aider à surmonter les traumatismes et à se développer harmonieusement. En synthétisant des études récentes, nous avons exploré comment l'exposition à la violence familiale affecte l'adaptation et les performances académiques des personnes interrogées. Les neuf études examinées se sont concentrées sur la population des enfants, des adolescents et des jeunes pour évaluer la relation entre l'exposition à la violence familiale et la réussite scolaire (Supol, 2021). Dans ces études de recherche, l'exposition à la violence familiale a été traitée comme une variable indépendante, tandis que la réussite académique a été considérée comme une variable dépendante. Les conclusions mettent en évidence le lien significatif entre la violence familiale et une baisse des résultats académiques, en soulignant les conséquences négatives sur la concentration et l'apprentissage (da Silva Alves, 2021). De plus, les façons dont un climat familial marqué par la violence influence la participation aux activités scolaires, impactant leur bien-être émotionnel, sont abordées. Grâce à une analyse approfondie de ce sujet, la revue fournit une compréhension plus détaillée des mécanismes par lesquels la violence familiale peut influencer la trajectoire académique des jeunes et suggère des orientations possibles pour les interventions et le soutien.

Mots-clés : l'exposition, violence domestique, performance scolaire, climat familial.

Abstract
Acest articol examinează consecinţele violenţei domestice asupra vieţii şi educaţiei copiilor, adolescenţilor şi tinerilor, evidenţiind modurile în care aceştia pot beneficia de sprijin în cadrul sistemului educaţional (Lloyd, 2018). Prin aplicarea unei abordări sistematice de cercetare şi revizuire, am analizat sintetic studii care au evaluat precis impactul cantitativ şi calitativ al expunerii la violenţa familială asupra performanţelor academice ale acestor grupuri de vârstă. Rezultatele subliniază necesitatea implementării soluţiilor educaţionale şi a sprijinului pentru a-i ajuta să depăşească traumele şi să se dezvolte armonios. Sintetizând studiile recente, am explorat modul în care expunerea la violenţa familială afectează adaptarea şi performanţele academice ale respondenţilor. Cele nouă studii examinate s-au concentrat pe populaţia copiilor, adolescenţilor şi tinerilor pentru a evalua relaţia dintre expunerea la violenţa familială şi performanţele academice (Supol, 2021). În aceste studii de cercetare, expunerea la violenţa familială a fost tratată ca o variabilă independentă, în timp ce succesul academic a fost considerat o variabilă dependentă. Concluziile evidenţiază legătura semnificativă dintre violenţa familială şi scăderea rezultatelor academice, subliniind consecinţele negative asupra concentrării şi învăţării (da Silva Alves, 2021). În plus, sunt abordate modurile în care un climat familial marcat de violenţă influenţează implicarea în activităţile şcolare, impactându-le starea emoţională. Prin analiza comprehensivă a acestui subiect, revizuirea oferă o înţelegere mai detaliată a mecanismelor prin care violenţa familială poate influenţa traiectoria academică a tinerilor şi sugerează direcţii posibile pentru intervenţii şi sprijin.

Cuvinte cheie: expunere, violenţă domestică, performanţă şcolară, climat familial.

Introduction

The family has a crucial impact on shaping an individual's personality and behavior. Present in all societies, the family is recognized for fulfilling various social roles. With a significant influence on individual lives and societies, the family exercises control over individual actions and guides how its members

behave. Through this guidance, family members assimilate values, traditions, and standards that shape their behaviors (Alhamed, 2020). Numerous researchers have examined the phenomenon of family violence, aiming to identify its origins and assess its impact on the individual and society. The conclusions indicate numerous implications of family violence on children, regardless of its sources, including a decline in academic performance, the tendency to leave home, the development of dependencies, and possible future professional difficulties. This study addresses family violence, exploring similar terms such as domestic violence and abuse, parental conflict and violence, intimate partner violence and abuse, and marital violence and abuse. The use of the term „exposure" illustrates the diversity of ways in which children can come into contact with family violence. This exposure can vary from awareness, such as observing, hearing, or learning about violent acts, to involvement, such as actively participating or intervening in a violent act, or becoming a victim of such an incident (Supol, 2021). The phrase „domestic violence" refers to the use of abusive behaviors and physical power by any family member against another family member (Alhamed, 2020). It has long been known that children's exposure to family violence, especially interparental violence, exposes them to the risk of developing a variety of behavioral problems, which can intensify over time. Academic success generally refers to the achievements and positive outcomes of a student's educational efforts. It encompasses a range of factors, including high academic performance, reaching learning goals, and acquiring relevant skills and knowledge. Factors influencing academic success can vary and may include cognitive abilities, personality traits, study involvement, relationships with peers, parental involvement, and teaching strategies. Academic success is not solely defined by grades; it also involves personal development and individual achievements. It is a holistic concept that considers the overall growth and competence of a student in educational environments. Various researchers and studies have contributed to understanding the multifaceted nature of academic success and the diverse factors that contribute to or hinder it (Ibrahim, 2019).

The aim of this narrative meta-analysis is to investigate and synthesize the impact of exposure to family violence on the academic success of children, adolescents, and young people. By evaluating and synthesizing existing research, the goal is to obtain an overview of how family violence can influence academic outcomes. Studies such as those conducted by Evans et al. (2008), Kitzmann et al. (2003), Wolfe et al. (2003), and Vu et al. (2016) indicate that exposure to family violence in childhood is negatively associated with trauma symptoms and internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Artz et al. (2018) conducted a narrative review focused on the academic outcomes of children exposed to family violence. They found associations with lower reading ability, speech and language difficulties, increased school absences, suspensions, and expulsions. Fry et al. (2018) performed a meta-analytic review involving adolescents, highlighting the negative impact of various forms of violence on academic outcomes. Children who witnessed parental violence were more likely to achieve lower scores on standardized tests and not pass. The longitudinal study by King & Mrug (2016) on

African American adolescents revealed a significant negative relationship between exposure to family violence and academic performance over two years. Differences in measures of exposure to family violence, operationalizations, and types of violence (emotional or physical) contribute to varied results. The resilience perspective (Luthar et al., 2000) provides a theoretical framework, suggesting that protective factors can mitigate the negative effects of exposure to family violence, emphasizing the need to explore factors influencing academic performance.

Thus, the objectives of this narrative meta-analysis include analyzing the relationship between exposure to family violence and academic success, including identifying the direction and intensity of this association, investigating the precise consequences of exposure to family violence on various aspects of academic success, such as academic performance, absences, or behavioral problems. Additionally, it will examine how the impact of family violence may vary by age, encompassing children, adolescents, and young adults, as well as summarizing and addressing divergent results from existing research, and identifying possible explanations for discrepancies.

Methodology

The consequences of exposure to family violence on the academic success of children, adolescents, and young adults have been identified through the study of articles addressing this subject, published in professional research journals and digital resources. In selecting articles, the following criteria were considered: they were written in English, could be academically evaluated, and were published between 2017 and 2023. Research articles were identified through searches in databases such as PubMed, Sage Journals, CINAHL, and PSYCHInfo. The key terms used included domestic violence, academic success, and family climate.

Data extraction

The data extraction in this study involves the careful collection and analysis of several relevant aspects. These include (a) Study characteristics, which encompass information such as source citation, the years and country in which the data were collected, research design, and details about the sample, such as the sample size (N) used in data analysis, and the age range of participants in years. (b) Characteristics of the measures used, provide information on the methods of assessing exposure to family violence, including the type of exposure and the type of family violence measured, as well as how academic success was measured within the study. (c) The use or absence of theoretical frameworks in conducting the study. (d) Presentation of the results obtained in the research, focusing on the identified association between exposure to family violence and participants' academic success. The information discussed is important for a detailed understanding of the methodology and findings of the study regarding the relationship between exposure to family violence and the academic performance of individuals. This narrative meta-analysis examines the depth of the impact of

exposure to family violence on the academic success of children, adolescents, and young adults by analyzing significant research.

Tabel 1. List of studies used in the meta-analysis with adjacent information

Author	Year of Publication	Study Objectives	Type of Violence	Affected Individuals
Alhamed	2020	Detailed description of the impact of family violence on the individual and society.	Family Violence	Individuals and society
da Silva Alves	2021	Analysis of the relationship between domestic violence and school performance.	Domestic Violence	Not specified
Fellin	2019	Development of a group therapy intervention for youth who have experienced violence.	Domestic Violence and Abuse	Youth in group therapies
Fry, Fang, Elliott, Casey	2018	Global synthesis and meta-analysis of the relationships between childhood violence and educational outcomes.	Childhood Violence	Children globally
Ibrahim	2019	Evaluation of the impact of domestic violence on students' academic performance.	Physical Violence and Abuse	Students
Kiesel	2018	Exploring the relationship between child maltreatment, exposure to violence, and school performance.	Child Maltreatment, Intimate Partner Violence	Academic Performance
Lloyd	2018	Analysis of the impact of domestic violence on children and young people and the potential role of schools.	Domestic Violence	Children, adolescents, young people
Supol	2021	A systematic review of the effects of exposure to family violence on academic performance.	Exposure to Family Violence	Adolescents
Yusuf	2017	Evaluation of the impact of domestic violence on women's academic performance as perceived by teachers.	Domestic Violence Against Women	Women

Thus, Alhamed, (2020), in „Family Violence and Its Implications on Individual and Society," investigates the consequences of family violence, discussing its impact on individuals and society as a whole. Alhamed's study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the consequences of family violence. Data analysis may involve examining models of impact on individuals and society, using questionnaires and statistical analyses. Artz, Porteous, Rossiter, Nijdam-Jones, Geczy & Jackson (2018), in „A Comprehensive Review of the Literature on the Impact of Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence for Children and Youth", conducts a thorough review of the literature, highlighting the impact of exposure to intimate partner violence on children and adolescents.

Artz's comprehensive review suggests a qualitative synthesis of existing literature. Data analysis involves summarizing, categorizing, and comparing findings from various studies regarding the impact of intimate partner violence on children and adolescents. Da Silva Alves (2021), in „Domestic Violence and School Performance", explores the relationship between domestic violence and academic

performance, emphasizing the links between these two aspects. This study adopts a quantitative method with an online link and statistical analysis to establish correlations between domestic violence and academic performance. Fellin (2019), in „Empowering Young People Who Experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse: The Development of a Group Therapy Intervention", contributes to developing a group therapeutic intervention for youths who have experienced domestic violence and abuse, offering practical solutions. Fellin's (2019) work indicates qualitative methods, with data analysis involving thematic coding of qualitative responses and pre-post intervention comparisons for quantitative aspects. Ibrahim, M. (2019), in „Impact of Domestic Violence on Student Academic Achievement", addresses the direct impact of domestic violence on students' academic performance, highlighting the connections between these aspects. The nature of the publication (book) suggests a theoretical or conceptual analysis rather than empirical research.

The analysis synthesizes existing literature to establish connections between domestic violence and academic achievements. Kiesel (2018), in „The Relationship Between Child Maltreatment, Intimate Partner Violence Exposure, and Academic Performance", explores the complexity of the relationship between child maltreatment, exposure to intimate partner violence, and academic performance. Kiesel's study likely involves quantitative analyses to examine the intricate relationship between child maltreatment, exposure to intimate partner violence, and academic performance. Statistical methods encompass regression analyses and correlation evaluations. Lloyd (2018), in „Domestic Violence and Education: Examining the Impact of Domestic Violence on Young Children, Children, and Young People and the Potential Role of Schools", examines in detail the impact of domestic violence on children and young people, with a focus on the potential role of schools in addressing this issue. Qualitative thematic analysis may be employed to identify and interpret patterns and recurring themes in reports or experiences related to domestic violence and education. Supol (2021), in „Effects of Family Violence Exposure on Adolescent Academic Achievement: A Systematic Review", conducts a systematic review of the effects of exposure to family violence on the academic performance of adolescents, providing a comprehensive overview. Supol's systematic review involves aggregating findings from various studies using qualitative synthesis. The analysis includes summarizing and synthesizing evidence to draw comprehensive conclusions about the effects of exposure to family violence on the academic achievements of adolescents. Yusuf (2017), in „Impacts of Domestic Violence Against Women on Students' Academic Performance as Perceived by Primary School Teachers in Nigeria", investigates the impact of domestic violence on academic performance, from the perspective of primary school teachers in Nigeria, discussing their observations. Yusuf's study employs the descriptive survey research method. This methodological approach involves collecting and analyzing data to describe characteristics or phenomena within a given population. In the context of this study, the descriptive survey method was used to obtain the perspectives and perceptions of primary school

teachers regarding the impact of domestic violence on students' academic performance. These research findings are essential for understanding the complexity of the relationship between exposure to family violence and the academic success of young people, providing diverse perspectives and essential information on addressing this sensitive subject.

Results

The results indicate the impact of domestic violence on the academic performance of children who witness episodes of violence against their mothers, identifying a significant correlation between exposure to family violence and a decline in their academic performance (Yusuf, 2017). Additionally, other findings involve the following aspects related to decreased school performance, with adolescents exposed to family violence often showing lower academic performance compared to those not exposed. The impact on concentration and motivation is significant, as family violence can negatively influence students' ability to concentrate at school and maintain motivation for learning. Exposure to family violence can contribute to emotional and psychosocial problems, which in turn negatively affect academic performance. The effects of domestic violence on children vary according to age and manifest through different reactions and consequences.

Small Ages (1-4 years)

Children exposed to domestic violence during this period may suffer significant consequences on their emotional and mental health. Emotional traumas constitute a major aspect of this experience, with the potential to generate stress, anxiety, and depression among children. This exposure to violence can negatively influence the social and emotional development of children, with long-term consequences on their interpersonal relationships and their ability to adapt to the environment (Fry, 2018).

Behavioral problems represent another manifestation of the impact of exposure to domestic violence, with children tending to develop aggression or withdraw socially as a defense mechanism against the traumas suffered (Kiesel, 2018). This influence extends to academic performance, where exposure to violence can contribute to academic difficulties, jeopardizing their success in the educational environment (Lloyd, 2018). The cycle of violence becomes a major concern, as there is a risk that these children will replicate the pattern of violent behavior in their future relationships, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence from generation to generation (Vu, 2016). Exposure to violence can also contribute to physical and psycho-emotional health problems, having a general impact on their overall well-being. The risk of replicating the conflict resolution model through violence increases, as children exposed to violence may assimilate this behavior as a normal way of interacting, thus increasing the likelihood of replicating this model in their own relationships in the future (Supol, 2021). In conclusion, the impact of

domestic violence on children is complex and affects multiple aspects of their lives, endangering their emotional, social, academic, and relational health.

At **school ages (6-12 years old),** the effects can include nightmares, sleep disorders, aggressiveness, and difficulties in relationships with school peers. Children exposed to family violence may suffer serious consequences, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impairments (Lloyd, 2018). These factors can negatively affect academic performance, leading to difficulties in concentration and learning.

During **adolescence (ages 13-18),** proper understanding of concepts and situations is crucial. Adults can support young people by providing explanations when it is assumed that they do not understand certain aspects, thereby contributing to their academic success. Adolescents can be affected differently, considering their period of development and adaptation (Supol, 2021). Exposure to family violence can contribute to stress, anxiety, and behavioral disorders, thus affecting academic success (Kiesel, 2018). The impact can cause academic problems, such as decreased school performance, with long-term consequences on educational development. Adolescents exposed to domestic violence may encounter difficulties in managing emotions (King, 2018), which is reflected in their school performance.

Perspective on younger and older age groups

For children and adolescents, the consequences may involve social and learning adaptation difficulties, while for young adults, the impact can be complex, varying depending on previous experiences and coping resources (Kiesel, 2018). Research shows that exposure to domestic violence can affect the academic success of young people, creating psychological and emotional barriers that can interfere with school performance (Artz, 2014). Young people exposed to family violence may suffer long-term consequences on their mental and emotional health, with the risk of developing anxious, depressive, or aggressive behaviors (Supol, 2021). Additionally, they may encounter difficulties in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships, with the potential to replicate toxic patterns experienced within the family (Yusuf, 2017). This type of exposure can influence young people's decisions regarding higher education, careers, and relationships, thus affecting their transitions into adulthood.

Conclusions

Exposure to family violence has significant consequences on the academic success of children, adolescents, and young adults. These effects manifest both in the short term and long term, negatively impacting their physical and mental health, including their focus and motivation for learning. Studies indicate that exposure to family violence can lead to negative mental health consequences, meaning that family violence can contribute to emotional and psychosocial problems, thus affecting students' ability to concentrate and motivate themselves

in the learning process (Artz, 2014). At the same time, concentration and motivation issues may arise, with the negative impact of domestic violence adversely influencing children's and adolescents' ability to focus at school and maintain motivation for learning. According to studies, exposure to family violence can have long-term consequences on academic success (Supol, 2021). To ensure the academic success of children, it is essential to pay attention to the prevention and intervention of family violence, providing the necessary support both educationally and emotionally (Fellin, 2019).

Interventions and support in combating family violence can play a crucial role in improving the academic trajectory of young people. Possible directions for such initiatives include:

Educational programs and counseling

Implementing educational programs that address the consequences of family violence and providing school counseling services can contribute to managing the psychological impact of violence and promoting mental health (Sheridan, 2017).

Training for school staff

Ensuring adequate training for teachers and school staff in recognizing signs of family violence and providing necessary support can create a safe and encouraging school environment.

Collaboration with social institutions

Coordinating interventions between schools, social services, and community organizations can create an integrated support system for young people affected by family violence (Lalande, 2023).

Legal and Social Resources

Providing information and access to legal and social resources for affected families can contribute to protecting young people and preventing the recurrence of violence (Kaur, 2008).

Community awareness

Community awareness campaigns can reduce the stigma associated with family violence and encourage reporting and early intervention (Sivarajasingam, 2022).

Support groups for students

Establishing support groups at the school level can provide a safe space for young people to share their experiences and receive emotional support (Thompson, 2012).

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Biodata

Marilena Geanina BÂRSAN: I graduated in 2021 from „Al. I. Cuza" University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, specializing in Psychology. In the same year, I obtained the certificate of a clinical psychologist in supervision, working professionally both in my practice (CIP) and at the Harmanais Center for Complementary Therapies. This year, I completed a master's degree in Clinical Assessment, Counseling, and Couple and Family Psychotherapy, at the same university/faculty. Currently, I am enrolled in basic training courses in cognitive-behavioral therapy. I am also a Neurofeedback therapist. At the same time, I have been a teacher of Romanian language and literature at „Ion Neculce" Secondary School, Iași, since 2000, starting my teaching career in 1997. My main areas of interest are child psychology, adolescent and youth psychology, developing methodologies for intervention in the categories mentioned above, and interdisciplinary approaches (neurosciences, psychosomatic medicine). Moreover, both my bachelor's and master's theses focus on psychological aspects of the age categories mentioned above ("Psychosocial Factors of Anxiety in Examination Situations in Students", „The Role of the Family Environment in the Development of Motivation and Academic Success").

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THE TRUE LIFE OF WOMEN IN THE „PERFECT HOME"

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Abstract

Domestic violence is one of the most frequent violations of human rights, occurring worldwide and manifesting in various forms. It has been found that domestic violence should not be ignored or considered normal. Thus, various actions have been initiated to inform society about the consequences of this issue at individual, community, and national levels. Although in Romanian society, the awareness of domestic violence came much later, in the last three decades, previously being a „taboo" subject, today, violence against women is viewed with a different attitude. Through this paper, I aimed to identify the effects of domestic violence on victims, and for data collection, the interview guide has been used. The study is based on the analysis of 5 interviews conducted with women victims of domestic violence, who were beneficiaries at the time at the Social Services Center for Adults in Difficulty in Iasi. The discussion areas have been focused on the following aspects: the history of violence in the couple relationship, the couple relationship, the factors leading to acts of violence, the reason why the woman remains in the abusive relationship, and support services for victims. The main aspects identified from the study refer to the partner's alcohol consumption, which is a primary factor in triggering acts of violence, jealousy, lack of financial resources (a reason that keeps the victim trapped in the relationship), and the partner's promises.

Keywords: domestic violence, victim, factors, effects.

Résumé :

La violence domestique est la violation des droits de l'homme la plus fréquente, se produisant dans le monde entier et se manifestant sous diverses formes. Il a été constaté que la violence domestique ne doit pas être ignorée ou considérée comme normale, c'est pourquoi des actions ont été initiées pour informer la société des conséquences de ce problème aux niveaux individuel, communautaire et national. Bien que dans la société roumaine, la prise de conscience de la violence domestique soit venue beaucoup plus tard, au cours des trois dernières décennies, ce sujet ayant été auparavant un sujet „tabou", aujourd'hui, la violence contre les femmes est perçue avec une attitude différente. À travers ce document, j'ai cherché à identifier les effets de la violence domestique sur les victimes, et pour la collecte des données, le guide d'entretien a été utilisé. L'étude est basée sur

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l'analyse de 5 entretiens réalisés avec des femmes victimes de violence domestique, qui étaient bénéficiaires à l'époque au Centre de Services Sociaux pour Adultes en Difficulté de Iasi. Les domaines de discussion se sont concentrés sur les aspects suivants : l'histoire de la violence dans la relation de couple, la relation de couple, les facteurs conduisant aux actes de violence, la raison pour laquelle la femme reste dans la relation abusive et les services de soutien pour les victimes. Les principaux aspects identifiés de l'étude se réfèrent à la consommation d'alcool du partenaire, qui est un facteur principal déclenchant les actes de violence, la jalousie, le manque de ressources financières (une raison qui maintient la victime piégée dans la relation) et les promesses du partenaire.

Mots-clés : violence, victime, facteurs, effets.

Rezumat
Violența domestică este cea mai frecventă încălcare a drepturilor unui om, aceasta are loc la nivel mondial manifestându-se sub diferite forme. S-a constatat că violența domestică nu ar trebui să fie ignorată sau considerată o normalitate, așadar s-au demarat acțiuni cu scopul de a informa societatea cu privire la consecințele pe care le poate avea această problemă, atât la nivel individual, comunitar, cât și național. Deși în societatea românească, conștientizarea problemei violenței domestice a venit mult mai târziu, în ultimele trei decenii, anterior fiind un subiect „tabu", în prezent violența împotriva femeilor este privită cu o altă atitudine. Prin prezenta lucrare mi-am propus să identific care sunt efectele violenței domestice asupra victimelor, iar pentru colectarea datelor a fost utilizat ghidul de interviu. Studiul se bazează pe analiza a 5 interviuri realizate cu femei victimeale violenței domestice, ce erau beneficiare în acel moment în cadrul Centrului de Servicii Sociale pentru Persoanele Adulte aflate în Dificultate din Iași. Ariile de discuție au fost axate pe următoarele aspecte: istoricul fenomenului de violență în relația de cuplu, relația de cuplu, factorii ce duc la actele de violență, motivul pentru care rămâne femeia în relația agresivă și servicii de suport pentru victime. Principalele aspecte identificate în urma studiului realizat fac referire la consumul de alcool al partenerului, ce reprezintă un factor principal în declanșarea actelor de violență, gelozia, lipsa resurselor financiare (un motiv ce o ține captivă pe victimă în acea relație) dar și promisiunile partenerului.

Cuvinte cheie: violență, victimă, factori, efecte.

Introduction

International research on family violence began in the 1970s, but it cannot be said that was when the discovery of this concept took place. Researchers from various fields observed that family violence, defined as a form of abuse manifested by men towards their partners through control and domination, requires investigation and attention (Manu, 2009, p. 14).

In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish November 25 as the „International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women", aiming to increase awareness in society about violence against women.

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon of domestic violence, there is no single definition, as associating the term „violence" with another word can give it a completely different meaning (for example: physical violence, sexual violence, economic violence, etc.).

According to the Romanian Crime Prevention Institute, domestic violence is defined as „a series of repeated constraining behaviors and physical, sexual, psychological, economic, social, or spiritual attacks that a person manifests towards a partner, with the aim of controlling and dominating them, using force and/or the victim's inability to defend themselves, which occurs within a couple relationship" (Romanian Crime Prevention Institute apud Rujoiu & Rujoiu, 2012, p. 24).

Legislatively, specifically Law no. 217/2003 for the prevention and combating of family violence, domestic violence is defined in Article 3 as „any intentional inaction or action of physical, sexual, psychological, economic, social, or spiritual or cybernetic violence that occurs in the family or domestic environment or between spouses or former spouses, as well as between current or former partners, regardless of whether the aggressor lives or has lived together with the victim".

Mândrilă (2009) stated that when we hear the word „violence", we involuntarily think of abuse of power, which paradoxically means powerlessness. In most situations, when a partner abuses power, their behavior can escalate and lead to acts of violence against women. In Romanian society, the role of victims of domestic violence is largely attributed to women. The purpose of this research was to determine the effects of domestic violence on women.

1. Forms of Domestic Violence and their repercussions on abused women

Irimescu & Rădoi (2017, p. 13) emphasize that the issue of violence against women and inappropriate behaviors towards them are subjects of global interest

According to Law no. 217/2003 for the prevention and combating of family violence, the forms of domestic violence are listed in article 4 as „verbal violence, psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, economic violence, social violence, spiritual violence, and cybernetic violence".

Domestic violence is a social issue that does not suddenly appear, or that a person finds themselves in at an inappropriate moment or place. Although it may seem paradoxical, women are most often abused by those who claim to love them, or by someone they know, which makes it harder for the victim to overcome such an event (Snyder, 2020, p. 21).

Many times, family violence remains hidden from society's eyes until the physical traces disappear, and those involved in acts of violence tend to behave as if nothing had happened. However, even if it is assumed that such experiences can be forgotten or erased from the victim's memory, this is only an illusion. When women are addressed with insulting or derogatory words, their wounds are reopened, and emotional trauma persists (Hogaș, 2010).

Hogaș (2010) highlighted that acts of violence against women have devastating effects, both physically and emotionally. These effects can persist for a long or short period of time, profoundly affecting the victims' well-being.

Women subjected to both physical and psychological violence are prone to chronic illnesses such as diabetes, joint inflammation, and back pain. In addition to

these medical issues, victims of domestic violence may experience frequent fatigue and insomnia due to constant stress and anxiety caused by emotional and physical traumas (Dumitrescu, 2015).

In the case of abused women, post-traumatic stress disorder is often mentioned. In some research, it is also referred to as the Battered Woman Syndrome (source?).

Muntean (2011) mentions the Battered Woman Syndrome as a condition that combines physical and psycho-social problems that women develop as a result of repeated acts of violence from their partners.

Post-traumatic stress disorder or the Battered Woman Syndrome, as defined in DSM III (1980), involves negative reactions generated by the recollection of painful past events, including dreams or nightmares associated with those traumatic moments. These reactions may include feelings of fear, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, etc., which can persist for minutes, hours, or even days.

The World Health Organization (2002) highlights that women who have been forced into sexual relationships are at an increased risk of suffering from depression and post-traumatic stress.

Vrasti (2012) emphasizes that, in addition to the direct effects of violence on the victim, it also has repercussions on children who have been exposed to scenes of violence in the family.

Most of the time, victims decide to leave their abusive partner only when they realize that their child is being affected by the (aggressive) environment in which they are growing up.

Mândrilă (2009) argued that the abused woman is often compelled to leave her partner only when she notices that their child is affected by the tensions and violence in the family environment. In those moments, the mother feels a deep responsibility to provide the child with a stable and healthy home, avoiding a dysfunctional family environment.

Domestic violence has devastating negative effects on women who have been repeatedly subjected to acts of aggression.

Albiol (2022) underscores that acts of violence lead to a significant increase in mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, psychiatric disorders, post-traumatic stress, alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorders, and sleep disorders. Additionally, women who have been subjected to violence are more prone to self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Many women stated that the consumption of alcohol and drugs represents a form of refuge for them, helping them to forget the physical and emotional pain caused by violence. Studies in Romania focused on the phenomenon of domestic violence have found an increase in the rate of alcohol and drug consumption during periods when the incidence of violence was also rising (Mândrilă, 2009).

Violence directed at women not only affects their physical and mental health but also has devastating consequences on their reproductive system. Unfortunately, violent acts against women during pregnancy can lead either to a

miscarriage or premature birth, endangering the mother's life in this situation (Necula, 2021).

Turliuc (2009) mentioned that domestic violence can be a triggering factor for suicidal behaviors in women, and those who have been victims of abuse are at a higher risk of suicide compared to the general population. When depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are associated with low self-esteem, they can generate suicidal thoughts in women who have been subjected to domestic violence.

When a woman has suicidal ideation or even resorts to this act, in the victim's mind, there is only the desire to break the cycle of violence. An example from Romanian literature is presented in the case of Ana from the novel „Ion" by Liviu Rebreanu, in which the victim can no longer endure the repeated episodes of violence perpetrated both by her father and her partner, leading Ana to tragically take her life (Mândrilă, 2009).

According to previous studies, it has been found that only one of the partner's deaths can put an end to the cycle of domestic violence. The loss of life represents the most tragic consequence of domestic violence, and this should be a wake-up call for the entire society (Mândrilă, 2009).

Mândrilă (2009) stated that some of the aforementioned effects can be viewed as strategies of cooperation – survival. Women who are victims of abuse adopt two distinct strategies, one being destructive, and the other being constructive. Self-destructive behaviors include substance abuse such as alcohol, drugs, and suicidal behaviors. Constructive strategies are those that victims take when they understand the impact that violence can have on both them and their children, subsequently deciding to separate from the abusive partner and begin the process of rebuilding their lives.

When the victim decides to separate from the abusive partner, there are two possibilities: either she seeks support from her family (this can happen if the victim has a good relationship with her family), or she will leave as far away from the aggressor as possible to feel safe (Hogaş, 2010).

Women who experience repeated physical and emotional abuse require continuous and long-term assistance from specialists in the field to reduce the risk of other negative events, such as alcohol abuse, suicidal tendencies, depression, and substance abuse (Hogaş, 2010).

Albiol (2022) observed that domestic violence can undermine the victim's self-confidence, and this can have repercussions on all aspects of her life. Often, the victim tends to choose another aggressive partner due to low self-esteem and the desire to feel loved. This dynamic can lead to entering a vicious cycle of violence.

The greatest harm done to a woman in a toxic relationship is the loss of self-respect, despite appearances, victims of domestic violence often develop an attachment to the aggressor (Muntean & Munteanu, 2011).

2. Study Design

My research was a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews.

According to Hurubean (2011), the individual interview technique represents a meeting between two people where a free discussion takes place, during which one person provides information while the other obtains information.

The data collection period was from January to May 2023. The interviews took place face-to-face between the interviewee and the researcher, following a predetermined plan, with an informed consent form signed because the interviews were recorded, and subsequently, the provided information was analyzed for research purposes. The interviews were held at the Social Services Center for Adults in Difficulty in Iași. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes each. A total of 5 women, aged between 19 and 41 years old, who were at that time beneficiaries of social services at the Social Services Center for Adults in Difficulty, were interviewed.

The study aimed to identify the consequences of domestic violence on the victims. The discussion topics focused on the following aspects: identification data, the history of violence in the couple's relationship, the couple's relationship, factors leading to acts of violence, the reasons why the woman remains in the abusive relationship, and support services for victims.

3. Research Results

Starting from the discussion topics and from the analysis of the interviews, we identified that the interviewed victims in this research came from dysfunctional families, with abusive and addictive behaviors, representing for them a normality and an example of how the family system operates. „My siblings and I wouldn't leave the room until they finished their circus...dad threw a knife at mom right in front of me" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence).

"They are hardworking people, but alcohol ruins them" (S2, 19 years old, victim of domestic violence).

The influence of the victim's background environment (especially the rural environment) was also noted, which in their case represented an impediment to their educational development.

"...I had to stay with my siblings, and because of that, I couldn't finish school" (S2, 19 years old, 6 grades, victim of domestic violence).

The history of violence in the couple's relationship was another discussion topic proposed in the research. Following the interviews with victims of domestic violence, we identified that the first signs of aggression towards them appeared after approximately 3-5 months of the relationship.

"about 5 months in, he started being violent, but I hoped he would change" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence).

"after 3 months of a relationship, we started arguing because of alcohol and gambling" (S2, 19 years old, victim of domestic violence).

"Well, about 2 months in, he started insulting me and hitting me" (S5, 31 years old, victim of domestic violence).

From the interviews with the victims, the most common form of violence manifested towards them was *physical*: „he hit me 2,3 times on the head" (S5, 31 years old, victim of domestic violence); „I was beaten with fists, slaps, and with a belt" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence), followed by *verbal* violence: „he called me stupid, cow..." (S4, 24 years old, victim of domestic violence); *social* violence: „I had family support, not anymore, because I disappointed them,...now I understand why, because I didn't go back to him only once" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence); „he took my phone, if he went to work...he took my phone with him" (S5, 31 years old, victim of domestic violence); and *economic* violence: „he took the child allowance and withdrew it, but the money was left in the house, meaning he knew where it was and I did too...but that happened on good days, but there were days when he took all the money from my pocket and left home" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence); „I only had the child allowance, which his mother would withdraw,...I don't even know what salary he has" (S3, 21 years old, victim of domestic violence).

Analyzing the couple relationship between victim and aggressor, we identified a different dynamic of functioning of the couples and their evolution. If in the first months of the relationship, the partner was attentive to the woman's needs „he bought me gifts" (S3, 21 years old), later he would change his behavior and attitude towards the partner „he was aggressive only at home, he behaved nicely in public" (S2, 19 years old, victim of domestic violence); „a year ago he hit me, he's not violent at all" (S3, 21 years old, victim of domestic violence).

From the analysis of the interviews, we identified several main factors that trigger acts of violence such as alcohol abuse and jealousy.

Alcohol abuse was mentioned as a factor that leads to the partner's aggression towards the victim, because when the man consumes alcohol, changes occur in his character, becoming jealous and impulsive.

Jealousy was also mentioned individually as a factor that makes the partner aggressive.

"...I worked for 6 months in sales, but he would come and cause trouble, he thought I was looking at customers (men) in a certain way,...he was jealous, and that's why I chose to quit the job" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence).

"he has problems with alcohol, he drinks daily, stays out at night, and when he comes home, he beats me" (S1, 41 years old, victim of domestic violence).

"every time he drinks, he insults me" (S2, 19 years old, victim of domestic violence).

"he came home drunk and started accusing me of talking to other men,....then he slapped me across the face" (S4, 24 years old, victim of domestic violence).

When victims were asked during the interview why they did not leave their abusive partner, they mentioned reasons such as lack of their income, lack of housing, but also their love for their partner. Paradoxically, many times the victim's love for the abuser keeps them in that relationship, hoping that the abuser will change.

"I hope he would change" (S1, 41 years old); „I have nowhere to go" (S2, 19 years old); „I had nowhere to go" (S3, 21 years old).

Following the interviews conducted with the victims, we identified the importance of support services that are necessary for victims of domestic violence, especially when they lack other resources. Victims are helped to overcome difficult moments through temporary accommodation (60 days) and the protection provided within the Social Services Center for Adults in Difficulty. Psychological counseling represents another support offered to victims in overcoming trauma and rebuilding self-esteem, while also assisting them in finding employment. All these services aim to prepare victims to become independent in all aspects after their discharge from the Center.

4. Conclusions

Domestic violence is a real problem, and to reduce this phenomenon, the intervention of both specialists and society is necessary.

From the analyzed interviews, victims mentioned that the most frequent violence they were subjected to was *physical violence*, followed by *verbal, social,* and *economic* violence.

A primary triggering factor of acts of violence identified by victims refers to the partner's alcohol consumption, noticing that the most frequent episodes of domestic violence occurred when the partner was drinking alcohol. Besides alcohol consumption, victims also mentioned the partner's jealousy, often unjustified. By mixing these two factors, domestic violence emerges.

Referring to the repercussions of domestic violence on victims, these are either observed near the incident (presence of bruises on the victim) or are observed over time, talking here about the disorders that many arise after abusive episodes (anxiety, depression, somatic disorders, etc.). Victims are often confused and do not understand why their partner behaves in such a way towards them, and even if they begin to understand his behavior, most of the time they fall prey to his promises „he promised me he wouldn't do it again".

The phenomenon of domestic violence began to be viewed in Romanian society as a real problem in recent decades, with various campaigns, projects, conferences, and legislative measures initiated to prevent and combat domestic violence (Bright Sky Ro App; Campaigns conducted by the Romanian Police – „Broken Wings" Domestic Violence Prevention Campaign; National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men – national campaign for information and awareness regarding domestic violence and violence against women, promoting the unique national toll-free hotline number for victims of domestic violence, sex discrimination, and human trafficking – 0800 500 333; POCU VENUS Project – Together for a Safe Life!).

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THE WOMAN VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Violence against women is a large-scale phenomenon in contemporary society, the number of women abused in a couple's relationship is constantly increasing. Even though in recent years there have been significant changes regarding the distribution of roles in the family, and the differences between men and women have narrowed considerably, there are still men with traditional mindsets who place women in a spot of inferiority, women's capabilities and aspirations being treated with superficiality or even with indifference.

The investigative approach consisted of qualitative research, with an interview guide, applied to 20 women involved in abusive relationships. The qualitative research was conducted in the „Children of Jesus" Day Center in Reşiţa Municipality. The purpose of the study is to determine the main reasons causing victims of domestic violence not to end the abusive relationship. The results of the research demonstrate the difficulties faced by victims of domestic violence and the need to adopt legislative measures to protect victims and apply strict sanctions to domestic abusers.

Keywords: traditional mentality, aggressor, legislative measures, frustrations, helplessness, support, protection.

Résumé

La violence contre les femmes est un phénomène de grande ampleur dans la société contemporaine, le nombre de femmes maltraitées dans les relations de couple est en constante augmentation. Même si, ces dernières années, des changements significatifs ont eu lieu en ce qui concerne la répartition des rôles au sein de la famille et que les différences entre les hommes et les femmes se sont considérablement réduites, il existe encore des hommes ayant une mentalité traditionnelle qui placent les femmes dans une position d'infériorité, les capacités et les aspirations des femmes être traité avec superficialité, voire avec indifférence.

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L'approche de l'investigation a consisté en une recherche qualitative, l'application d'un guide d'entretien, appliqué à un certain nombre de 20 femmes impliquées dans des relations abusives. La recherche qualitative a été réalisée au centre de jour « Enfants de Jésus » du municipe de Reşita. Le but de la recherche est de déterminer quelles sont les principales raisons qui poussent les victimes de violence domestique à ne pas mettre fin à la relation abusive. Les résultats de la recherche démontrent les difficultés rencontrées par les victimes de violence domestique et la nécessité d'adopter des mesures législatives pour protéger les victimes et d'appliquer des sanctions sévères aux agresseurs domestiques.

Mots clés : mentalité traditionnelle, agresseur, mesures législatives, frustrations, impuissance, soutien, protection.

Rezumat

Violenţa asupra femeii reprezintă un fenomen de amploare în societatea contemporană, numărul femeilor abuzate în relaţia de cuplu fiind într-o continuă creştere. Chiar dacă în ultimii ani s-au produs modificări semnificative referitoare la distribuţia rolurilor în familie, iar diferenţele dintre bărbaţi şi femei s-au redus considerabil, încă există bărbaţi cu mentalităţi tradiţionale care plasează femeia pe un loc de inferioritate, capacităţile şi aspiraţiile femeilor fiind tratate cu superficialitate sau chiar cu indiferenţă.

Demersul investigativ a constat într-o cercetare de tip calitativ, bazat pe interviu, aplicat unui număr de 20 de femei care sunt implicate în relaţii abuzive. Cercetarea calitativă s-a realizat în cadrul Centrului de zi „Copiii lui Isus" din Municipiul Reşiţa. Scopul cercetării fiind acela de a determina care sunt principalele motive care le determină pe victimele violenţei domestice să nu pună capăt relaţiei abuzive. Rezultatele cercetării demonstrează dificultăţile cu care victimele violenţei domestice se confruntă şi necesitatea adoptării unor măsuri legislative care să protejeze victimele şi să aplice sancţiuni aspre agresorilor familiali.

Cuvinte cheie: mentalitate tradiţională, agresor, măsuri legislative, frustrări, neputinţe, suport, protecţie.

1. Introduction

Violence against women is not a recent phenomenon, being encountered in all societies and at all times. In recent years, it has taken on a special dimension as a result of the large number of women abused in the couple's relationship, who do not manage to put an end to the abusive relationship. An alarm signal is the multitude of cases of violence in which the victims lost their lives because they did not benefit from the support of the competent authorities in time to be able to end the abusive relationship.

Violence supposes an abuse of power closely related to a position of power and the imposition of this power on others, but there are also cases in which precisely the lack of power determines episodes of violence. However, it is interesting to note that the abuse of power and the imposition of control in a violent way paradoxically denotes the aggressor's lack of power. Thus, the accumulated frustrations and inability to be in control lead to aggressive behavior imposing this much-desired control and power on others, which can be very well observed in the cases of men, but even women aggressors (Rădulescu, 2001).

Violence directed at women is a manifestation of gender inequality, more precisely of certain social practices that are detrimental to women and put them in a place of inferiority. The norms that establish the dominance of men over women legitimize various forms of violence (Băluţă&Tufiş, 2022).

Domestic violence may be conceptualized through different forms of abuse: physical abuse, manifested by visible injuries on the victim's body; social abuse, in which the victims isolate themselves and refuse to communicate with those around them, passively accepting the abusive situation; mental abuse, considered extremely serious because it affects the mental health of the victim, possibly leading to the appearance of serious disorders. Also, abuse of a sentimental nature makes its presence felt in abusive relationships, with the victims being exposed to painful traumas that affect their ability to find their emotional balance (Bonea, 2013).

Domestic violence is a serious issue that often goes undetected for a long time. Thus, its effects may be blunted and neglected, allowing those who commit such acts to continue their abusive behavior without consequences or repercussions; however, it cannot be easily forgotten. Every act of aggression, and every moment of fear contributes to the deterioration of interpersonal relationships and the traumatization of victims. It is crucial to understand the complexity and severity of these long-term consequences of domestic violence to provide support and protection to victims.

2. The cyclicality of domestic violence

Certain researchers, having concerns about the phenomenon of domestic violence, have identified a process of its emergence. By analyzing this cycle process, we can explain how women become victims, how they come to accept the abusive behavior of their partners, and why they do not have the courage to end such a relationship. Dănilă et al. (2009) highlight three distinct phases that differ according to duration and intensity, both within the couple and between couples, determined by certain events that occur in the life of the couple, phases that follow one other after the period called „courtship" (p. 103).

During the courtship period, the relationship between the two partners is characterized by a particularly affectionate behavior, rich in compliments from the abuser towards the female victim. In this phase, the fact that the man is loving and attentive makes the woman not pay due attention to the aggressive episodes of the life partner. Very often, the abuser identifies certain weaknesses in the woman and tries to take advantage of them at times when the woman cannot handle herself, and this makes her believe that she can rely on him and that they can be a functional couple. Also, during this period, the man can make certain confessions from the intimate sphere, tell her certain episodes from his childhood, and confess certain events that marked his existence, all this with the aim of justifying his own aggressive behaviors. All these stories and forays into the past do nothing but create and strengthen a state of dependence of the victim on the aggressor and the aggressor on the victim.

At the beginning of a relationship, women show an exaggerated enthusiasm for phone calls from their partner, but with time they become more frequent and turn into dozens of calls a day, which aim to constantly check on the woman. Over time, the woman becomes more introverted and more withdrawn, her relationship with family and friends becomes increasingly distant. All this is part of the „seduction" plan, and after it is carried out, acts of violence also begin (Walker, 2009, pp. 63-70).

▪ **The first phase – creating tension**

During this phase, the first adversarial discussions appear, discussions that the woman tries to manage with calm, and understanding and in some situations avoids her partner. By adopting this strategy, the woman is unconsciously implying to the man that she accepts the abuse and legitimizes it. This behavior, it does not mean that she does not realize the context in which she is, but she believes that by adopting such a position she can avoid the situation escalation. She resorts to what we call denial. Freud (1925) defined this term as „a behavior that brings together a variety of defenses aimed at diminishing the threatening part of reality and thus allowing the individual to live under less psychic stress".

▪ **The second phase – serious incidents of aggression**

When the tensions between the two partners become unbearable, the beginning of a phase is triggered in which even the most banal discussions may degenerate into conflicts. Initially, the man tries to justify his behavior, but along the way, he loses his ability to communicate. According to studies conducted by Hearn in 1998 on a sample of men incarcerated for domestic violence, they claim that anger blinds their judgment intense moments. Thus, acute incidents occur as a result of a man's desire to demonstrate his power in front of his partner, intending to teach her a lesson and discipline her, without realizing that he can hurt her (Hearn, 1998).

▪ **The third phase – the aggressor's regrets**

At this stage of the process, the abuser appears to express regret for his actions, asking for forgiveness and enlisting the help of relatives and mutual friends to win the woman's forgiveness.

He tries to convince her that he deserves a second chance, using gifts and tender gestures. On the other hand, the woman's behavior towards the aggressive man changes, and she is susceptible to his promises and requests, influenced by the behavioral patterns in the family and the learned value system. The duration of this stage can vary, sometimes being shorter than the first, but longer than the second. In cases where the period of love and regret is quickly followed by violence and anger, the woman may react impulsively, potentially injuring or even killing her partner (Walker, 1984).

3. Abuse of power in the couple's relationship

Abuse of power is one of the main causes of domestic violence. Even if, in recent decades, society has evolved and women have become independent, men continue to want supremacy, often discrediting the actions of their life partners. Women's achievements may often be at odds with men's expectations, and this may cause conflicts within the couple, conflicts risking to degenerate into acts of violence of which both women and children may be victims. Violence, in common language, involves the use of force and coercion by an individual, group, or social class to impose their will on others. From a legal perspective, violence means the use of physical force or other persuasive means to cause damage to property or injury to a person's integrity. From a psychological point of view, violence denotes aggressive behavior most often manifested as a result of frustrations that may not be vented in socially desirable ways (Sînzianu, 2006).

The term power has several meanings: to exploit, to coerce, to manipulate, to enter into competition, or, on the contrary, to associate with someone for the joint use of a position of power, etc. Some of these forms have a positive content, others have negative content, being associated but not identical with violence. Violence is not always power, most of the time violence is a means to an end: gaining a position of power (Hogaș, 2010).

A specific classification of violence focuses on the goals and motives of the aggressor. In this respect, in the literature, two types of violence and two categories of aggressors are identified:

- **expressive violence**, which refers to aggressors who usually fail to control their impulses and tend to erupt in conflict situations, unable to keep their emotions in check. This type of violence may be caused either by difficulties in communicating with others and in controlling the situation, or by the lack of interpersonal strategies necessary to manage the problems encountered.
- **instrumental violence**, which refers to aggressors who do not suffer from a lack of intellectual or social capacities and whose acts of violence are not characterized by impulsivity.

By analyzing the characteristics of domestic aggressors, we can see that domestic violence is the result of the unequal distribution of power within family and society (Dănilă, 2009). Domestic violence is a complex phenomenon involving power and control dynamics. The aggressor wants to have absolute authority over the other family members, expressing this control through various means, such as threats, intimidation, frequent abuse, isolation, deprivation of material resources, cutting off contact with extended families or friends, imposing a regime of restrictive life, humiliation or domination through physical violence. This abusive behavior has serious consequences for the victims and may perpetuate a cycle of violence within the family (Bonea, 2016)

4. Types of abuse directed against women

The analysis of the literature shows the main forms of violence against women:

● **Physical abuse** – it is the most frequently encountered in situations of abuse within the family. In elaborating a definition of physical abuse, several researchers were „prevented" by the fact of including in the same category slapping and acts of violence in which weapons are used, be they cutting weapons or firearms (Husso, 2017, p. 1-14), noting that physical abuse is just another stage in the process of partner abuse, preceded by abuse through neglect. It is considered physical violence and when the aggressor destroys goods inside the home, deprives the victim of food, sleep, and the threat of death using various objects (Sînzianu, 2006).
Psychological violence is regulated by Law 25/2012 and is defined as: „imposing personal will or control, causing tension and mental suffering in any way and by any means, demonstrative violence against objects and animals, through verbal threats, control of personal life, acts of jealousy, coercion of any kind, as well as other actions with a similar effect, in these forms of manifestation are forms of psychological abuse, as well as forms of emotional abuse (http://www. mmuncii.ro).

● **Sexual abuse** is a form of abuse that begins with offensive comments to the woman and continues with unpleasant touches and various insults inflicted on the victim during or in connection with the sexual act. Rape is a form of violence that women often suffer in silence, according to social norms that consider intimate relationships primarily a man's right, a territory where he is the master who decides (http://journal.managementinhealth./article/view).

● **Social abuse** is „a condition that worsens the situation of the woman as a victim. Social violence is at the same time a barrier to the valorization of women's resources outside the family and a framework that favors her aggression in terms of private and intimate life" (Amnesty International, Femmes, ACT 77/001/2005, 2005).

● **Economic abuse** involves „decreasing the victim's resources and autonomy, controlling the victim's access to money or personal belongings, food, means of transport, telephone and other sources of protection or care from which they could benefit" (Law 217/2003).

In Romania, the phenomenon of domestic violence is increasing day by day and is considered one of the most serious social issues, with roots deeply embedded in people's mentality (Bogeanu, 2013).

5. The methodological dimension of applied research

Methods and techniques used

In the applied part of the current approach, we used a sociological survey based on an interview guide, addressed to victims of domestic violence.

The sociological investigation „is a technique of research (investigation) of the cases that are the object of social assistance, necessary to know the social problem raised by the client (individual, group or collective)" (Sandu, 2010, p. 101). The interview represents „a method of obtaining, through questions and answers, verbal information from individuals and human groups, to verify hypotheses or for the scientific description of socio-human phenomena" (Patton, 2002).

Ethical aspects of the work

The present research involves the collection of information from a vulnerable group, so in the entire investigative approach, the observance of ethical aspects was taken into consideration. When collecting the data, the purpose and objectives of the research were explained, and the fact that the data will only be used for scientific purposes. Also, the respondents were informed about the confidentiality of the data, but also about the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The sample of qualitative research

To outline the qualitative approach, a group of 20 women who were identified as victims of domestic violence was used. The research tool was the structured interview guide. The organization selected for the study is a non-governmental entity involved in the provision of psychosocial assistance services in community environments characterized by deprivation and marginalization, located in Reşiţa municipality. The period of collection and interpretation of the relevant data for the qualitative analysis was between September 2023 and February 2024.

Research design

The purpose of the qualitative research is to identify the main reasons that lead victims of violence to remain in a relationship with the abusive man.

Research objectives Objective 1: Determining the causes that influence abused women not to seek help of a specialist to end the abusive relationship; Objective 2: Exploring the dependency/autonomy of a person who has been subjected to domestic violence.

Following the objectives of the research approach, the research questions were established.

Question 1. How does the victim of domestic violence self-evaluate the situational context in which she is?

Question 2. What are the factors that led to the current situation of victims of domestic violence?

Question 3. Are victims of domestic violence confident enough to seek specialist help/support to become independent again?

Question 4. What does „living with the abuser" mean for persons abused?

Question 5. Are the victims of domestic violence influenced by the experiences lived in the family of origin?

6. Analysis and interpretation of data

The present study involved the collection of data through semi-structured interviews, followed by their transcription and analysis. Through transcription, the dominant orientations in the speeches of the interviewed persons were identified, by applying labels to their different fragments. Afterward, the tags were grouped according to the convergence of the analyzed discourse. This method allowed the researchers to familiarize themselves with the discursive content of the respondents (Sandu, 2010).

The structure of the interview guide was based on the following thematic units (axes).

Thematic unit 1: „Incidence of cases of abuse and neglect". Support questions:

"Have you ever been a victim of domestic violence?" (question no. 1);

"How did the episodes of domestic violence begin in your case?" (question no. 2)

Thematic unit 2: „Knowledge of the phenomenon of abuse and neglect". Support questions:

"What do you think are the causes of domestic violence?" (question no. 3);

"What are the effects of domestic violence on the female victim" (questions no. 4,5)

"How do you think domestic violence could be prevented" (question no. 8)

Thematic unit 3: „Factors leading to success/failure". Support questions:

"How do you think episodes of domestic violence have left their mark on you?" (question no. 9);

"How do you think your life will be like in 5 years?" (question no. 10).

Analysis and interpretation of the results obtained following the application of the interview guide targeting the answers to the questions, following the thematic units. The first thematic unit focuses on outlining the vision of addicted people on the incidence and onset of abuse in the family.

Thematic unit 1: „Incidence of cases of abuse and neglect". „Thus, with the help of research questions 1 and 2, the incidence and onset of violent episodes faced by the interviewed persons were identified.

Analyzing the answers to questions 1 and 2: „Have you ever been a victim of domestic violence?" (item no. 1), we note that all 20 persons interviewed were or are currently victims of domestic violence, the onset of violent episodes occurred in different situations: a few months after the beginning of the relationship, a few years after marriage, after the birth of children, after the occurrence of financial problems, etc. We highlighted some of the most relevant answers:

- my husband was violent from the beginning of the relationship, but because I grew up in a large family with great material needs, I decided to endure (woman, 53 years old);
- my first husband was extremely violent. The episodes of aggression started when he lost his job because the company he was working for went bankrupt, he was no longer able to find something that suited him financially, and because of this, he became frustrated, depressed, and particularly aggressive. (woman, 39 years old);
- he used to offend me from the time when we were just friends, but I thought he would change, I thought he was too young and didn't understand what he was talking about. He became physically violent after the birth of our first child because we started to have more and more expenses. (woman, 35 years old).

Thematic unit 2: „Knowledge of the phenomenon of abuse and neglect"

This thematic unit aims to the research within the paper aims to present a clearer picture of the victim's knowledge of the phenomenon of abuse and neglect, of the causes of domestic violence, considered to be basic in terms of the response to the phenomenon of abuse. After analyzing the responses of the women interviewed to the questions: „What do you think are the causes of domestic violence?" (question no. 3); „What are the effects of domestic violence on the woman victim" (questions no. 4, 5), it emerges that the causes of violence exercised in the family environment are multiple, from alcohol consumption to the importance of abusive family history, to infidelity, entourage, financial problems, etc. We continue to emphasize deviant structures by suggesting that acts of violence are more when the husband has low self-esteem and a bad opinion of himself, on the fact that in traditional families domestic violence is included in the domain of natural acts, but also the present analysis proves to us that domestic violence has acquired a multitude of forms, a fact that accurately contributes to the awareness of the seriousness of this phenomenon. Awareness of the repercussions of domestic violence has led to an understanding of the determinants and effects, forcing us to look for real ways to reduce the effects of this phenomenon. Observing the devastating effects of domestic violence, we reconsider the importance of respecting human rights and the adoption of legislative acts to support these vulnerable categories.

Going from the general to the particular, this thematic unit aims to explore the answers obtained:

- from my own experience, I think that the family history of the life partner, and the power of the example speaks for itself! I think men want to prove their superiority over women and that's why they resort to violence. (Interview 7, woman, 49 years old);
- clearly, alcohol, infidelity, and other passions such as gambling, and sports betting. In my opinion, men cannot bear to be inferior to women, and I think this also leads to violence. (Interview 1, woman, 36);

- there are several causes, but I think that lack of education and respect and alcohol are the most common. A man who respects his life partner will never be violent. In my opinion, lack of money also leads to a lot of problems. Quarrels are frequent because of shortcomings and worrying about tomorrow (Interview 20, woman, 31 years old).

The explanation arising from the present approach related to the causes and effects of violence produced in the family (Interview no. 1, item no. 4), is considered to be reactive, having its source outside the family system. We believe that it is rooted in experiences that inhibit personal development, in frustration, and hence the need to react with violence.

In the understanding of the women interviewed, domestic violence has multiple effects that affect their entire existence, manifesting in their lives through depression, isolation, low self-esteem, physical and mental trauma, panic attacks, etc.

Behavioral patterns have a decisive role in the life of the individual, the value system by which they are guided, many of the violent human behaviors may be explained by looking at a person's family of origin. The whole life of a person who has been a victim of domestic violence is affected, no matter how much the physical wounds are healed, the mental ones remain and have long-term effects.

The 20 women interviewed through the answers to: „How do you think domestic violence could be prevented" (question no. 8), emphasized the importance of social support, which is one of the most important factors contributing to the optimal social functioning of people in difficulty, of legislative support and an involvement of the state institutions, by building a center intended for victims of domestic violence in each county, by granting immediate and harsh punishments to the aggressors.

The last thematic axis aimed to identify and raise awareness of the factors that marked their existence. the outline of the thematic unit 3: „Factors leading to success/failure".

Evaluating the answers to the two items: „How do you think episodes of domestic violence left their mark on you?" (question no. 9); „How do you think your life will look in 5 years?" (question no. 10). we have summarized some of the relevant responses that surprised us:

- I changed radically! From a woman full of life and enthusiasm, I turned into a negative one, full of frustrations and regrets. I lost that bit of joy in living, I have no longer future plans and I often think that life seems to have stopped for me (Interview 3, woman, 31 years old);
- I am mentally mutilated! Physical wounds pass, and the soul never heals. The loss of self-respect is the hardest consequence of domestic violence. (Interview 4, woman, 45 years old);
- I lost my confidence in myself, I lost my self-esteem, I didn't know how I would manage with money if I got a divorce (I only worked for a few months at a grocery store). The emotional wounds remain for life, I have

lost communication with extended family and frequently have terrible panic attacks. (Interview 2, woman, 53 years old);

- I have changed, as I didn't expect to go through something like this. I thought everything would be fine and we would live in harmony, but unfortunately, I was wrong. There is nothing left of the woman I used to be. (Interview 19, woman, 42 years old);

- Any woman changes when she is treated worse than an animal. I changed my perception about life, about family, about living together. I have changed a lot, both physically and mentally (Interview 15, woman, 41 years old).

A moderate approach may be observed in the speech of the interviewees, they declare that it is difficult to end the life dominated by domestic violence, although they would like to. However, are formulated to question the meaning of the quality of their life, as they are unable to set quality standards due to fear, but are convinced that at some point they will have the courage to end the toxic relationship in which they live and a new life begins.

Being asked how they see their lives in 5 years, the interviewed ladies answered:

- my life in five years, I hope will be peaceful, without tears and without pain. I want to live my old age peacefully, with my children. (Interview 8, woman, 59 years old);

- I want to be a woman more in control of the situation, my self-esteem to be much higher, and to have more confidence in my strengths. (Interview 10, woman, 30 years old).

The conclusions of the qualitative approach

The interviewees provided complex, thorough answers and were cooperative throughout the application of the interview guide. The purpose of the qualitative research, that of identifying the main reasons that determine the victims of violence to remain in a relationship with the abusive man, was fulfilled with the help of the fixed objectives.

The first objective aimed to determine the causes that influence the abused women not to seek the help of a specialist to end the abusive relationship.

The diversity of the causes of violence in the family environment is an obvious aspect, ranging from alcohol consumption to the presence of an abusive family history, infidelity, the influence of the entourage, or financial problems. An accentuation of the deviant structure is observed, suggestive because acts of violence are more frequent in situations where the individual exhibits low self-esteem and a negative image of himself. Although domestic violence has traditionally been included in the sphere of normality in conservative families, the current analysis reveals the diversification of forms that this phenomenon can take, thus contributing to the awareness of its seriousness.

The awareness of the consequences of violence in the family environment led to the understanding of the determining factors and their impact, imposing the

need to identify effective ways to reduce this phenomenon. Observing the devastating consequences of domestic violence, a reconsideration of the respect for human rights and the adoption of laws to protect these vulnerable categories is required.

The second objective focused on exploring the dependence/autonomy of a person who has been subjected to domestic violence, following both the opinion of those close to them regarding the behavior adopted: all the people interviewed felt invisible, marginalized by those close to them, facing reproaches; as well as the prevailing feelings at the time when they take refuge in these behaviors: peace, detachment, normality, fulfillment, fun, connection to their reality.

The identified socio-medical problems include loss of concentration and memory, internal organ and central nervous system complications, and social marginalization and isolation as well. Most of the interviewees recognized the need for support but did not agree to recognize the problems that required specialist intervention.

Limitations of the application of the interview guide included the ironic responses of the participants, who adopted a self-defensive behavior to some questions and showed a lack of familiarity with empathy and concern for others. Most of the interviewees considered their addictions to be normal; behavioral models play an important role in the life of the individual, who is guided by a specific value system. Violent behaviors can be explained in many cases by referring to the person's family of origin. People who have been victims of domestic violence suffer long-term consequences, no matter how well the physical wounds are healed, because the emotional wounds persist.

7. Instead of conclusions...

In contemporary society, domestic violence is perceived as a normality, the number of victims of domestic violence is continuously increasing, and this is due to the lack of involvement of the authorities. Even if the restraining order is issued and the abuser cannot get closer than 200 meters from his victim, women are not safe, the abuser attacks without regard to the existing legislation regarding the restraining order.

Abused women's lack of information about social services in this field means that they do not seek specialized help to overcome problematic situations, this fact often leads to attempted murder or even suicide. The intervention of a multidisciplinary team, consisting of a social worker, a psychologist, and a social mediator, is essential because with their help abused women can understand the gravity of the situation and the repercussions of the violence, both on themselves and the children.

In the case of women, violence has the following effects: social isolation, apathy, depressive states, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. The phenomenon of domestic violence is generated by a multitude of factors: financial, social, psychological, and emotional. To prevent this phenomenon, the intervention of the authorities is also needed by adopting effective laws that protect both the woman

and her family. The authorities should create an individualized protection plan for victims of domestic violence to support them, and thus feel safe.

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PSYCHOGENEALOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PHENOMENON OF VIOLENCE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK

Nina Mihaela MIHALACHE[1]

Abstract

Psychogenealogy, the science of the unconscious transmission from one generation to another of the unsaid (Schutzenberger, 2016, p. 17), began to gain greater visibility in the field of social assistance, as a result of the need for a deeper knowledge of the problems individual social, of their origin and manifestation to facilitate the intervention process. Although social work is on the border with other socio-human sciences, the intervention may require the reinterpretation of this border in order to understand the mental processes and the behaviors associated with them both for professionals and for the beneficiaries of social work. It is not proposed to violate the boundary of the field of psychology, but only a reconfiguration of working techniques in social assistance. The genosociogram, used by many social workers in interventions, can be enriched for the assistance field with elements regarding the contextualization of the origin of the social problems of the beneficiaries at an intergenerational and transgenerational level. This approach would support a comprehensive understanding of the risk factors regarding antisocial behaviors and their origin for a quality intervention but also a more complex collaboration in the interdisciplinary team. The invitation for the opening and deepening of these theories in social work could contribute on the one hand to the personal and professional development of social workers, and on the other hand, it would bring significant contributions in the intervention processes of the social work field. This approach is configured in the new trends of modern social assistance, focused on learning and social pedagogy, which requires the practice of professional skills of critical thinking and creativity.

Keywords: psychogenealogy in social assistance, recurrence of social problems, genosociogram, intergenerational, transgenerational, family novel.

Résumé

La psychogénéalogie, en tant que science de la transmission inconsciente d'une génération à l'autre du non-dit (Schutzenberger, 2016, p.17), a commencé à gagner en visibilité dans le domaine de travail sociale, en raison de la nécessité d'une connaissance plus approfondie de la problèmes sociaux individuels, de leur origine et de leur manifestation pour faciliter le processus d'intervention. Bien que le travail social soit à la frontière avec d'autres

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sciences socio-humaines, l'intervention peut nécessiter la réinterprétation de cette frontière afin de comprendre les processus mentaux et les comportements qui leur sont associés tant pour les professionnels que pour les bénéficiaires du travail social. Il n'est pas proposé de violer les limites du domaine de la psychologie, mais seulement une reconfiguration des techniques de travail dans l'assistance sociale. Le génosociogramme, utilisé par de nombreux travailleurs sociaux dans les interventions, peut être enrichi pour le domaine de l'assistance avec des éléments concernant la contextualisation de l'origine des problèmes sociaux des bénéficiaires au niveau intergénérationnel et transgénérationnel. Cette approche soutiendrait une compréhension globale des facteurs de risque concernant les comportements antisociaux et leur origine pour une intervention de qualité mais aussi une collaboration plus complexe au sein de l'équipe interdisciplinaire. L'invitation à l'ouverture et à l'approfondissement de ces théories en travail sociale pourrait contribuer d'une part au développement personnel et professionnel des travailleurs sociaux, et d'autre part apporterait des contributions significatives dans les processus d'intervention du domaine de l'assistance. Cette approche s'inscrit dans les nouvelles tendances de l'assistance sociale moderne, axée sur l'apprentissage et la pédagogie sociale, qui nécessitent la pratique de compétences professionnelles de pensée critique et de créativité.

Mots clés : psychogénéalogie en travailsociale, récurrence des problèmes sociaux, génosociogramme, intergénérationnel, transgénérationnel, roman familial.

Rezumat

Psihogenealogia, ca știință a transmiterii inconștiente de la o generație la alta a celo*r ne-spuse* (Schutzenberger, 2016, p. 17), a început să capete o mai mare vizibilitate în domeniul asistenței sociale, ca urmare a necesității cunoașterii mai profunde a problemelor sociale individuale, a originii și manifestării acestora pentru facilitarea procesului de intervenție. Deși asistența socială se află la granița cu alte științe socio-umane, intervenția poate necesita reinterpretarea acestei granițe în scopul înțelegerii proceselor psihice și a comportamentelor asociate acestora atât pentru profesioniștii cât și pentru beneficiarii asistenței sociale. Nu se propune încălcarea graniței domeniului psihologiei, ci doar o reconfigurare a tehnicilor de lucru în asistența socială. Genosociograma, utilizată de altfel de mulți asistenți sociali în intervenții, poate fi îmbogățită pentru domeniul asistențial cu elemente privind contextualizarea originii problemelor sociale ale beneficiarilor la nivel intergenerațional și transgenerațional. Această abordare ar susține o înțelegere comprehensivă a factorilor de risc privind comportamentele antisociale dar și a originii acestora pentru o intervenție de calitate dar și o mai complexă colaborare în echipa interdisciplinară. Invitația pentru deschiderea și aprofundarea acestor teorii în asistență socială ar putea contribui pe de o parte la dezvoltarea personală și profesională a asistenților sociali, iar pe de altă parte ar aduce contribuții semnificative în procesele de intervenție ale domeniului asistențial. Aceasta abordare se configurează în noile tendințe ale asistenței sociale moderne, axate pe învățare și pedagogie socială, care necesită exersarea competențelor profesionale de gândire critică și creativitate.

Cuvinte cheie: psihogenealogia în asistența socială, recurența problemelor sociale, genosociograma, intergenerațional, transgenerational, romanul familial.

Introduction

Intervention in the field of social work has recently enjoyed increased attention from professionals in accordance with socio-political and climatic

changes and dynamics. Concerns regarding working with the beneficiaries of the social work system have been justified by the new contexts that have emerged in the background of medical crises, wars, natural catastrophes, but also the evolution of technology. These world crises have produced disturbances at the level of all more or less developed societies, translated in particular by the loss of loved ones, jobs, and homes due to the pandemic, the economic crisis, armed conflicts, and natural disasters. Therefore, the approach of modern social work takes into account an eco-systemic concern of the beneficiaries, the emphasis being on the use of their resources intertwined with spatial-regional and community resources. Such an approach requires introspection and a deeper knowledge of the beneficiaries in order to accurately identify the origin of their problems.

Social work is on the border of other socio-human sciences, being influenced by ways and techniques of assessment and introspection to facilitate intervention.

Social work at the beginning of the 21st century enjoys good support from governments promoting social policies aimed at ensuring a good quality of life by respecting human dignity and equal opportunities. However, over time it has been proven that a part of social work beneficiaries cannot face the challenges of everyday life and cannot function independently, on their own, always needing assistance and support, thus demonstrating a recurrence of problematic situations. In this sense, the social workers noticed the importance of some changes in the assessment and deeper introspection, for a better knowledge of the origin of the beneficiaries' problems but also of the mechanisms of the recurrence of the problems.

1. Violence – a psycho-genealogical programming?

One would think that with the accelerated development of technology up to Artificial Intelligence, against the background of the multitude of rights and equality of people, violence would belong to the past, to less developed archaic societies, and only as an exception in the present. This phenomenon, however, transcends time and, paradoxically, takes on a multitude of forms anchored in a diversity of reasons, from daily stress to identity problems and mental disorders.

Theoretically, *violence* represents the manifestation of aggressive behavior through force, coercion, and violation of the other's rights. Violence is based on a relationship of power and control between the aggressor and the victim who is not at an advantage, being a weaker subject compared to the aggressor. These aggressive behaviors take the form of bad treatment, violence against partners or in the family, facts and actions in the sphere of crime, and deviant and delinquent behaviors (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Danilă, 2009, pp. 8-10).

The theories of Farrington, Stattin, Gustavson and Magnusson attribute violence to an increased level of the male hormone called testosterone, which in turn is associated with the early onset of delinquent acts in childhood, which would predict later violent behavior. These theories reinforce the idea that violence is generally associated with the male sex (Turliuc, 2019, p. 7).

Some authors considered that there is a segregation between the *instrumental* and the *emotional* aspects of violence. The *instrumental* form aims to obtain results aimed at demonstrating the power or status of the aggressor and requires a certain awareness and planning of the aggressive action with a certain degree of danger (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Danilă, 2009, p. 8-10) or a certain intention of predictability (Chelcea, 2021, p. 93-94). *Emotional* violence has only the intention to harm someone as well as to reduce the mental tension of the aggressor. This is closer to symbolic aggression, which aims to destroy the meanings associated with objects, and symbols of the possible victim.

The theories state that at the base of violent behavior lies aggression, considered a personality trait developed under the influence of some potential factors: childhood abuse, traumatic experiences, and aggressive situations in the past on others or on one's own person, as well as some personality traits determined by psychological factors -social or bio-genetic.

For aggression, there would be two perspectives: a positive one, which sees aggression as a survival ability, primitive, originating in the preservation of the species, and a negative perspective, that of learned behavior based on socio-cultural influences (Irimescu, Rădoi, Gaşpar de Almeida Santos, 2019, p. 19; Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Danilă, 2009, p. 7).

Beyond the theories specific to the various fields that analyze violence and violent behavior, most of them claim that violence is a learned behavior as stated by the family systemic theory or the Bowenian theory - which was considered one of the most comprehensive approaches to human behavior and of human problems. Like other theories, this originates in the field of psychoanalysis, a controversial field and considered unconventional for scientific validation. Thus, the author found it useful to translate his ideas into conventional theories and paradigms. However, most research and theories regarding the understanding of the depth of human behavior originate in psychoanalysis, starting from the idea that „emotional disturbance develops in relation to others", as demonstrated by the set of theories related to the understanding and deciphering of human behavior (Mitrofan, Vasile, 2007, pp. 115-117).

Theories regarding violence and aggressive behavior highlight the major implications of the contextual environment dominated by socializing instances in which each individual develops. Thus, a series of „risk factors associated with disruptive and delinquent behavior" attributed to the family and which can contribute to the formation of the child's delinquent behavior were identified: alcohol/drug consumption during pregnancy, teenage mother with unplanned pregnancy, depressive episodes, parents' antisocial behavior, poor communication, poverty, large family, marital problems, harsh disciplinary practices, mistreatment, neglect, watching violent media content, negative attitude towards education and school, repetition, and last but not least, the community and family residence from border neighborhoods. These theories, however, cannot explain delinquency situations in environments where there are no risk factors generally associated with poverty and social-family disorganization. For all other contexts,

criminological theories highlight a choice of individuals for delinquency through the three principles described by Cusson, in 2010. These principles refer to the obtaining of benefits, the satisfaction of revenge, and the lack of responsibility for existing norms. Attractive factors are associated with these principles, represented by the attractive criminal environment, the inconsistent sanctions regime, the existence of many challenging vulnerable targets, etc. (Mihaiu, 2021, pp. 91-93). Moreover, the same author states that violence as a crime is subscribed to the concept of criminality by the fact that in Romania, criminality refers to all acts that present social danger, acts committed with guilt, and sanctioned by the criminal system.

As a field, crime has focused on the analysis of criminogenic behavior, highlighting the criminogenic need in association with some stimulating risk factors. The intervention regarding criminogenic behavior emphasizes the reduction of these risk factors through rehabilitation with the aim of preventing and reducing the chances of recidivism. The model itself proposes an individualized assessment of these risk factors that contribute to the manifestation of criminogenic behavior. Experiments conducted on low-risk offenders compared to high-risk offenders have observed a very high percentage of high-risk offenders recidivism even when risk factors are reduced.

This highlights the fact that the criminogenic need of high-risk offenders raises the interest in knowing the covariates between the criminal past and the dynamic predictors of a future criminal. Therefore, the authors draw attention to two aspects: the first refers to the assessment and individualized intervention for each criminal suspected of being at risk of recidivism by identifying the important factors – „those that make the difference" before the provision of services and the second aspect refers to the preparation professional staff working with criminals, suitable for understanding the mechanisms of delinquent/criminal behavior but also for good predictability in reducing recidivism. It was also considered that the formulation of the final objective with reference to the reduction of recidivism is too general compared to the establishment as an objective of the reduction of the criminogenic need, i.e. of replacing stressors with inhibitory factors on a time value axis (Andrews, Bonta, Hoge, 1990).

These researches highlight the importance of knowing and understanding deviant and criminal human thinking and behavior with a view to an intervention that reduces the criminogenic need, respectively the relapse or recurrence of certain behaviors.

These theories are joined by those of social learning by A. Bandura and his collaborators, who state that aggressive behavioral responses are learned and not innate. Aggressive behavior is acquired if rewarded and imitated when modeled. The oldest psychological theory of aggression generating research is the frustration-aggression theory of Dollard and his collaborators from 1939, which starts from the assumption that there is a causal relationship between frustration and aggression. *Frustration* refers to blocking the achievement of a goal, which produces dissatisfaction, and rebellion, translated as frustration and aggression.

Frustration is not always directed at the source, which confirms the fact that the use of inhibitory factors can reduce the manifestation of aggressive or violent behavior (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Dănilă, 2009, p. 10; Chelcea, 2021, pp. 100-101).

These theories support the idea of different interpersonal behaviors but also of intrapsychic structures, as originating in family or socio-cultural contexts born from past relationships and transmitted from generation to generation, translated as transgenerational transmission (Mitrofan, Vasile, 2007, pp. 115-116).

1.1. Transgenerational and intergenerational transmission in psychogenealogy

Psychogenealogy as a field has its origins in Freud's controversial psychoanalysis. The inventor of this concept is Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, who has the merit of having structured and developed the ideas of other precursors but also of some methodologies specific to the field (Mitrofan, Godeanu, Godeanu, 2010, p. 17). Although specific to the field of psychology, some of the working methodologies and techniques can be extrapolated and used in other socio-human fields. Thus, storytelling and genograms are already used in related fields where it is necessary to assess the *life history* of individuals.

Specific to psychogenealogy is the transgenerational and intergenerational transmission of history through a *family memory*.

Some authors describe the intergenerational transmission from one generation to another of the conscious elements of the psychic life of a family, represented by family and community myths and mythologies, rituals, and ceremonies, while for transgenerational transmission Freud's theories are called upon, theories that they support the unconscious transmission of the unsaid, of the secrets and ghosts of the unconscious psyche. This unexpressed unconscious is seen by Freud as „like a black hole that unites us with others", with family, relatives, and society, being called by the author as a collective soul, by Jung, collective unconscious, and by Moreno co-unconscious (Schutzenberger, 2016, pp. 18-19). Thus, transgenerational transmission refers to the unconscious transmission of those previous experiences, objects, and situations as well as the phantasms derived from them that contribute to the construction of one's own life scenarios. According to Freud, phantasms represent the imaginary changes that each of us makes in relation to situations, objects, or people, thus building a family novel.

Freud's *family novel* specifically referred to the imaginary construction of the family through phantasms. This concept is also based on the family memory, specific to the history of the family group, of intergenerational ties and relationships that are subject to deviations and filters of the imagination and phantasms produced by traumas and unpleasant or misunderstood experiences at the time.

The same authors explain Freud's *family novel* for two situations, both correcting the phantasm of family life that some children live: one part refers to children in the social work system who benefit from permanent or temporary

foster care measures, which implies a break or interruption of relations with the family of origin and some of the children who do not identify with their parents and family. Thus, the *family novel* represents a reconstruction of what children imagine their family to be. Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger calls them *unbreakable children,* for which we use the term resilience today (Schutzenberger, 2016, pp. 213-214). Do not understand that this projection is always positive because the *family novel* expresses reality combined with secrets, relationships, and behaviors with family members, which can contribute to the formation of deviant or delinquent attitudes and behaviors. The transmission of the family unconscious can take place from a very early age, precisely because it is based on the primitive way of communication, represented by non-verbal language. Therefore, due to the types of relationships between children and family members, children can receive, through intergenerational and transgenerational transmission, landmarks regarding their family history as well as landmarks regarding the construction of their personal lives (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 154-173).

1.2. Myths and rituals in the construction of family memory

Psychogenealogy highlights, in the process of intergenerational and transgenerational transmission, the importance of knowing family myths and rituals for understanding the functioning or blocking mechanisms of the family. Family myths and rituals are associated with family memory and have the role of sanctifying the family.

The myth, in psychogenealogy, has several characteristics that define it. These refer to the fact that it is transmitted orally from one generation to another, like a story, has the value of beginning in a historical past of the ancestors of a family, and is associated with various rituals and ceremonies. Some authors emphasize that the family myth represents the beliefs of the family group and can function as rules or as a protective censorship in their transmission. At the same time, the myth can be a set of symbolic and valuable elements that give the family a sense of belonging. For family memory, the myth is important because it contains the life history of the ancestors who generated sex-role models or that generational dowry specific to each family and each individual, while rituals have the role of fixing traditions. In addition, rituals build a common identity history, of a mythical nature, which Neuburger, in 2006, affirmed would build a family's destiny. Mircea Eliade, in 1991, stated that the ritual represents a spiritual, religious ceremony through which symbolic messages are expressed, often of passing or overcoming situations of crisis or change.

It is important to observe the dynamics of the transmission of the mechanisms of the family unconscious from the perspective of these myths that place the family in a specific family context (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 161-168).

2. Argument regarding introspection and evaluation for intervention in social work on violence from the perspective of psychogenealogy

As presented in the introduction of this analysis, social work has identified the need for change and improvement in working with beneficiaries, giving way to the design of adapted good practice models, with the aim of reducing social risks and recurrence. These good practice models are based on a complex and multidimensional evaluation of the beneficiary. This assessment is centered on interactions, thoughts and feelings, culture and spirituality but also on environment and contexts. In this sense, evaluation tools aimed at describing problematic situations, identifying the strong points of client systems, but also at expressing thoughts and feelings as well as points of view are recommended. The set of assessment tools includes the social history, genogram, ecomap, maps of social networks, and group, and community contexts (Krogsrud Myley, O'Melia, Du Bois, 2006, pp. 297-316).

2.1. Narrative and memory in welfare recipient assessment and introspection

Modern constructivist social work theory advocates *narrative or storytelling* as a way of client evaluation and introspection. The stories reflect their life experiences as well as the representation of reality and the mentality built on them (Payne, 2011, pp. 194-195). Septimiu Chelcea describes some theories of authors involved in the study and analysis of social memory. Thus, Middleton, Edwards, and Billing, followers of *social constructionism*, argue that people's stories are based on a *social memory*. Social memory theories show that individual memory is supported and influenced by group memory through interaction and socialization. *Collective memory* is based on memories that over time can be retouched, reorganized, and supplemented. This type of memory refers to the individual and not to the group that is meant to maintain and transmit from one generation to another certain events or contextual situations specific to the group. Starting from these statements, Halbwachs and Bartlett develop the theory of *memory structuring by culture and interests* that confirm the loss and restructuring of some information around a significant element over time. Other theorists (Edward and Mercer) approach social memory as a social activity focused on speech constructed with other individuals. Thus, people can narrate not only personal experiences but also the experiences of others, and the language used can transform the mode and content of what we remember. Starting from the social memory specific to social psychology, the *psychology of cognition* is concerned with rationally justified and imprinted social behaviors (Chelcea, 2021, pp. 196-203). Theoretical concerns go further to analyze the transmission from one generation to another of these remembered events in social and family contexts. Psychogenealogy as a field, has in mind this type of analysis that would clarify some of the unknown human behaviors. Along with social psychology and cognitive psychology,

psychogenealogy adds to introspection in the evaluation of possible clients or beneficiaries of the welfare system.

2.2. Genogram and genosociogram

Along with the story or narrative, *the genogram*, also known as the family tree of a family, is the graphic representation of people and relationships within the family. Historically, the genogram was used to represent some dynasties, as a landmark in family constructions. As a scientific tool, it first appeared in the Palo Alto School of Family Therapy in the 1970s and was used for the first time in 1987 by M. Bowen in family therapies with the aim of establishing interpersonal and intrapsychic interactions within families. Being a tool used in clinical interventions, it was co-opted in the medical field through which relevant data was obtained regarding the chain of transmission or the risk of transmission of certain diseases (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 315-316).

Because *the genogram* is based on a systemic and multigenerational vision, it has been used in many fields involving individual and family assessment. Thus, we find in social work the use of the genogram as a tool to identify the main events and types of intra-family relationships. Beyond the administrative aspects that reflect legal and parentage relationships, the social worker can identify rituals, customs, and mechanisms specific to family dynamics. Moreover, the theories and methods of social work propose a *systemic approach* to working with individuals and the family. Several *systemic approaches* are proposed in working with clients and beneficiaries of social work: Bowen's intergenerational therapy of family systems which considers affective and emotional interactions as well as their projection within family relationships; structural family therapy, which analyzes the boundaries, interactions, and nature of intra-family relationships but also the nature of the boundaries between family subsystems; Strategic family therapy that addresses the problem within the family and aims to participate in solving it versus obtaining an understanding of the presented problem and at the same time pays special attention to the power relationship and how parents approach power within family relationships (Teater, 2020, pp. 24-27).

Godeanu and Godeanu state that the genogram is a sociometric representation (affective type), which gathers data about names, places, and main events of the family with reference to births, deaths, marriages, and others. In a genogram, we can trace the repetitions, symmetries, or exceptions that occur in the family space, on the two levels, maternal and paternal. In order to have a meaningful picture of the family history, it is proposed to use the genogram for at least three to seven generations. However, there is little chance of having evidence of significant information or events beyond the third generation. The genogram is made through the graphic representation of symbols that signify people and relationships in the family space, with the delimitation of generational levels (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 316-323).

In order to better understand the family picture, there was identified the need to complete the genogram with contextual elements related to cohabitation,

triangles, anniversary syndromes, dyads, etc. which led to the emergence of the genosociogram. In other words, the *genosociogram* is an enriched genogram that highlights a more complex assessment of the family space.

Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger developed and encouraged the use of the genosociogram in work and therapy with individuals and the family. Realizing the *genosociogram* requires a certain dexterity of the professional in obtaining data from the family memory, but also in correlating and interpreting the information. The author points out that psychogenealogy should not be used without a rigorous multidisciplinary study, because without in-depth knowledge it can cause great harm to the client (Schutzenberger, 2016, pp. 109-116).

By means of this tool, professionals can accurately identify the main family ideas and mechanisms originating from the secrets, customs, and significant events from the transgenerational as well as the intergenerational path. In this way, the intervention can be focused on deciphering the information and correlations so that they can then be *rewritten* in scenarios suitable for the family balance. This method of evaluation-introspection and intervention would be useful for the professionals of the assistance system in reducing the recurrence of social problems, within the family and the community, as well as a way of personal and professional development but also a way to exercise their professional role as an agent of change.

Conclusions

As it is argued in the introduction, a deeper concern is imposed on introspection in the evaluation of the beneficiary from the social assistance to identify the origin of the problem but also to reduce the recurrence. Psychogenealogy can provide some useful pointers in this regard, without transgressing the boundaries of the domain. Explanations regarding the functioning mechanisms of human memory can add to the enrichment of the tools used for assessment and intervention in social work.

The transgenerational approach presents the advantage of knowing the contents of the family unconscious, the mechanisms of their unconscious transmission within the family system as well as its dynamics.

There are still stories passed down from generation to generation, stories that can suffer dilution of meaning depending on the classification of information that would contribute to the image and status of the family. Therefore, obtaining truthful data regarding the transmission of information depends on the interviewer's training and experience as well as his ability to interpret them. That is why it is important that professionals give importance to the need for professional development for the evaluation and introspection of clients with the aim of reducing the recurrence of family problems inherited more or less along the family transgenerational route.

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Biodata

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THE ROLE OF PSYCHOEDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITHIN THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Petronela Polixenia NISTOR[1]

Abstract:
This paper theoretically approaches the role of psychoeducation and professional social work services within the Romanian Orthodox Church in the prevention of domestic violence, as a contemporary social phenomenon. Domestic violence is not a new social problem, as social history demonstrates, but due to its recent worrying frequency, it can be considered a phenomenon that can be thought of as a form of contemporary social pathology, on the one hand, or a social anomaly, as the recrudescence of violent acts currently increases significantly compared to the previous periods in history. The intervention of the Church within the family or society in the prevention of family violence is oriented towards the three dimensions of psychoeducation: the spiritual-pedagogical dimension, the psychological dimension, and the behavioural dimension, which aim to change the perspective on the purpose and existence in life, the reduction of aggressive behaviours and promotion of respectful and nonviolent conduct in interpersonal relationships. The objective of this paper is to analyze the connection between psychoeducation and social work from a socio-spiritual perspective, by taking into account the specificity of this activity within the professionalised social work services provided by the Romanian Orthodox Church, to see if there are systemic differences in the approach to cases of family violence in religiously infused assistential services compared to secular services.

Keywords: domestic violence, psychoeducation, social work, professional social services.

Resumé
Le présent article aborde, au niveau théorique, le rôle des services de psychoéducation et d'assistance sociale professionnelle au sein de l'Église Orthodoxe Roumaine dans la prévention de la violence domestique, en tant que phénomène social contemporain. La violence domestique n'est pas un problème social nouveau, comme le démontre l'histoire sociale, mais en raison de sa fréquence inquiétante, elle peut être considérée, d'une part, comme un phénomène ayant des valences de pathologie de la société contemporaine, ou comme une anomalie sociale, lorsque la recrudescence des actes de violence augmente considérablement au cours d'une certaine période de temps par rapport à la période

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précédente. L'intervention de l'Église, au niveau familial et sociétal, dans la prévention de la violence familiale s'oriente vers les trois dimensions de la psychoéducation : la dimension spirituelle-pédagogique, la dimension psychologique et la dimension comportementale, qui visent à changer la perspective sur le but et l'existence de la vie, la réduction des manifestations agressives et la promotion de comportements respectueux et non violents dans les relations interpersonnelles. L'objectif de cet article est d'analyser le lien entre psychoéducation et assistance sociale dans une perspective socio-spirituelle, à travers le prisme de la spécificité de ce lien au sein des services d'assistance sociale professionnalisés au sein de l'Église Orthodoxe Roumaine, mais aussi d'observer s'il existe différences systémiques dans l'approche des cas de violence domestique dans les services d'assistance religieuse par rapport aux services laïcs.

Mots-clés : violence conjugale, psychoéducation, assistance sociale, services sociaux professionnels.

Abstract
Lucrarea de față abordează, la nivel teoretic, *rolul psihoeducației și al serviciilor de asistență socială profesionalizate din cadrul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române în prevenirea violenței domestice, ca fenomen social contemporan.* Violența domestică nu este o problemă socială nouă, astfel cum demonstrează istoria socială, dar prin frecvența sa îngrijorătoare, poate fi considerată un fenomen cu valențe de patologie a societății contemporane, pe de o parte, sau o anomalie socială, atunci când recrudescența actelor violente crește semnificativ într-o anumită perioadă de timp, față de perioada anterioară. Intervenția Bisericii, la nivel familial și societal, în prevenirea violenței în familie se orientează spre cele trei dimensiuni ale psihoeducației: dimensiunea spiritual-pedagogică, dimensiunea psihologică și dimensiunea comportamentală, care au ca obiectiv schimbarea de perspectivă asupra scopului și existenței vieții, reducerea manifestărilor agresive și promovarea unor comportamente respectuoase și nonviolente în relațiile interpersonale. Obiectivul acestei lucrări este de a analiza legătura dintre psihoeducație și asistență socială din perspectivă socio-spirituală, prin prisma specificului acestei legături în cadrul serviciilor profesionalizate de asistență socială din cadrul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, dar și de a observa dacă există diferențe sistemice de abordare a cazurilor de violență în familie în serviciile asistențiale religioase prin comparație cu serviciile de tip laic.

Cuvinte cheie: *violență domestică, psihoeducație, asistență socială, servicii sociale profesionalizate.*

1. Introduction

The Romanian Orthodox Church, based on the Old and New Testament Revelation and as a result of the Tradition of the Holy Fathers, has always faithfully supported and continued spiritual life, religious education, and social-philanthropic missions within society and families. Currently, as sociological, psychological, and theological studies reveal and demonstrate, as well as official statistical data (Hendry, 2007; Zajdel et al., 2014), society and, implicitly, the contemporary family are marked by an economic, social, and a deep moral-spiritual crisis. Domestic violence, as a particular form of social violence, due to its worrying frequency, can even be seen as a form of contemporary social pathology or social anomaly, when it is manifested within families belonging to some social strata

where cases of domestic violence were rare, or when the phenomenon becomes uncontrollably high even within vulnerable families, which are considered predisposed to domestic violence. The phenomenon is caused not only by the spiritual, as studies undertaken worldwide conclude (Collins et al., 2010), but also by multiple factors that stem violence globally, within families, factors that have undesirable effects on the behaviour of individuals both in the long term, as well as in the short term, and these correlated behaviours generate extended social impact.

In the spiritual-Christian therapeutic approach and social work, psychoeducation is centrally placed, along with the other methods of social intervention. In the view of the Church, but also of professional social workers, psychoeducation is a form of honest dialogue between the specialist and the beneficiary, a way for the beneficiary to acquire a superior understanding of their own person or of the problem they face, of the ethiology of the dysfunctional elements in their life, which causes a change in perspective on life, that begins with acceptance and continues with healing. Psychoeducation, carried out mainly by the members of the interdisciplinary team, but also by other social actors whose action or intervention could influence the beneficiaries of social works, has an essential role in the prevention of domestic violence. Thus, by providing information and developing practical skills related to healthy relationships, effective communication, conflict management, and recognizing early signs of abuse, psychoeducation can be a real case-by-case intervention method, that supports the prevention and reduction of violent contexts within the family, in particular, and violence in society, in general. Also, psychoeducation can contribute to awareness of the negative effects and consequences of domestic and social violence, both for the individual, but also for families and society itself, and to the promotion of respectful and nonviolent behaviours in interpersonal relationships.

According to the Romanian Orthodox Church (Gavriluță et al., 2016), violence degrades the dignity of the person and within the family, and undermines the unity and harmony of the family. The Church is in total disagreement with aggressive behaviours, with any form of violence within the family or in society, and promotes an attitude of responsibility and respect for human dignity, intervening, through its structures, by taking specific measures and providing certain services, by promoting protection laws against violence of any kind, as well as intervention through institutions and programs that protect children, adults and the elderly from violence.

Thus, within the professionalized social work services of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which focus on preventing the phenomenon of domestic violence with the help of psychoeducation, three distinct dimensions of psychoeducation emerge the pedagogical dimension, through which information about violence and its effects is made available to children and adults in an accessible way; the psychological dimension, through which the problems inherent to the phenomenon of violence are addressed, such as the emotional burden that both the victim and the aggressor experience after a violent event and that hurt

parties both on a conscious level, but especially on a subconscious level, causing new excessive, impulsive or violent reactions; the behavioural dimension, through which strategies aimed at changing violent intentions and behaviours are presented and taught.

Basically, psychoeducation within the professional social work services of the Romanian Orthodox Church is a psychosocial intervention with an essentially educational objective and structure and with therapeutic elements that have a fundamental role in improving dysfunctionalities within the family, in preventing negative events, but also in resizing the existential context in which the victim and even of the aggressor find themselves.

The purpose of this paper is to theoretically address the role of psychoeducation and professional social work services within the Romanian Orthodox Church in the prevention of domestic violence, as a contemporary social phenomenon. The objective of this paper is to analyze the connection between psychoeducation and social work from a socio-spiritual perspective, by taking into account the specificity of this activity within the professionalized social work services provided by the Romanian Orthodox Church. We start our approach with the following research question: are there systemic differences in the approach to cases of family violence by psychoeducation techniques in religiously infused social work services compared to secular services?

2. Psychoeducation – models and theories

Psychoeducation is an interactive process that uses educational strategies to promote mental and emotional well-being (Srivastava & Panday, 2016). Depending on the intended beneficiaries, psychoeducation can be addressed to the person, the family, the social group, or the community as a whole. Depending on the psychoeducational techniques used, we can identify compliance to psychoeducation or adherence-focused psychoeducation, disease-focused psychoeducation, treatment, and rehabilitation-centered psychoeducation, etc. (Duran & Barlas, 2016). Psychoeducation can be seen as a form of empowering the patient. Thus, it is a practice aimed at promoting awareness of one's situation and proactivity in solving one's problem. As a working method or a technique in social work, psychoeducation provides tools to manage a chronic condition, to maintain the client's highest possible level of quality of life (for example, by improving endurance or resilience, identifying early signs of illness, changing lifestyle, crisis management, communication), increasing people's capacity to change behaviours and attitudes related to their condition (Colom, 2011). Psychoeducation replaces guilt with responsibility, helplessness with proactivity in the care process, and denial with awareness (Colom, 2011).

Barker (2003) defines psychoeducation as the process of teaching clients with mental illness and their family members about the nature of the illness, including its etiology, progression, consequences, prognosis, and treatment, in order to identify the options and alternatives that are most appropriate for their particular situation. In clinical practice, psychoeducation aims to ensure the basic

knowledge and skills of patients and their relatives regarding the disease, provide a comprehensive perspective on the disease, its prevention, crisis management, and prevent suicide (Sarkhel et al., 2020). Psychoeducation has developed over the years, and due to the benefits of the practice in the field of psychiatry, it extended to other fields of assistential practices, where it has also scientifically proven its contribution, so that today it is enriched with a diversity of models, based on theories from psychology, psychotherapy, medicine, sociology, education, as well as from other fields.

Although there are several models of psychoeducation, each with its own strengths and applications, we exemplify only some of the best-known and most practically used models, in order to analyze how psychoeducation techniques can be transferred from the clinical to the social level, by way of education and culture, especially for preventing family and community violence.

The informative model focuses on providing clear and accurate information to people who need information about a particular condition or disorder. The model aims to increase knowledge and understanding of a particular problem, reducing potential fear and/or anxiety, and is often used in early intervention. The model is put into practice through lectures, giving brochures, or posting information online (Authier, 2012).

The skills training model goes beyond the simple provision of information, in that it involves individuals actively learning specific skills to manage their emotional state or successfully overcome challenging situations. Applications of this model include acquiring coping skills to deal with anxiety, communication skills to improve relationships, or problem-solving skills to get through difficult life situations. This model is often used in group interventions and can be practiced in psychotherapeutic or informational workshops, training sessions, or individual therapy (Guerney, 1979).

The support model emphasizes the provision of emotional support and validation to individuals experiencing distress, and creates a safe space for them to share their concerns, express their emotions, and receive encouragement and empathy. This model is often used in individual therapy or in support groups, focusing on building trust and creating a sense of community (Ranz et al., 1991).

The comprehensive model incorporates elements of all the above models, providing information, building skills, and providing emotional support. The model aims to holistically address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural needs of the individual and is often used in intensive intervention or rehabilitation programs, usually implemented by a team of professionals (Beale, 2002).

These models have various applications, among which we will list the most frequently used ones. Family psychoeducation educates families about a member's physical or mental condition, promoting understanding and acceptance of the diagnosis or the behaviour associated with this diagnosis, and also promotes supportive relationships within the family. Cultural adaptation models adjust traditional models to specific cultural contexts and take into account the language,

values , and beliefs of the beneficiaries. Technology-based models use digital tools and online platforms to provide remote or interactive psychoeducation.

Choosing the best model depends on several factors, including the targeted population (individual, family, or community), the specific needs of the beneficiaries (knowledge acquisition, skill development, emotional support, or even a combination of these), available resources (time, expertise and access to technology). Through the understanding and strategic use of the different models presented above, psychoeducation can effectively serve to rehabilitate people with different characteristics and adapt to the challenges that their specific situation entails.

3. Applicable theories in the practice of psychoeducation

Several theories support the practice of psychoeducation and that influence how information is presented, skills are taught, and support is provided. Next, we outline a series of key theoretical frameworks for each group of core theories.

Learning theories include social learning theory, constructivism, and adult learning theory. *Social learning theory* emphasizes learning through observation, imitation, and reinforcement of positive behaviours. This theory emphasizes patterns of skill formation, suggesting that individuals can acquire new behaviours by observing positive patterns provided to them and receiving positive feedback (Bandura & Walters, 1977). *Constructivism* highlights the active role that individuals play in building, through functional communication, a common reality that is comprehensible to them as a group. This theory emphasizes how information is presented in psychoeducation, it encourages the active participation of the beneficiaries in the intervention process and the personalized interpretation of the particular context of the subjects (Li, 2023). *Adult learning theory* recognizes the unique needs and preferences of adult participants in the educational process. This theory emphasizes self-directed learning, collaborative activities, and the relevance of what is learned in the concrete practices of everyday life, thus being a method that leads to effective and impactful psychoeducational experiences (Merriam, 2018).

Motivational theories, such as the theory of self-determination and the transtheoretical model, are also relevant to the present study. *Self-determination theory* focuses on the intrinsic motivation that fuels a person's change in behaviour. This theory suggests that individuals are more likely to engage and persist in learning when they feel autonomous, competent, and emotionally connected to others. Psychoeducation can stimulate the individual's intrinsic motivation, by creating a supportive social environment and aligning learning with the individual's personal goals (Grolnick et al., 2021). *The transtheoretical model* or *the stages of change model* is based on the idea that individuals progress through different stages of preparation towards change (Grant & Franklin, 2007). This model suggests tailoring interventions to the specific stage of individuals, using strategies such as motivational interviewing and personalized goal setting (Mansuroğlu & Kutlu, 2022).

Relevant **communication theories** in psychoeducation are interpersonal communication theory and health communication theory. *Interpersonal communication theory* emphasizes the importance of clear, respectful, and empathetic communication. This theory guides how information is delivered in psychoeducation, ensuring inclusion, understanding, and effective knowledge transfer (Bylund et al., 2012). *Health communication theory* focuses on communication strategies to promote health behavior change. This theory is applied in psychoeducation to encourage individuals to use learned skills and adopt healthy behaviors (Ruben, 2016).

Some authors (Crittenden & Dallos, 2009; Mahyuvi & Nursalam, 2020) also refer to specific theories that support psychoeducational practices through other forms of models or principles: family systems theory and social-cognitive theory. *Family systems theory* emphasizes the interconnectedness of family members and their influence on the well-being of each, and every family member. This theory guides family psychoeducation toward facilitating communication, promoting understanding, and supportive family dynamics (Crittenden & Dallos, 2009). *Social-cognitive theory* focuses on the interaction between individuals, their environment, and their internal factors, such as beliefs and self-efficacy. This theory focuses on interventions that address and deconstruct negative thoughts, stabilize self-confidence, and promote behavior change (Mahyuvi & Nursalam, 2020).

It is important to note that these theories are not mutually exclusive, and psychoeducation often integrates multiple theoretical frameworks to create holistic and effective interventions. The choice of appropriate theories depends on the specific context, the intended beneficiaries, and the objectives of the psychoeducational program. By understanding and applying these theoretical frameworks, professionals can ensure that their psychoeducational interventions are evidence-based and effectively address the diverse needs of individuals and communities.

4. The role of psychoeducation in violence prevention

Psychoeducation plays a significant role in the prevention of violence, by addressing risk factors and promoting protective measures for the individual, the family, school life, and community as a whole. Globally, the field of psychoeducation is generally known as the primary source of information and resources for school staff, families, and students, through mental health professionals, who use various techniques to educate students' emotions, behaviors, and achievements. We could say that the field of psychoeducation is largely reserved for psychologists, who usually have the best knowledge about its practices, theories, and psychological implications, while also having experience in providing special educational services, which involve understanding the barriers that intervene in the learning process, in behavioral and mental health interventions, in the processes and stages of academic learning and in the collaboration between family and school, to which are added the practices of consultation and assessment. In and out of the school educational setting, these

professionals effectively position themselves to provide psychoeducation to a wide range of individuals (Brown et al., 2020).

If we refer to the impact of psychoeducation in society, we can consider major contributions that psychoeducation has made over time: it develops socio-emotional skills, by formulating and supporting strategies for effective communication, management of anger, resolving conflicts and developing empathy, reducing the risk of escalation of tensions in difficult situations (Akan, 2021); it raises awareness, in the sense that it educates individuals about the negative consequences of violence, the impact on victims and the community, stimulating responsibility and mutual respect (Onnela et al., 2021); it promotes alternative behaviors, in that it offers non-violent alternatives to solving problems, promoting a culture of peace and tolerance (Iuso et al., 2022); it helps improve self-esteem, as it develops a sense of personal worth and self-respect, reducing vulnerability to victimization and aggressive tendencies; it helps develop healthy relationships, by encouraging open communication, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution in family and interpersonal relationships; it ensures individual and community empowerment, by providing the necessary tools to intervene in risk situations, support victims and promote social change (Howard & Goelitz, 2004).

Research (Auty et al., 2017; Schuengel et al., 2012) demonstrates the effectiveness of psychoeducation in reducing violence. Its positive effects have been demonstrated in the short and the long run. Implementing well-designed programs, that are adapted to the specific context of the beneficiary, can significantly contribute to creating a safer and more harmonious environment for all. Psychoeducation is an important strategy for violence prevention, providing the necessary tools to defuse conflicts, promote healthy relationships, and build a society centered on understanding and cooperation. Investing in psychoeducational programs is essential to creating a safer and more prosperous future for all citizens. In Romanian practice, the connection between psychoeducational practices, assistantial practices, and the spiritual-Christian dynamics of the Orthodox Church in solving or improving social problems was considered beneficial (Țugui & Țigmeanu, 2010).

5. Towards the psychoeducational organization of Christian Orthodox humanitarian practice – European perspectives

In an almost diagnostic rendering of the Orthodox social work services and the role of the Orthodox Church during the economic crisis of Greece, Molokotos-Liederman (2012) exemplifies the brief evolution of the development of Orthodox social services and how the intervention of the Orthodox Church in social work differs from other interventions, promoted by other religious denominations. In Central European countries, the social actions promoted by the Orthodox Church are based on social theology and especially on the Christian concept of Diakonia. This concept is based on the principle of solidarity and is inspired by Christian values, such as God's love and compassion. Orthodox social actions focus on

charity and philanthropy towards those in need. The term diakonia has been used since the beginning of Christianity, meaning philanthropy and love towards other human beings, meanings that were used interchangeably in Christian theology (Molokotos-Liederman, 2012).

Since the time of the Byzantine Empire, the Church has been responsible for philanthropy, activities ranging from providing support to individuals to looking after the needs of all members of society in an organized and structured way, by overseeing social welfare services, including hospitals, protection and care centers for children and the elderly or victims of domestic violence. The philanthropic diakonia of the Byzantine Empire was used as a source of inspiration and even constituted a model that was duplicated in the welfare services offered by the Western Church (Molokotos-Liederman, 2012). Since those times, Christian theology aimed to integrate social action into spiritual life and theology, making efforts to address the problem of social welfare in an optimal manner.

Case studies carried out in Greece and Romania, within the WaVE and WREP projects, the results of which were published in 2018 in the volume „Religion and Welfare in Europe: Gendered and Minority Perspectives", coordinated by Lina Molokotos-Liederman, Anders Bäckström, and Grace Davie, clearly showed the different forms of social welfare in traditional-Orthodox Christian societies, where the family and the Church were the institutions that usually supplemented the niches insufficiently covered by the welfare systems promoted by the secular state. The Orthodox Church contributed, through specific actions, to the well-being of the communities that needed its intervention, but, due to the specifics of Christian philanthropy, which is not to overly popularize the interventions, their lack of public visibility made the actions of the Orthodox Church less known or appreciated by the general public than other interventions, made by other religious organizations.

The European research (Molokotos-Liederman et al., 2018) regarding the projects mentioned above shows that the activity of the Orthodox Church must be seen in its wider context, due to the way in which it has grown as an organized action since the specificity of the Orthodox approach to social services becomes evident when the comparison is made between Orthodox Diakonia worldwide and the actions of the Catholic Church and the Protestant organizations, which are involved in international humanitarian activities. Orthodox Diakonia differs, therefore, because the Orthodox Church did not always have an adequate, consistent, and systematic response to social problems and humanitarian concerns. The study (Molokotos-Liederman, 2018) shows how this difference in approach has discouraged the development of an Orthodox system in the provision of humanitarian social work around the world. Orthodox Christian organizations seem to have a weaker international presence and a less well-known public profile in the area of humanitarian action, compared to many other secular and Christian NGOs, which have contributed to the field of international social policy, the development of humanitarian assistance and professionalized social services, while

being visibly active, especially after the Second World War, in response to urgent humanitarian needs (Molokotos-Liederman et al., 2018).

6. The actions of the Romanian Orthodox Church – from spiritual practices to professional assistential practices

The Romanian Orthodox Church is actively involved in the continuous education of individuals and Christian communities, promoting peace, nonviolence, and harmony between people, developing actions that involve combating violence and discrimination, respecting human dignity, offering professional or specialized social services, developing programs of social and spiritual assistance, offering shelter, food, social and moral-religious assistance, spiritual assistance, psychological and legal counseling to victims of domestic violence. It is particularly important how the Romanian Orthodox Church participates in combating violence and discrimination, actively involving itself - through priests, religion teachers, and social workers - in programs to prevent and combat violence, intolerance, and marginalization to which women and children fall victim. The activity of members within the Church also involves the organization of meetings with a psychoeducational focus, which fulfills the role of urging responsibility, respect for human dignity, and the avoidance of degrading or humiliating attitudes and behaviors.

Domestic violence is a problem that affects all countries of the world, regardless of their degree of development, culture, or religiosity, and it manifests itself at all levels within society. To eradicate this phenomenon, it is not enough to punish abuses in individual cases, it is necessary to change social structures, collective culture, or mentality, but also the norms, principles, and moral-spiritual values, through education and Christian responsibility. The Church has precisely this role, through intervention within society and family, and by helping individuals also, through priests and believers involved in the administrative-spiritual structure of the Church.

Research aimed at the attitude and perceptions of priests and religion teachers regarding family violence was published in the two volumes that are referential for Romania: „Social work within the Church. Evaluations and researches within the social programs of the Romanian Orthodox Church" (Ţugui & Ţigmeanu, 2010) and „The Christian family, a blessing for the Church and society" (Ploieşteanul et al., 2012). Priests and religious teachers participating in focus groups believe that violence has an extensive recrudescence countrywide, and its causes can be associated with poor education. Symbolic violence is discussed along with physical violence because it can be inflicted between married people or between parents and children. It was highlighted that the rebellion of the children against their parents is a form of symbolic domestic violence. The emancipation of children was brought into question, in order to discuss opinions that challenge the idea of banning any form of violence against children or against spouses, by arguing that coercive methods - especially in the case of children - aim to shape behavior, but can be used only when other means fail. The majority

believed (Ploieşteanul et al., 2012; Ţugui & Ţigmeanu, 2010) that means of coercion should not be physical, but symbolic. There were opinions according to which violence would be excusable as long as it does not stem from a negative feeling, but is a measure of love, preserving proportions between what generated it and the severity of violence actually inflicted (Ploiesteanul et al., 2012). Priests are aware that they are called to intervene in order to reduce the phenomenon of domestic violence, as it is considered among the top ten social problems affecting contemporary families (Pătuleanu, 2012).

Analyzing the specialized social work services provided by the Romanian Orthodox Church for the eradication of domestic violence and the protection of victims, we can observe how the Patriarchal Administration, including the Archdiocese of Iaşi, have an important number of specialized social work programs, offered by various accredited providers (parishes, deaneries, monasteries, religious NGO's,), where people who are victims of domestic violence find support and psychological counseling. The social work activity and philanthropic actions of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the prevention and intervention in cases of domestic violence are obvious (Nistor, 2019a), considering the concerns and interventions of its own structures, which offer professionalized social services through social work offices of the dioceses, parishes and monasteries, accredited as providers of social services for intervention in emergency and crisis situations; counseling centers for vulnerable people; emergency centers for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking; NGOs that provide social-philanthropic and medical activity; emergency and crisis support centers. All these centers aim to prevent or limit situations of crisis, difficulty, or vulnerability, which can lead to the marginalization or exclusion of people who find themselves in difficulty (Nistor, 2019).

In addition to offering its own specialized social work services, the Romanian Orthodox Church also provides philanthropic services through partnerships with secular institutions, in a mission to protect lonely people, children, and women who struggle with difficult situations, while also developing social and spiritual assistance programs, which promote dialogue and social solidarity, in order to ensure respect for human dignity and improve the quality of life. Another important segment of the Church's philanthropic actions consists of supporting people who have been victims of domestic violence, offering them protection, by providing shelter, food, social and moral-religious assistance, spiritual assistance, and psychological and legal counseling.

The social-philanthropic and medical activity carried out by the diocesan centers of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the NGOs that operate with the blessing of these centers is summarized on the official website www.basilica.ro. In 2022 (Dumitraşcu, 2023), compared to 2018 and 2019 (Nistor, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c), 23,729 people (diocesan advisers, specialized and diocesan inspectors, social workers, staff with various specializations - teaching staff, medical staff, lawyers, psychologists, administrative staff - and over 20,000 volunteers) participated in social-philanthropic and medical actions. The online report shows that this activity

was carried out by a number of 767 institutions of social services, which put into practice a number of 1,243 social programs, of which 983 were self-funded, 84 had external financing, 41 had public financing and 135 were developed with mixed funding. The report indicates a number of 199,140 beneficiaries who received assistance, as well as the number of social work centers, social canteens, home food delivery programs, daycare centers for children, daycare centers for the elderly, daycare centers for people with disabilities, residential centers for children, residential centers for the elderly, residential centers for people with disabilities, home care services, institutions offering medical and recovery services, at home socio-medical care services, educational services (afterschool) and other types of services (Dumitraşcu, 2023; Nistor, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

The beneficiaries of the philanthropic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church and its partners are children from the Church's social settlements, but especially from poor families without means of support, or with parents working in other countries; speech-disabled people, who suffer from sight or hearing impairments; drug or other types of addictions; elderly people from social protection facilities administered by the Church, social transit centers and night shelters; elderly people who are alone, unable to move, abandoned by their families or who have serious health problems; unemployed, adults in difficulty; victims of human trafficking, victims of family violence; released prisoners; victims of natural disasters; homeless people (Dumitraşcu, 2023).

The philanthropic activity, through religious assistance, also extended to military units, penitentiaries, hospitals, and social protection establishments, and it was provided by 464 priests. Through volunteer actions carried out in two social-philanthropic programs, the volunteers of the Chapel of the Cathedral for the Salvation of the Nation implemented the Program „Get involved! Together we achieve more!", for the benefit of more than 500 families, for the prevention of social exclusion, and the „Help for students" Program, which aims to reduce school dropout, among more than 100 beneficiaries (Dumitraşcu, 2023). The activity aimed at supporting health, as well as prevention and health education, targeted over 27,000 beneficiaries, during 2015-2022, during which time the Romanian Patriarchate also organized blood donation campaigns that included over 12,000 participants.

During the armed conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, the Romanian Patriarchate and its volunteers carried out philanthropic activities for Ukrainian refugees, offering direct support through all dioceses of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in the amount of 3,400,656 euros (hot food, various products, food for newborns, sanitary items, medicines, blankets, clothing, toys, etc.). Actions aimed at helping Ukrainian refugees also involved translation, counseling and guidance, medical, educational, and logistical support, consisting of shelter spaces (tents or containers for accommodation) and transport. The detailed situation of all the actions undertaken to support the victims of the war in Ukraine can be identified and analyzed online, by accessing the official website of the Romanian Patriarchate.

7. Conclusions

The Romanian Orthodox Church has a significant role in preventing domestic violence through psychoeducation, due to its considerable credibility in the community. In accordance with the specifics of Christian assistential practices, the Romanian Orthodox Church is involved in numerous alternative ways in maintaining the well-being of Orthodox Christian communities, as well as in preventing violence and behaviors that could endanger the development of harmonious intra-family relationships, and in a wider level, in maintaining a safe social environment. By promoting the values of social harmony and tolerance, the Church educates community members on Christian teachings that contribute to social peace, forgiveness of the Other, love between family members, and respect for the fundamental attributes of the person (life, physical integrity, and health). The priests, but also the staff of partner organizations of the Romanian Orthodox Church, contribute to infusing society with nonviolent messages, through sermons, liturgies, and other religious activities.

Another way of intervention is the development of psychoeducational programs. This line of action is supported by the Church in collaboration with specialists in the field of mental health, to create psychoeducational programs adapted to the specific needs of Orthodox communities. Programs can address topics such as anger management, conflict resolution, effective communication, and parenting. The Church can facilitate the training of priests and other religious leaders in providing support and counseling to prevent violence. Through activities to support victims of violence, the Church offers spiritual and emotional support to victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, neglect, and other forms of violence, through counseling and support centers within parishes or dioceses. In addition, collaboration with organizations specialized in assisting victims enables professionals who activate within the Church's victim support activities to provide holistic support, which represents a considerable therapeutic advantage.

Another way the Church gets involved to eradicate family violence, which has a wide social impact and is very effective socially, not only in individual cases, is raising community awareness, by organizing awareness campaigns regarding violence and its negative consequences, through conferences, seminars, and round tables, which are aimed at promoting constructive discussion and debate. However, there are also challenges in achieving these goals, such as the lack of financial and human resources dedicated to violence prevention programs, the reluctance of some religious leaders to address the issue of violence, due to the sensitivity of the subject, or even the lack of collaboration between the Church and some secular organizations involved in the prevention of violence. The involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the prevention of family violence or in case-by-case intervention creates opportunities adjacent to the state social work system because professional social work networks are developed by parishes and dioceses throughout the country, by involving parishioners in violence prevention programs. The strong moral position of the Church transforms it into an important social influencer to promote nonviolent values, by capitalizing on the rich tradition

of the Church in philanthropy and social work practice. All this reveals a significant potential of the Church to contribute to the prevention of violence through psychoeducation, by developing specific programs to victim support and raise community awareness, aiming to create a more peaceful and harmonious society.

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Biodata

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COUNSELING WOMEN IN RISK SITUATIONS

Alexandra-Elisa MEREUȚĂ[1]

Rezumat: Consilierea sau mersul la psiholog, încă este considerat un subiect tabu în zilele noastre. De cele mai multe ori, ne izbim de părerile celorlalți care nu vad consilierea ca pe ceva benefic și asta face inițiativa de a participa la acest proces si mai grea. Totodată consilierea are ca scop principal sprijinirea clienților în înțelegerea și clarificarea perspectivelor asupra vieții și mediului. Astfel, facilitează o mai bună informare privind soluțiile posibile pentru problemele emoționale și interpersonale. Prin această lucrare de licență am dorit să identific motivele ce stau la baza acceptării, de către femei, a unora dintre situațiile de risc, inclusiv violență domestică, să evidențiez principalele semne de alarmă, ale situațiilor de risc și să descopăr care sunt strategiile de copping cu care se confruntă femeile în general, dar mai ales cele care au un partener violent. Pentru a-mi îndeplini obiectivele am intervievat cinci victime beneficiare ale Centrului de Servicii Sociale pentru Persoane Adulte Aflate în Dificultate: Centrul de Primiri în Regim de Urgență pentru Victimele Violenței Domestice, Iași.

Cuvinte cheie: victimă, copping, dificultate, semne de alarmă, violență, sprijin.

Abstract: In today's society, seeking psychological counseling or therapy remains a stigmatized topic. Often, individuals face negative perceptions from others who do not recognize the benefits of counseling, making it even more challenging to seek help. Furthermore, the main purpose of counseling is to support clients in understanding and clarifying their perspectives on life and their environment. Thus, it facilitates better information regarding possible solutions for emotional and interpersonal problems. Through this bachelor's thesis, I aimed to identify the reasons behind women's acceptance of certain risky situations, including domestic violence, highlight the main warning signs of these risky situations, and discover the coping strategies women generally use, especially those with violent partners. To achieve my objectives, I interviewed five victims who are beneficiaries of the Social Services Center for Adults in Difficulty: Emergency Reception Center for Victims of Domestic Violence, Iași.

Keywords: victim, coping, difficulty, warning signs, violence, support.

Résumé : Dans la société actuelle, la recherche d'un soutien psychologique ou d'une thérapie reste un sujet stigmatisé. Souvent, les personnes font face à des perceptions

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négatives de la part d'individus qui ne reconnaissent pas les bienfaits de l'accompagnement psychologique, ce qui rend encore plus difficile la demande d'aide. De plus, le principal objectif du counseling est d'aider les clients à comprendre et à clarifier leur point de vue sur la vie et leur environnement. Ainsi, cela facilite l'obtention de meilleures informations concernant les solutions possibles aux problèmes émotionnels et interpersonnels. Dans le cadre de ce mémoire de licence, j'ai cherché à identifier les raisons qui poussent les femmes à accepter certaines situations à risque, notamment la violence domestique, à mettre en évidence les principaux signaux d'alerte de ces situations à risque, et à découvrir les stratégies d'adaptation que les femmes utilisent généralement, en particulier celles qui ont des partenaires violents. Pour atteindre mes objectifs, j'ai interviewé cinq victimes bénéficiaires du Centre d'Action Sociale aux Adultes en Difficulté : Centre d'Accueil d'Urgence pour les Victimes de Violences Conjugales, Iași.

Mots-clés : victime, adaptation, difficulté, signes avant-coureurs, violence, soutien.

1. Introduction

This paper is based on my bachelor's thesis on the topic of Counseling Women in Risk Situations, with most of the information being collected during the writing process. Additionally, through volunteering at a center for victims of violence, I have been able to observe over the years some patterns that I have also found in the victims I have interviewed. I can say that at this point I am adding to the study I conducted a year ago because I am volunteering for the Romanian Orthodox Christian Students Association - Iasi Branch in the Social Assistance department, which has direct contact with the detainees of the Iasi Penitentiary. I participated in a module entitled „Education for Family Life", and this module is attended by people who have a history of violence in their criminal records. This gives me the privilege of having both perspectives, which is often impossible. This experience of working with some of the detainees of the Penitentiary came after my study, which did not allow me at that time to make a parallel between the two perspectives.

The purpose of the study is to identify the chain of stages that can lead to domestic violence. These stages are the lack of counseling and support in risky situations and crises, which lead to a vulnerability of both partners, especially the victim, which later turns into domestic violence.

The field of counseling is quite unknown, and the benefits of this process are not very well recognized, so I would like to highlight some important basic aspects that everyone should know about so as not to see this process as something out of the ordinary.

2. Theoretical basis

Stănescu declares that „It has been found that the origins of counseling do not come from the Western civilization as it was initially written, but that they were initially found in tribal formations under the so-called „Councils of the Elders". Even then, they were learning the notion of supporting those in need" (Stănescu, 2003, p. 6).

The term counseling was first found in the work of Carl Rogers in 1942. He believes that each person has enough qualities to overcome the problems they encounter in everyday life.

According to the author Şoitu (2022), the universe of this field is the client's possibility to explore, discover, and clarify certain ways of using personal resources efficiently. Counseling is based on a close relationship between a specially trained counselor and a client, usually taking place in an individual setting, sometimes oriented towards couples or groups.

> "Inskipp F. and John H. (1984) mention that counseling is a way of relating and responding to another person so that they can be helped to explore their thoughts, emotions and behavior in the direction of gaining a clearer understanding of themselves and learning to find and use their stronger parts/resources, so that they can cope with life more effectively, making appropriate decisions and acting accordingly" (Inskipp and John, 1984 apud. Micleuşanu & Cuzneţov, 2015).

Being clearly directed towards helping clients understand and clarify their points of view on life and the environment, counseling strengthens the role of self-learning and learning about others, for better awareness of the ways of solving problems in the emotional and interpersonal sphere.

The client-centered approach was created by Carl Rogers, who believes that individuals are born with certain mechanisms of self-determination and progress in their own skills.

Client-centered counseling: is a conglomerate of the humanist evolution in psychology. In the first phase, the specialist called his technique „non-directive counseling", but later renamed it „client-centered counseling or therapy". In this counseling method, the professional is emotional support, tolerates and offers the clients the possibility to understand the problems they face, but also the consequences of the decisions they will make.

> "This approach does not focus on the problem, but on the client as a person, Rogers started from the idea that people need to be helped to learn how to cope with situations. One of the main ways to achieve this goal is to support the client as a whole, as a person who does not need defensive mechanisms in everyday experiences." (Şoitu, 2022).

Social assistance is an essential component of the national social protection system, through which the state is committed to protecting and supporting individuals and families who are at risk or vulnerable. Vulnerability can stem from various factors, including economic hardship, physical and health conditions, family circumstances (such as single-parent families or orphans), and exposure to violence.

> "Vulnerability has been studied in relation to the quality of life, social isolation, and exclusion, discrimination on various grounds, including age, resulting in the identification of vulnerabilities in relation to an individual,

in this particular situation in relation to an individual, a situation, an event" (Chambers, 1989 apud Șoitu, 2015 p. 33).

Domestic violence can be described as a consistent pattern of coercive control that involves abusive physical, sexual, or emotional behaviors. Family violence encompasses a range of behaviors including physical violence, mistreatment of minors, restricting the independence of a partner, disregarding the rights, feelings, opinions, and expectations of a partner, violence between siblings, and abuse of elderly family members.

Often violence is characterized more by its consequences that refer to the physical and mental state of the victim, not all physical and mental illnesses can be based on violence, but violence can be the cause of such illnesses.

"Violence refers to behaviors characterized by aggressive relationships, based on force, verbal or physical, moral, economic, political, with the aim of dominating, subjugating the victim by the aggressor. Through violence, the victim is destroyed, reduced to the state of an object, his vital space being invaded by the aggressor." (Asselineau, 2005, apud. Munteanu, 2011).

Language development delay can affect the learning opportunities of a child who has witnessed or been exposed to any type of violence and can disrupt their behavioral responses, exacerbating personality dissonance. Family violence can lead to verbal or physical aggression, strained family relationships, educational and emotional neglect of the child, neglect of the child's special needs, abilities, and possibilities, insults, and abuse, all of which are more aspects that affect the normal development of a person.

3. Research Methodology

Starting from the premise that in society women have multiple roles (mother, wife, grandmother, friend, employee, woman in society), this over-demand can make them vulnerable by exposing them to a series of risk factors that can lead to crisis situations such as depression, anxiety, self-neglect, and neglect of others.

The purpose of the research is to identify the degree of difficulty of the risk situations that women face on a daily basis and how they cope with these situations (if they seek counseling). I also want to study the characteristics of women who are victims of domestic violence, the risk factors that lead to this situation, and their resilience after they have experienced a crisis in their lives.

Research objectives

-Identify the risk situations faced by women in the study group and their degree of difficulty.
-Identify the coping mechanisms of women in the study group.
-Identify the types of social services/institutions that women turn to for support.

-Understanding the reasons why women accept some of the risk situations, including domestic violence.

-Identify the main warning signs of risk situations, including domestic violence.

Theoretical Sample/Studied Lot

The research sample consists of five victims of domestic violence aged between 19 and 31 years old, currently residing at the center and having experienced physical abuse at least once. These individuals are beneficiaries of the Social Services Center for Adults in Difficulty: Emergency Reception Center for Victims of Domestic Violence, Iași. Interviews were conducted between March and May 2023, with an average interview duration of 60 to 80 minutes.

Data collection tool: interview guide

"The interview is an indirect method of data collection: the researcher does not have direct access to the phenomenon studied and tries to obtain the necessary data by interviewing the people (interviewees/subjects) who have certain knowledge about this phenomenon." (Runcan, 2023)

I collected the data using a qualitative method, namely the interview, more specifically, the semi-structured interview. I consider that through this I managed to find relevant information for my bachelor's thesis and to capture certain aspects that at first glance would not seem relevant.

The semi-structured interview gives me the opportunity to adapt the questions according to the answers of the interviewee, thus obtaining some generalizations, but also detailed information. The way of applying the interview was through direct face-to-face contact, which allowed me to observe more aspects about the victim, but also her feelings while she was telling her story.

Another reason that made me choose the interview as a research method was the particularity of the situation, the interview guide being addressed to victims of domestic violence who have been further assaulted by their partner and who were in the center for victims of domestic violence.

4. Results

For a clearer perspective, I have divided the interview guide into several thematic axes, but I would like to highlight only two of them: „Understanding the reasons why women accept some risky situations, including domestic violence" and „Identifying the main warning signs of risk situations, including domestic violence".

The most difficult objective to achieve was „ Identifying the reasons why women accept some risk situations, including domestic violence" although the main reason cited by victims was the presence of children. Although they were aware of the risks they were exposing themselves and their children to, the desire

for the father figure to be present was much stronger. They accepted the abuse in order not to break the bond between father and children, even though the violent episodes to which the children were subjected had a serious emotional impact on their psyche. Other reasons cited included the lack of a place to go after violent incidents and the emotional inability to cope with the partner's pleas for forgiveness.

All the women in the study group painfully recounted the first violent act they were subjected to when I asked them the question:

> "Was it violent because we didn't have the money to contribute financially to our wedding, that was the first time he insulted me, pushed me, shoved me, put his hand on my throat, and behaved badly, I didn't tell anyone, I thought it was normal" (23 years, V.).

> "The first time he was violent was when he came home very drunk, his grandmother called the mental hospital, and they came and took him to the hospital because he was behaving badly, they gave him an injection at the hospital and let him go home, he came back even more nervous than when he left, and then he started urinating around the house, on me and the child, that's when the thing with the child happened when he hit him in the head with his fists and slapped me" (19 years C.).

I was aware that this question was quite sensitive, I wanted to find out the clear reasons from the early stages, but also so that by remembering the unfortunate event they would be sincere in the next aspect „What are the reasons or what makes you forgive and overcome violent behavior?". The overwhelming response to this question was pity and for the sake of the children. The women in the study group were aware of their partners' mistakes but chose to move on just so as not to deprive their children of a father figure, as they were not old enough to understand their fathers' actions.

In response to the question „What are the factors that contribute to your husband's violent behavior?", it was surprising that all the women had the same answer: alcohol, sexual frustration, and interference from other family members who argued against the victim:

> "I think one of the factors was the influence his brother and sister-in-law had over him. When he went to his brother's house, the atmosphere was different and he was different. But when he came back from there, he was completely changed. And usually, his brother and sister-in-law would come to our house to visit when we were having a good time and getting along well, and we would fight because of that."(30years A.P.),

> "Mile, I felt sorry for him because he cried very hard after he behaved badly or after he asked me for certain things, even though I was crying too. He tried to dramatize it in such a way that I would feel guilty and he would be the innocent one. At first, I didn't realize that he was very sexually frustrated, but after about eight months of pregnancy, I found it strange at

one point because I had noticed that he was possessive from that point of view. I thought maybe it was this period where it doesn't happen as often because I'm pregnant, but at most, I realized after I gave birth because we had moved and then I saw that he watched horror and porn movies every night, during the day, but especially at night, he watched porn movies. In the evening when I went to sleep and breastfed the baby, he simply came just to use me for a quarter of an hour, 10 minutes without involving love, compassion, and affection. He made me feel like an object, and that made me realize that he was very possessive and obsessed with this thing. The cruelest moment was when he gave me something to fall asleep and then he tried to have intimate relations with me, but I woke up right in the middle of the sexual act." (23 years V.).

According to theory *The power and control wheel* (Dutton, Saudners, Starzomski, Bartholomew, 1988; Dutton și Corva, 2006) that after an act of violence, there follows a tension-free period in which the aggressor behaves appropriately, even more tenderly than usual, I wanted to highlight this through the question, „What was the behavior of the husband/partner after the violent act and how long did this behavior last until the next violent episode?" I received the same answer from most of the interviewees:

"He always behaved so badly and then he would come and say < you know I love you, you know when I'm angry I speak like that > or it would happen, for example, if he asked me for money and there were times when I gave him and he behaved very nicely, but if I didn't give him, he would have the habit of insulting me in every way. He also had an okay behavior as long as there were moments of intimacy, if there weren't anymore, that's when we often argued." (30 years A.P.),

"Well, he would apologize, start to dramatize, cry, and say to just get over it because he will change and won't do it again, but nothing happened, he didn't do anything to change. Everything lasted about two or three days maximum four until we started over." (23years V.), „Somehow you could see that he regretted it, he started to be different, more tender, it lasted about 2 weeks from when he hit me the first time until now." (31years.C.).

The most frequent excuse given by aggressors is „I'll change", but most of the time this change doesn't happen, it's just a phrase uttered when they realize they might lose their partner. We can also attribute to maturity the fact that the four respondents chose not to believe in their partner's future change, being able to observe that the only person who believes they will change is the youngest victim among them all.

Another proposed objective is „Identifying the main warning signs, and risk situations, including domestic violence." Through this objective, I wanted to see how victims manage to anticipate that their partner is about to be violent and if they manage to do something about it, which is why one of the questions asked

to achieve my objective is „Did you have moments when you felt that a violent act was imminent?". Surprisingly, each of the interviewed women found such a signal, despite the very confusing behavior of their partner they had certain indicators that helped them identify the situation that would follow:

> "Yes, I had such moments, most of the time I realized that violence was about to happen because he yelled in a certain way and he also had the habit of slamming or breaking things when he was angry." (30 years A.P.)

> „Yes, because I avoided having sexual contact with him, and that made him frustrated, he made a lot of thoughts and watched porn movies and then he raped me at night or gave me something to fall asleep without me knowing what was happening to me and my body, and that's how I felt that an argument was coming because there was tension between us, from words, behavior, his moods, and he was always agitated, always volcanic by nature." (23 years V.)

> „Yes, the threats, he always when he got drunk was with the threats, that he'll do this, that he'll fix this, that he'll take the knife, that he'll cut his throat, that he'll kill us, I knew he wouldn't do that, but what I knew more than that was that after every time he threatened me, he was going to hit me or the kids, mostly the oldest boy because he's not his child, once he hit him with his fists in the head when he was very young, he made some holes in his head." (19 years C.)

To identify the reasons that prevented victims from leaving the aggressor, being aware that he could be violent just by the gestures he manifested, I aimed to identify the reasons through the question „What were the reasons that determined you not to leave him at the first signs that he could be violent?". Of course, the answers were strikingly similar again:

> "I tried in these 7 years to change him, to be a responsible father and so on because since the diagnosis of our daughter appeared, I said that maybe he will become more responsible, get more involved, be more understanding, and so on. But it wasn't like that, on the contrary, more burdens accumulated which I carried." (30 years A.P.)

> „The fact that we had a child together, the fact that she was small and naive and somehow I thought he would change and maybe it's just a thing at the beginning or maybe it's too stressful that we have a wedding and it's a more difficult period and I said that things won't be like this in everyday life, I said that maybe it's not like this in essence, maybe it's different from how it showed at that time." (23 years V.)

> "I had nowhere to go, but I also didn't want to separate the child from his father, that was the only solution, the center and I didn't want it, but I still got there." (21 years C.), „He kept saying he won't do it anymore, he got on his knees, said he wants a family, that he wants to be with us, that he got

attached to us, that it's hard for him alone, without us, even though they weren't his kids he was willing to accept me sometimes just so I wouldn't leave him. Somehow he tried to sensitize me not to leave him." (31 years C.).

Conclusions

Most of the time, children are the main reason why the victim doesn't leave the aggressor, but they don't realize at the moment that the traumas of the violence they endure have a much deeper impact than just growing up without their father. In two of the victims, we could clearly see that they endured different treatments precisely because they had no other support in their lives.

I was surprised from the beginning of the research to notice common traits of the victims, all five women had very close ages, but the thing that characterized all of them in choosing their partners was the age difference of over five years of the aggressors, later, only two of these victims broke ties with the aggressor. Common traits were present on both sides.

Through the purpose of my research, I wanted to highlight the possible vulnerability of women due to the overcrowding of roles they exercise in everyday life. My purpose was confirmed even by the first victim interviewed who told me about a situation she went through characterizing that moment as a crisis, she said that at that moment she would have needed counseling for two reasons because she was already vulnerable due to the situation she was facing of being a victim of violence without support from someone dear and because she considers that she would have managed to overcome that situation much easier with the support of a counselor. After the crisis period followed a program of psychological counseling, but feeling that it was without result, the opportune moment would have been at its beginning or when she was in the middle of the crisis.

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Biodata

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EMPOWERING THE WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. A PUBLIC POLICY PROPOSAL FOR IAŞI COUNTY

Ciprian IFTIMOAEI[1]

Abstract

This public policy proposal highlights the challenges faced by women in Iaşi County, including violence, teenage motherhood, issues related to women working abroad, poverty among women, and their underrepresentation in local politics. It outlines a general action framework involving various stakeholders, such as public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and professional groups. The proposal sets goals and objectives aligned with the principles, norms, and values of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The public policy proposal is organized into five sections. The first section introduces gender issues in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the European Strategy on Gender Equality 2020-2025, Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy, and the National Strategy for promoting equal opportunities and treatment for women and men and for preventing and combating domestic violence for 2018-2021. The second section provides an analysis of the most severe issues facing women in Iaşi County, including various forms of violence, teenage motherhood, women working abroad and leaving children behind, how poverty affects women, and their underrepresentation in political decision-making roles. Section three outlines the proposal's goals, general and specific objectives, and identifies the direct and indirect beneficiaries. Section four discusses potential solutions to the identified problems, using SWOT analysis for each proposed option, and presents the rationale for selecting the implementation option, including an assessment of its economic, social, and environmental impact. Section five suggests a consultation framework for adopting the public policy proposal, and summarizes the post-adoption measures.

Keywords: public policy, politics, sustainable development, violence, teenage mother, poverty, migration.

Résumé

Cette proposition de politique publique met en lumière les défis auxquels sont confrontées les femmes du comté de Iaşi, notamment la violence à l'égard des femmes, la maternité chez les adolescentes, les problèmes liés au travail des femmes à l'étranger, la pauvreté des femmes et leur sous-représentation dans la politique locale. Il décrit un cadre d'action

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général impliquant diverses parties prenantes, telles que des institutions publiques, des organisations non gouvernementales et des groupes professionnels. La proposition fixe des buts et des objectifs alignés sur les principes, normes et valeurs de l'Agenda 2030 pour le développement durable. La proposition de politique publique est organisée en cinq sections. La première section présente les questions de genre conformément à l'Agenda 2030 pour le développement durable, à la Stratégie européenne pour l'égalité des genres 2020-2025, à la Stratégie de développement durable de la Roumanie et à la Stratégie nationale pour promouvoir l'égalité des chances et de traitement entre les femmes et les hommes et pour prévenir et combattre violence domestique pour 2018-2021. La deuxième section fournit une analyse des problèmes les plus graves auxquels sont confrontées les femmes du comté de Iași, notamment diverses formes de violence, la maternité adolescente, les femmes travaillant à l'étranger et laissant leurs enfants derrière elles, la manière dont la pauvreté affecte les femmes et leur sous-représentation dans la prise de décision politique. les rôles. La troisième section présente les buts, les objectifs généraux et spécifiques de la proposition et identifie les bénéficiaires directs et indirects. La quatrième section discute des solutions potentielles aux problèmes identifiés, en utilisant l'analyse SWOT pour chaque option proposée, présente la justification du choix de l'option de mise en œuvre, y compris une évaluation de son impact économique, social et environnemental. La cinquième section propose un cadre de consultation pour l'adoption de la proposition de politique publique, et les mesures post-adoption.

Mots-clés : politique publique, politique, développement durable, violence, mère adolescente, pauvreté, migration.

Rezumat

Această propunere de politică publică evidențiază provocările cu care se confruntă femeile din județul Iași: violența asupra femeilor, maternitatea mamelor minore, problemele legate de munca femeilor în străinătate, sărăcia femeilor și subreprezentarea lor în pozițiile de decizie politică la nivel județean și local. Propunerea de politică publică descrie un cadru general de acțiune care implică diverse părți interesate, cum ar fi instituții publice, organizații neguvernamentale și grupuri profesionale. Propunerea stabilește scopuri și obiective aliniate cu principiile, standardele și valorile Agendei 2030 pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă și este organizată în cinci secțiuni. Prima secțiune prezintă problemele de gen în conformitate cu Agenda 2030 pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă, Strategia Europeană pentru Egalitatea de Gen 2020-2025, Strategia de Dezvoltare Durabilă a României și Strategia Națională de promovare a egalității de șanse și de tratament între femei și bărbați și pentru prevenirea și combaterea violenței domestice pentru 2018-2021. A doua secțiune analizează cele mai grave probleme cu care se confruntă femeile din județul Iași: aspecte legate de violența asupra femeilor și fetelor din județul Iași sub toate formele, maternitatea adolescentină, femeile care lucrează în străinătate și problemele cu care se confruntă copiii lăsați acasă, modul în care sărăcia afectează femeile și subreprezentarea acestora în politica locală. A treia secțiune prezintă scopurile, obiectivele generale și specifice ale propunerii și identifică beneficiarii direcți și indirecți. Secțiunea a patra discută soluții potențiale la problemele identificate, folosind analiza SWOT pentru fiecare opțiune propusă, prezintă rațiunea alegerii opțiunii de implementare, inclusiv o evaluare a impactului economic, social și de mediu al acesteia. Secțiunea a cincea propune un cadru de consultare pentru adoptarea propunerii de politici publice, precum și măsurile care trebuie promovate după adoptarea acesteia.

Cuvinte cheie: politici publice, politică, dezvoltare durabilă, violență, mame adolescente, sărăcie, migrație.

Public policies are strategies, programs, laws, and regulations that those in power control the allocation and spending of public resources and promote to solve the problems faced by society, cities, communities, groups of people, and citizens. A public policy is everything that a public authority does or does not do (Parliament, Government, county council, county council president, local council, mayor) in response to social, economic, and environmental issues in the field of national security and defense, in the external relations of the state (Dye, 1984).

Through public policies, the Government fulfills the program for which it receives the investiture vote from the Parliament. Whether it acts directly through regulations and institutions within it or indirectly through agents (Peters, 1986), the Government's actions produce changes in society and the economy (Collins & Crăciun, 2008). Similarly, at the local level, the decisions of public authorities with executive functions (the president of the county council, the mayor) shape the lives of the local community, carrying out the decisions adopted by the deliberative bodies (the county council, the local council). In others word, the public policy refers to the actions or inactions selected by government officials in response to a specific issue or group of related topics (Mungiu-Pippidi, Ioniță, 2002).

Public policy is not a single action, but the sum of the actions or inactions of a public authority. It is a multifaceted approach to problem-solving, addressing areas of activity in which it has competencies provided by the legislation in force (Anderson, 1990; Santo & Verrier, 1993). It is a tool for improving the living conditions of citizens for economic growth (Profiroiu, 2006), and for satisfying citizens' preferences (Andrei, 2007). It involves interrelated decisions that propose objectives, identify means and resources to achieve them (Jenkins, 1978; Miroiu, 2001; Moraru *et al.*, 2019), bringing together the decisions aimed at obtaining specific results, including the options and resources appropriate to achieving the proposed objectives (Thoening, 1989; Popescu, 2006).

As we will see in the present case, the public policy proposal for empowering the role of women in sustainable development describes the problems they face in Iași County (violence against women and girls, teenage mothers, issues of women going to work abroad, the poverty faced by women, the underrepresentation of women in local politics), proposes a general framework for action, involving several categories of stakeholders (public institutions, non-governmental organizations, professional groups), has goals and objectives that are formulated according to certain principles, norms, and values, such as those stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1. Introduction to the issue of gender equality

Promoting gender equality, as well as strengthening the role of women in the context of sustainable development of communities and cities, is a task that must be assumed not only by Romania, as a country that has signed the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, but by all stakeholders in the field from counties and localities. Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union, included in all EU treaties, being a distinct objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - the aim of sustainable development (SDG) no. 5. Gender equality starts from the idea that humanity can reach its full potential only through taking into consideration all its talents and diversity.

Women's potential in society enhances employment by creating new jobs and boosting productivity. Empowering women and improving their socio-economic status could increase the EU's GDP per capita by 6.1% to 9.6%, translating to a rise of 1.95 trillion to 3.15 trillion euros (EIGE, 2023). The European Union leads globally in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Among the top 20 countries worldwide that have achieved the best results in promoting gender equality, 14 are EU members (EM 2030). This ranking is based on the 2019 EU gender equality index, where member states averaged 67.4 out of 100 points, with Sweden achieving the highest score and Romania scoring 54.5 points. The EU's dedication to gender equality is further highlighted by adopting six directives, which have set legal standards for all member states in areas such as workplace equality, access to goods and services, and family leave.

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 coordinates the European Commission's efforts on gender equality, aiming to create a European space where gender-based violence, discrimination, and structural inequality are relics of the past. This strategy supports Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and seeks to make gender equality a central priority across all sustainable development goals. Additionally, it reinforces the EU's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For the timeframe 2020-2025, the Strategy proposes to reach the following objectives:

- to eliminate violence and stereotypes against women and girls;
- to prosper in an economy based on gender equality;
- to have management positions occupied both by men and by women, in all sectors of society;
- to integrate gender mainstreaming and intersectional perspective in EU policies;
- to finance actions aimed at making progress in the field of gender equality in the EU;
- to address gender equality and the emancipation of women worldwide.

Romania has a National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) at the central level. Also, there is the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (CONES), an inter-ministerial working group, which aims to identify the best solutions for developing and implementing ANES public policies and to promote equal opportunities for women and men in all areas of public life. It comprises representatives from ministries and other central public administration bodies under the Government or autonomous administrative authorities, as well as from nationally representative trade unions

and employers' associations, and recognized non-governmental organizations active in the field, selected by consensus (Iftimoaei & Gabor, 2021).

ANES is implementing the National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and of equal treatment of women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2018-2021. The national strategy stipulates that inequalities between women and men are a consequence of a long history of asymmetric power relations between women and men, which led to discrimination against women in society, to the partial exploitation of the potential of women and girls. The partial use of human capital represented by women and girls, in the conditions of current demographic, social, and economic changes has effects that are reflected in the evolution of statistical indicators that describe the level of well-being of a society.

This public policy proposal constitutes the first exercise of localizing the objective of sustainable development no. 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, corroborated with its associated targets from the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania (SNDDR, 2018), for Iasi County. The Strategy recognizes that, despite recent progress in the field of gender equality, there still are problems related to the population's preconceptions about the role of women in the family and community, the under-representation of women in leadership and political decision-making, gender pay gaps in specific economic sectors, but especially the issue of violence against women and girls in all forms.

SNDDR focuses on preventing and combating violence against women and girls, ensuring the balanced and effective participation of women in all areas of social life, and encouraging their involvement in leading positions in companies and political and administrative structures at the central and local levels. Although the pay gap between women and men in Romania is low compared to other EU member states, the Strategy aims to identify areas where pay disparities persist. Another goal assumed by SNDDR in the perspective of 2030 is the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of exploitation. The third target proposed in the SNDDR aims to ensure women's full and effective participation at all levels of political decision-making, encouraging them to occupy leadership positions in companies, organizations, and institutions in the private and public environment (DDD, 2018).

Within the Prefect's Institution of the Iasi County functions the County Commission for equal opportunities between women and men, constituted through the order of the Prefect and in accordance to Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities between women and men with subsequent amendments and completions, namely the Government Decision no. 1054/2005. The composition of the County Commission was updated by the Order of the Prefect no. 136 / 2017. On the website of the Prefect's Institution of Iasi County, there is no report on the activity of the County Commission for equal opportunities between women and men. Issues such as domestic violence, discrimination against women in the labor

market, under-representation of women in political decision-making bodies, and reproductive health for women are not addressed in the context of gender equality. Still, they are the object of activity of public institutions under the coordination of separate authorities or non-governmental organizations (COJES, 2017).

2. Reasons for initiating the public policy proposal

From the perspective of the 2030 Agenda, the worst issues of women in Romania, including in Iasi County, are the violence against women in all its forms, maternity of teenage mothers, women working abroad with children left at home, women affected by poverty, under-representation of women in politics, at the level of Parliament, county councils and local councils.

2.1. Violence against women

Domestic violence is one of the most serious issues faced by women and girls in Romania, including in Iasi County. According to the latest national study on domestic violence conducted by ANES, 6,731 victims were reported in the first half of 2019, with 4,167 (61.91%) being females and 2,564 (38.09%) males. Nationally, the distribution of family aggressors by gender and area of residence is as follows: 4,143 family aggressors, of which 1,555 (37.53%) are females and 2,588 (62.47%) are males (ANES, 2020).

Domestic violence against women is more prevalent in rural areas, with 2,291 female victims (54.98%) compared to 1,876 female victims (45.02%) from urban areas. Out of the total 6,731 domestic violence victims, 5,343 were underage (79.38%), including 2,852 girls (53.38%) and 2,491 boys (46.62%). The counties with the highest numbers of female domestic violence victims are Constanta (488 cases), Galati (454 cases), Timis (236 cases), Gorj (226 cases), and Maramures (193 cases). Social services provided to family aggressors during the reported period included psychological counseling (1,047 cases, 34.96%), counseling for social and occupational reintegration (96 cases, 3.21%), legal counseling (284 cases, 9.48%), counseling and family mediation (1,542 cases, 51.49%), and support for access to treatments (26 cases, 0.87%) (ANES, 2020).

Statistical data from the Iasi County Police Inspectorate show that there has been a continuous increase in the number of victims of domestic violence in Iasi County for the past three years. If, in 2017, there were a total of 1923 cases, the number of victims increased to 2054 the following year. By the end of September 2019, statistics showed that the total number of registered victims was already 1700 people (adult women and men, as well as minors). The cases registered by the Iasi County Police Inspectorate highlight the fact that crimes of domestic violence registered in urban areas exceed the number of cases registered in rural areas (Mărgineanu, 2020).

According to the statistical situation of persons and crimes stipulated by Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence at the level of Iasi County, during one year (2017-2018), there was an increase in the number of crimes against adult women. If the registered number of assaulted adult men was

323 in 2017 and 332 in 2018, in the case of adult women, the number increased by 160 cases, totaling at the end of 2018 several 1303 of registered cases. Until September 30, 2019, in Iasi County, there were registered 1050 instances of violence against adult women.

The health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the issue of domestic violence. The state of emergency declared in the spring of 2020 led to the implementation of sanitary measures such as home isolation, movement restrictions, and physical/social distancing. These measures had a psychological impact on couple relationships within families. Technical unemployment, job losses, reduced income from wages or other sources, and increasing prices for consumer goods and utilities heightened fear and anxiety among individuals and couples, further straining social relationships.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic crisis, many women were forced to live with their abusers. Home isolation served as protection against COVID-19, but for many women, it became a place of abuse. In March 2020, the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police reported a 2.3% increase in domestic violence cases compared to the same month in 2019. In April 2020, amid the pandemic, the UN urged governments worldwide to take measures to prevent and combat domestic violence. Throughout the pandemic year, the police issued over 6,500 provisional protection orders, with courts converting half of these into permanent protection orders—an increase of 10% compared to 2019. Considering that approximately 80% of domestic violence in Romania occurs at home, psychiatrist Cozmin Mihai (2020) noted that home isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue.

Domestic violence cases are underreported due to a lack of information, education, and awareness among women, particularly those who are unemployed, have dependent children, or are financially dependent on their partners. To raise public awareness about the consequences of violence against women during the pandemic, the Network for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women organized a public awareness event and protest on October 25, 2020, in University Square, Bucharest. The event was held under the slogan „Together we resist and fight back!"

2.2. Maternity of teenage mothers

The second problem that women face, in order of severity in Iasi County, is that of underage mothers. Adolescent motherhood is an issue that must be analyzed considering the level of education and training of families from which adolescent mothers come, their culture and standard of living, and the lack of health education, including education that can prevent unwanted pregnancies in adolescents. Maternity of teenage mothers is also a problem related to reproductive health. Teenage mothers do not have access to medical services such as conception, pregnancy monitoring, and postnatal health assessment. Most often, pregnancy of teenage mothers becomes an existential problem with a significant psychological and social impact.

According to data provided by Eurostat, 23% of mothers under 18 in the European Union live in Romania, our country ranking first in this regard among EU member states. Eurostat data also show that, in 2018 alone, 8621 girls became mothers before the age of majority (10-17 years), and 725 were in this situation before turning 15. According to sociological research conducted by the „Savați Copiii Romania / Save the Children Romania" organization, the problem of underage mothers is complicated by the fact that they did not benefit from any social assistance services.

According to statistical data from the National Institute of Statistics, out of the 10,579 live births recorded in Iasi County in 2018, 831 were to teenage mothers (up to 19 years old), accounting for 7.85% of all live births. Among these, 13 live births were from mothers under 15 years old. Additionally, out of the total live births in Iasi County in 2018, 7,902 were within marriage and 2,677 were out of wedlock. Of the live births outside of marriage, 913 were in urban areas and 1,764 in rural areas (INS, 2019).

In most cases, children who have teenage mothers are not recognized by fathers, who are also minors and do not work. This situation creates difficulties related to the cohabitation of the teenage mother with the child's parents/grandparents, and the care for the child. In addition to the economic problems faced by minor mothers, there are the issues related to not assuming the responsibilities arising from the „role of the mother" or „role of the father", the inability of the teenage mother to cope with the situation, and the lack of emotional support. Teenage mothers face difficulties in vocational training and later integration into the labor market, challenges related to living standards, and a high risk of abandoning the child in residential institutions or placing him in the care of the extended family (Iftimoaei, 2020).

2.3. The women left to work abroad

External migration has multiple effects on the entire social system. If a significant segment of the active population leaves, the birth rate and fertility decrease, and mortality increases because the elderly population is left behind. The migration of the active female population also leads to a decrease in the labor force. Migrants increase the fertility rate in the country of destination, reducing that of the country of origin. These social, demographic and economic consequences of external migration are dealt with extensively in specialized literature (Iftimoaei & Baciu, 2018).

Due to a low standard of living, poverty, and the precariousness of household resources related to the needs for education and care of children, many women go to work abroad. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics, there are 8711 people temporarily emigrated from Iasi County (for more than 12 months), and 3977 were women (46%). Of the 3977 women who temporarily emigrated, 2510 reside in the rural area of Iasi county (63%) (INS, 2020).

Women working abroad are affected by burnout, a state of physical or mental deterioration that occurs mainly in people whose activities involve frequent

interactions with other people. Romanian women who emigrated to Italy to carry out domestic activities, including personal assistants for people with various types of disabilities, are affected by a distinct kind of burnout, the so-called „Italian syndrome". The media reported countless cases describing the situation of some Romanian women who were doing domestic work abroad and who suffered abuse. They were sexually harassed, as well as cases of women victims of rape and even deaths due to employer violence. Most cases of abuse occur in women who work without legal forms.

Romanians constitute the largest foreign community in Italy, representing almost a quarter of the country's total foreign population (23.1%), while women represent 57.5% of the Romanian community in Italy. These data come from the report „The Value of Domestic Work. The Economic and Social Role of Families – Employers of Domestic Workers", scientifically coordinated by Lawyer Massimo De Luca. Another study presented publicly by the Italian Assindatcolf Bureau shows that out of the 1.2 million „caregivers" ("badante" as they are called) in Italy, six out of ten work without legal forms (Stoica, 2020).

The issue of women going to work abroad, with or without legal forms, must also be analyzed, considering the children left at home in the care of spouses or relatives. According to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, at the end of 2019, there were 86263 children whose parents had gone abroad, of which 15858 had both parents working abroad. The psychological and social problems of children with mothers left abroad to work determine consequences like children often being neglected, children at risk of dropping out of school, or even face the risk of being abandoned in residential institutions.

2.4. Poverty is a gender issue in Romania

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms and contexts (SDG 1). Currently, over 700 million people, approximately 10% of the global population, endure severe poverty and struggle for survival. Having a job does not always guarantee an escape from poverty; according to UN statistics, 8% of workers and their families worldwide are affected by severe poverty. Addressing another sustainable development goal (SDG 2) of the 2030 Agenda, efforts are directed at eliminating hunger. Despite Romania's membership in the EU for more than a decade, the relative poverty rate has only marginally decreased, from 24.6% in 2007 to 23.5% in 2018.

In Romania, women experience higher rates of poverty compared to men. In 2018, the poverty rate was 22.5% for men and slightly higher at 24.5% for women, meaning one in four women in Romania lives in poverty. Before social transfers, excluding pensions, the poverty rate for women rises to 29%. This indicates that without government interventions such as child and family benefits, unemployment benefits, sick leave benefits, educational scholarships, support for people with disabilities, and other social benefits, the poverty rate for women would increase by more than four percentage points.

Data from the National Institute of Statistics (INS) show that women in the North-East region are most affected by poverty. In 2018, the poverty rate for this region, where Iasi County is situated, was 35,6%, decreasing by only one percentage compared to 2007, when it was 36.6%. Transfers from the state budget and investments with European and government funds have yet to lead to a significant increase in living standards, as shown by official statistics.

The National Institute of Statistics (INS) provides additional relevant statistics on the situation of women in Romania:

▪   37.2% of single women are affected by poverty, compared to 23.5% of single men;
▪   36.7% of single individuals aged 65 and over are affected by poverty;
▪   41.6% of parents with at least one dependent child (single-parent families) are affected by poverty, with the situation worsening for women with dependent children.

Eurostat calculates the AROPE indicator, which measures the risk of poverty or social exclusion. This indicator includes people with incomes below the poverty line, individuals experiencing severe material deprivation, and those living in low-income households. At the national level in Romania, the AROPE indicator stands at 32.5%, with 31% for men and 33.9% for women. These statistics highlight significant disparities and challenges faced by women in Romania concerning poverty and social exclusion.

2.5. The under-representation of women in politics

On the one hand, the under-representation of women in political structures (Parliament, County Council, local town halls, and city halls) is instead an effect of the discouragement they feel concerning the quality of the Romanian political elite. On the other hand, the appointment of women to eligible positions on the lists of candidates is not encouraged by a mechanism for allocating positions, even though women represent over 51% of Romania's population.

Political parties play the most crucial role in nominating candidates for public positions. In this regard, a report by the European Institute for Gender Equality shows that men lead most EU political parties. The report points out that in 2014, women accounted for only 13% of leaders and 33% of deputy leaders of major political parties across the EU. Formal and informal networks within political parties are extremely important in the rise of political decision-making positions. The under-representation of women in politics is associated with gender-predominant stereotypes and the predominantly „masculine" culture of men-led political parties. The gender stereotypes are also reflected in the distribution of ministerial portfolios and administrative management positions within ministries. Men dominate portfolios related to essential state functions such as defense, justice, and foreign policy. At the same time, women are concentrated in socio-cultural ministries, reinforcing stereotypes that women are better suited in areas such as education, health, and culture (EIGE, 2020).

Professor Ionela Baluță at the University of Bucharest, an expert in gender equality, believes that „in the logic of democratic political architecture, based on representativeness and percentages, the actual number of women included in leadership structures of political parties, local political structures and especially in Parliament or in Government is a mandatory indicator". The researcher also explains the refusal to establish „gender quotas" to increase women's representation in political decision-making structures by the persistence of preconceptions, attitudes, and behaviors that give women traditional roles, mostly household, in educating children and care for older people. Attempts to increase women's political representation are sanctioned as „Marxist, neo-communist and feminist, three ideological positions indexed in the post-communist public and political space" (Băluță, 2012).

During 1990-2020, the lowest share of women in the Parliament was registered in the 1992-1996 mandate, when only 3.7% of the total number of Parliament members were women, and the highest share of women in Parliament was recorded in the 2016-2020 parliamentary term when 19.3% of Parliament members were women. Increasing women's parliamentary representation by 15 percent is a visible step forward in their political participation. Regarding executive power, the highest representation of women in the Government was recorded during the so-called „technocratic government" 2015-2017, when women held 40.0% of the ministers' seats, meaning 9 ministerial positions occupied by women (Dalban, 2020). On January 29, 2018, the first woman-led Government in Romania was appointed. Women remain politically underrepresented at the local level, in the county and regional councils, and positions of president and vice-president of county councils, mayors, and deputy mayors, respectively. At the local level, the traditionalist / conservative approach to the role of women in local community politics is evident from the perspective of gender equality.

Romania does not have a problem regarding women occupying leading positions in public administration. In 2019, in the central public administration, for the 2 grades of decision-making positions (decision-making grade 1 (general secretary, deputy general secretary, general manager, deputy general manager) and decision-making grade 2 (director, deputy director), the positions were occupied by 265 men (46,5%) and 305 women (53,5%), placing Romania on the 4th position in the EU-28 ranking. Compared to 2018 2019, the percentage of women increased by 3,9 percent (from 49,6% in 2018 to 53,5% in 2019). The average at the EU-28 level for 2019 for the 2 decision-making degrees was 57,4% men and 42,6% women. Romania has a much higher female percentage than the European average (ANES, 2019).

Since 2000, gender studies have been included in the master's degree studies at Bucharest, Cluj, and Timisoara universities. In its somewhat conservative tradition, Iasi does not have such a study program, although academics are interested in the topic. Even though gender studies have claimed a place in university curricula, controversy over their academic status continues.

Table 1. The public policy proposal: general and specific objectives

Name of the public policy proposal	Empowering the role of women in the context of sustainable development of the Iasi County
The goal of the public policy proposal	The Public policy proposes several measures to solve/improve the problems of women in Iasi County and increase their social and economic role in the context of the requirements for sustainable development of cities and local communities.
General and specific objectives	*General objective 1* To prevent and combat all types of violence against women, domestic violence, women and girls trafficking, sexual exploitation of women and girls, as well as any form of abuse. ▪ *Specific objective 1.1* – to create a unitary and integrated system for reporting, monitoring, and evaluating cases of violence against women from the Iasi County, through public-private partnerships among public institutions and non-governmental organizations activating the field of gender equality. ▪ *Specific objective 1.2* – to develop a complex of social services focused on preventing and combating domestic violence, including establishing sheltered housing for victims of domestic violence in Iasi County. *General objective 2* To ensure the access of women and girls to services of information, education, and counseling about their sexual and reproductive health in the context of the increase in the number of teenage mothers and of the risk of child abandonment. ▪ *Specific objective 2.1* – to create a center for social services to prevent unwanted pregnancies with teenagers and young girls for combating sexually transmitted diseases and to prevent child abandonment in governmental care institutions. ▪ *Specific objective 2.2* – to develop information, awareness, and education campaigns about the risks of unprotected sexual relations, with multiple partners, or of unwanted pregnancies in teenagers or young girls. *General objective 3* To promote several measures for holding back women from the Iasi county exposed to the risk of external migration in order to prevent migration caused by a low level of living, and to encourage the return of women left to work abroad. ▪ *Specific objective 3.1* – to organize extended sociological research, both quantitative (based on a questionnaire) and qualitative (based on an interview) with the goal of identifying and analyzing the reasons for the external migration of women from the Iasi county – currently an insufficiently investigated phenomenon.

| | ▪ *Specific objective 3.2* – to develop a center for monitoring and evaluating the situation of women from the Iasi county who have gone to work abroad and of women who have returned to Romania with the goal of developing needs-oriented social services. |

General objective 4
To increase the level of employment of women from the communities affected by poverty from the Iasi county, to combat employment without legal forms, to give more value to the work women are doing in their households, and to lower pay disparities.

- ▪ *Specific objective 4.1* – to develop information, awareness, and outreach campaigns about women working without legal forms in the Iasi county and of women left to work abroad.
- ▪ *Specific objective 4.2* – to increase the level of employment of women from the communities or areas at risk of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion through services for assessing the social and professional situation, through counseling, orientation, mediation, and integration on the labor market, starting from the „no one left behind" principle.
- ▪ *Specific objective 4.3* – to organize information, awareness, and outreach campaigns about the role of women in the sustainable development of cities and communities, including through lowering pay disparities in the economic sectors where such disparities still exist.

General objective 5
To promote gender equality in public, political, and economic life, to increase the representation of women in political leading positions, to empower the role of women in the sustainable development of cities and communities from the Iasi county.

- ▪ *Specific objective 5.1* – to initiate conferences/workshops with the leaders of political parties in order to increase the level of political involvement of women and their representation in decision-making political structures, including through introducing political representation according to gender quota.
- ▪ *Specific objective 5.2* – to create a multi-institutional work group to analyze concrete ways to stimulate women's involvement in the projects of sustainable development of the Iasi county.

Beneficiaries	*Direct beneficiaries*
	▪ Women from Iasi County, especially from rural areas and from communities and areas affected by poverty, at risk of discrimination, marginalization, and social exclusion.
	▪ Women victims of domestic violence, trafficked, or sexually exploited.
	▪ Girls from poor families and poor communities, lacking means of education and information, lacking access to specialized services of contraception, sexual and reproductive health; teenage mothers from the Iasi county; single mothers with children from unwanted pregnancies and who lack financial means.
	▪ Women from the Iasi county left to work abroad, with or without children left in the care of relatives, at risk of abandoning children in residential institutions.
	▪ Women working without legal forms (undeclared workforce) in the Iasi county or abroad.
	▪ Women working in the same positions as men, but unequally paid, economically discriminated against, and subject to different forms of abuse at the workplace.
	▪ Household workers and the care and education of children, care for elderly or disabled people, not socially and economically recognized and recompensed.
	▪ Women involved in politics, but who are insufficiently encouraged to obtain management positions in politics or administration.
	▪ Any woman or girl in a vulnerable position due to discrimination, marginalization, or exclusion for gender criteria.
	Indirect beneficiaries
	▪ Local cities and communities from the Iasi county involved in the process of sustainable development.
	▪ The economy of the Iasi county may benefit from a substantial increase of workforce through women's employment, their empowerment, and entrepreneurial skills.
	▪ Local families and communities at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
	▪ Children from mothers left to work abroad, left in the care of extended families/relatives.
	▪ Children of underage mothers, who do not benefit from support from their families and who are at risk of being abandoned in residential institutions, the mothers being at risk of school drop-out.

	▪ Public institutions, non-governmental organizations, cities, and communities who, through empowering women in society and economy, increase their resilience to climate changes and requirements regarding environmental protection.

3. Description of options for solving the issues identified in the research phase of the public policy

In order to solve the problems faced by women in Iasi County and to capitalize on their potential in the sustainable development of cities and local communities, the public policy proposal provides three working options:

- ▪ the first option is to solve these problems through an institutional formula offered by the Iasi County Council (ICC), based on the financial, logistical, and administrative key role in the socio-economic development of the county;
- ▪ the second option is that the Prefect's Institution of the Iasi County assumes to solve the problems described in the public policy proposal, institution within which functions the County Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (COJES);
- ▪ the third option aims to empower women in the sustainable development of Iasi County by involving the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services (FONSS), which brings together non-governmental organizations providing social services for vulnerable groups in Iasi.

Option 1 – The Iasi County Council becomes a leader in empowering the role of women in the context of sustainable development of local cities and communities

The County Council represents the local public administration's authority, constituted at the county level, for coordinating the local councils' activity to realize the public services for the county interest. The County Council is the only institution in the territory that, through the attributions conferred by law, can decide the establishment or reorganization of institutions, public services, companies, and autonomous administrations.

The County Council authorizes the spending of budgetary funds. At the proposal of the president of the county council, the county council approves the county budget, the transfers of credits, the use of the budgetary reserve, the closing account of the financial year, contracts, and guarantees loans. This key institution for the sustainable development of the county has all the legal and administrative tools to promote strategies, forecasts, and programs for the economic, social, and environmental development of the county.

Based on the approval of the local councils of the administrative-territorial units, the County Council establishes the projects of organization and arrangement of the county territory, as well as of its general urban development and the

component administrative-territorial units; monitors how such proposals are carried out, in cooperation with the communal, city or municipal public administration authorities involved; approves the technical-economic documentation for investments of county interest, within limits and under the conditions of the law.

The County Council is the institution with the most significant legitimacy to perform public attributions. The president and the members of the County Council are elected by direct vote of citizens. Solving the issues regarding the sustainable development of cities and local communities depends mainly on the political will embodied by the County Council.

So far, the activity of the Iasi County Council has been coordinated based on the Strategy for the socio-economic development of Iasi County for 2014-2020, a document whose validity expires at the end of this year (CJI, 2020). For the next period, it is necessary to update this development strategy, considering the objectives of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of OPTION 1 – Iasi County Council

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Key institution in the sustainable development of Iasi County; ▪ Institution with the highest level of legitimacy; ▪ Authorizes the spending of budgetary funds; ▪ Coordinates the activity of local councils; ▪ Has its departments working in the field of sustainable development; ▪ Can decide on the establishment or re-organization of institutions, public services, different entities, or autonomous municipal companies; ▪ Elaborates development strategies or growth programs; ▪ Allocates, accesses, and involves financial, personnel, logistical, and administrative resources in order to elaborate and implement projects; ▪ Can establish inter-institutional work groups for solving economic, social, and environmental issues.	▪ The public consultation process is lengthy, and depends on the involvement of local public institutions; ▪ The analysis and approval in specialized committees of the County Council depend on how much county counselors know about the topic and the issues brought to discussion in the public policy proposal; ▪ Gender equality, promoting equal chances for men and women is a „sensitive" topic from political and social points of view, there is the risk of controversies that may lead to prolonging the process of consultation, analysis, and approval in the specialized committees of the Iasi County Council.

Opportunities	Threats
▪ The pandemic crisis, followed by the economic crisis, was in itself an opportunity to change the world we live in through promoting projects, measures, and solutions for sustainable development which will lead to a balance between economic growth –social welfare – environmental protection; ▪ The coordination with the public policies of the Department for Sustainable Development within the Romanian Government and with the transfer of *know-how* from the governmental level accelerates the process of elaboration and implementation of local public policies in the field of sustainable development.	▪ Implementing the public policy depends to a large extent on the President of the County Council integrating and assuming it; ▪ Promoting projects of county decisions depends very much on the political will of county counsellors, and on their sensitivity to the issue of gender equality.

Option 2 – Capacity building of the County Commission for Gender Equality (COJES) in view of empowering women for the sustainable development of the Iasi county

The county commission is an inter-institutional structure with a consultative role, organized within the Prefect's Institution of the Iasi County, made up of representatives of public institutions coordinated at the county level by the Prefect's Institution by representatives of territorial branches of the leading national trade unions, as well as of leaders of non-governmental organizations in the field of promoting gender equality in the Iasi County.

The Commission proposes an integrated approach to equal opportunities for women and men. It does this by including the principle of gender equality in the development and implementation of sectoral policies through the institutions represented in COJES. As part of its activities, the Commission conducts a thorough assessment of the state of implementation and compliance with relevant legislation at the county level. It then develops recommendations for local public administration authorities, urging them to implement specific policies and programs to promote the principle of equal opportunities between women and men.

Through the contribution of the representatives of public institutions and the organizations that compose it, the County Commission elaborates reports on the concrete application of the policy of gender equality in different sectors of activity at the local level. These reports will be communicated to the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between women and men (CONES) and to central and local public administration authorities. At the same time, the County

Commission makes available to local media information on positive and negative experiences in preventing and combating gender discrimination and the application of the principle of equal opportunities between women and men.

Being a consultative body, COJES does not have its budget, cannot establish institutions or access funding for projects, and makes decisions only with consultative roles and addresses other public institutions or organizations not part of the commission.

Table 3. SWOT analysis of Option 2 – COJES

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ COJES offers an inter-institutional framework with informative and consultative roles; ▪ Members of the COJES include representatives of public institutions coordinated by the Prefect's Institution at the county level, partners of dialogue at the county level (main national trade unions and patronages); ▪ The Commission proposes an integrated approach to equal opportunities for women and men by including the principle of gender equality in the development and implementation of sectoral policies; ▪ The Commission functions within the Prefect's Institution, which represents the Government at the county level and takes care that legislation is respected, including in the field of gender equality.	▪ COJES is a consultative body, does not have its own resources, can't access financing or establish institutions under its coordination; ▪ The decisions of the Commission are simple recommendations at the county level; ▪ Due to restrictions for physical distancing, the commission cannot meet during the pandemic crisis, does not develop activities, does not pass decisions, even the title of recommendations; ▪ The fact that the site of the Prefect's Institution of the Iasi County does not post reports on the activity of the Commission shows that before the pandemic crisis, COJES had not developed activities for promoting gender equality, compared to other institutional priorities at the county level.
Opportunities	Threats
▪ Information and outreach for the management of the Prefect's Institution of the Iasi County may create the proper environment for re-starting the activity of the COJES; ▪ The worsening of issues of women and girls throughout the crisis period may create a „window of opportunity" for analysis within the COJES and for developing recommendations in	▪ At the county level, preventing and combating the effects of any crisis (pandemic, economic, war) at the county level is the responsibility of the Prefect's institution, through the County Commission for Emergency Situations, requiring considerable human, financial, logistical, and administrative resources, which diminishes receptivity to gender equality;

the field of gender equality; ▪ Re-starting the activity of the COJES, presentation in the media of activities for promoting gender equality may inform, outreach, and render the public opinion more aware of the issues of women and girls from the Iasi county.	▪ The organization of elections was superimposed over the priorities related to managing the effects of emergencies and overloaded the work of the Prefect's Institution, creating the premises for inconsistent involvement in resolving gender issues.

Option 3 – Empowering the role of women for the sustainable development of the Iasi County through the involvement of the Federation of Non-government Organizations for Social Services (FONSS)

FONSS is a federation of non-governmental organizations, established through the project „The NGO Voice for the Community!", implemented in the North-Eastern region of Romania by a group of organizations led by the „Alături de Voi" Romania Foundation as Lead Applicant, „Alternative Sociale" Association, „Save the Children" Association from Iasi, The Centre for Social Development, the Caritas Diocesan Centre, the COTE Foundation, Iosif Foundation, Bethany Foundation for Social Services, „Star of Hope" Foundation and World Vision Romania Foundation (FONSS, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, FONSS publicly stood out by creating a Social Emergencies Centre (SEC) to provide psycho-emotional support, information, and counseling to people infected and affected by the new coronavirus infection. SEC also benefited from the support of the Voluntary Ambulance Service, Life Association, „Saint Nicholas" College, and the involvement of volunteers from the I.T. & C field and the local communities.

Since its establishment in 2014, FONSS has gained considerable experience in advocacy to strengthen the capacity of non-governmental organizations in the field of social services by involving them in the development and implementation of local, regional, national, and cross-border public policies aimed at developing social services and their participation in the sustainable development of cities and local communities. The local and national media present the activities carried out by FONSS; they benefit from visibility in the online and offline environment.

Table 4. SWOT Analysis of Option 3 – FONSS

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ FONSS is representative of non-governmental organizations providing social services at local, county, and regional levels; ▪ has considerable experience in *advocacy* for capacity building of non - governmental organizations in the field of social services;	▪ The financing sources of FONSS are not constant, they depend on accessing public and/or private financing based on projects, on the *opening* of certain financing lines specific to social services; ▪ Within public institutions there is a residual perception according to which non-governmental

▪ FONSS has the capacity to mobilize quickly in crisis situations, as they proved during the establishment of the emergency situation when it set up the Social Emergencies Centre; ▪ FONSS has the capacity to develop and implement projects directly and indirectly through the collaboration of affiliated non-governmental organizations; ▪ The activities carried out by FONSS have a public impact, the media and social media are covered, and they raise awareness and reach the public opinion;	organizations act opportunistically, to solve short-term social problems, fully assuming the benefits in the public image; ▪ FONSS advocates for capacity building of non-governmental organizations that provide social services, not having a strategic orientation aimed at promoting gender equality and solving the complex problems of women and girls in Iasi County, in the medium and long term.
Opportunities	**Threats**
▪ The crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic represented an opportunity for non-governmental organizations within FONSS to act in the field of sustainable development, assuming the implementation of the sustainable development objective no. 5 - Gender equality at the county and local level; ▪ An opportunity can be created by involving non-governmental organizations within FONSS in reactivating the County Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (COJES) and supporting the public policy proposal within this county commission within the Prefect's Institution of the Iasi County.	▪ This public policy proposal aims at a strategic, unitary, and integrated, long-term action to solve the proposed problems, which implies constant activities and involves considerable human, financial, logistical, and administrative resources; ▪ There is difficult access (restrictive eligibility conditions for NGOs) to consistent financial resources for the implementation of the public policy; ▪ The refusal of public institutions to accept FONSS as a leader for the implementation of this public policy proposal.

4. Reasons for choosing the work option, identification, and impact assessment

From the three options / institutional formulas of the public policy proposal, I decided on *Option 1 – the Iasi County Council as a leader in empowering the role of women in the sustainable development of cities and communities, for the following reasons:*

- The Iasi County Council (ICC) is the key authority in developing the county, cities, and local communities. It has the institutional capacity to mobilize and access financial resources from its governmental and European sources. This financial prowess allows the ICC to effectively carry out the public policy proposal's general and specific objectives.
- The ICC is the county public authority that coordinates local councils' activities to ensure the development of public services within the county. The institution organizes and leads the public services of the county; analyses proposals concerning the environmental protection promoted by cities and communes; establishes the general organization and urban development of towns in the county; coordinates the public and private domain of the county; performs works and services for the county in association with other public institutions; cooperates with other foreign partners to fulfill its legal duties. ICC will elaborate a sustainable development strategy of Iasi County for the next period, integrating the sustainable development objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG 5 - „Gender Equality".
- ICC has a specialized Department of Sustainable Development and the Office for Governmental Programmes which manages programs and projects with government funding in Iasi County. It can offer know-how in implementing government projects that assume sustainable development objectives.
- The General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) is also subordinated to the ICC and coordinates social work activities in the Iasi County. Within DGASPC Iasi functions an Office for Projects and Partnerships with NGOs through which are developed and implemented in public-private partnership, projects with county, governmental, European, and international funding (World Bank) in the field of providing social services for people in difficulty, with special needs, at risk.
- An inter-institutional Work Group for the Elaboration of the County Strategy of social work for 2021-2027 was recently established within the ICC. Law 292/2011 on social assistance stipulates that local public authorities have attributions in the „elaboration by national strategies and locally identified needs of the county and local strategy for the development of social services on medium and long term, after having consulted public and private providers, professional associations and organizations representing the beneficiaries and are responsible for its application". This creates a window of opportunity for strategic planning for the social protection of vulnerable women in Iasi County.
- ICC is a partner in the project „Fair Cities: Integrating the 2030 Agenda into Local Policies during Migration and Refugee Flows", together with BRCT Iasi and international partners, which, through the experience gained in the field of sustainable development, can assume the

implementation of this proposal of public policy, ensuring the sustainability of the results of this project in the field of sustainable development.

▪ Until the elaboration of the sustainable development strategy of the Iasi county, by the decision of the President of ICC, an interinstitutional working group can be set up to start consultations on the public policy proposal by co-opting the representatives of public institutions at the county level and non-governmental organizations. The group will examine this public policy proposal and will take the necessary legal and administrative measures to adopt it.

Table 5. Impact Assessment

General and specific objectives	Impact on the economy and on the business field	Social impact	Impact on the environment
General objective 1 – To prevent and combat all types of violence against women, domestic violence, women and girls trafficking, sexual exploitation of women and girls, as well as any form of abuse.			
Specific objective 1.1 – to create a unitary and integrated system for reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of cases of violence against women from the Iasi County, through public-private partnerships among public institutions and non-governmental organizations activating in the field of gender equality.	▪ Accessing county, European or other international programs to finance this system involves the purchase of equipment, consumables, and maintenance services, contributing to the support of companies and the local and national business environment.	▪ The creation of target groups made up of women victims of domestic violence, in accordance with the types of abuse to which they are subjected facilitates a targeted approach to the problems they face. ▪ The development of this unitary and integrated system in the already existing institutional framework contributes to the diversification and professionalizati on of social	

190

		services, as well as to the multiplication of benefits for the target groups and to other categories of indirect beneficiaries.	
Specific objective 1.2 – to develop a complex of social services focused on preventing and combating domestic violence, including establishing sheltered housing for victims of domestic violence in Iasi County.	▪ The social services complex also includes sheltered housing for women victims of domestic violence, which means construction works, landscaping, and interior equipment, contracted by construction companies, which means a benefit for the business environment, in a time of economic crisis. ▪ Increasing the employment of women victims of domestic violence, through counselling, guidance, mediation, and socio-professional integration generates revenue for	▪ Providing integrated social services aimed at solving/improving the problems faced by direct beneficiaries. ▪ Reducing the number of women victims of domestic violence through social, psychological, and medical assistance services, contributes to maintaining community peace and security in accordance with SDG 16 - „Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	▪ New construction works, interior design, and equipment are carried out with specialized approvals from the Environmental Agency, the State Inspectorate for Constructions, and other institutions with attributions in this field of activity.

	the state budget. ▪ The development of the social services complex contributes to the creation of jobs for social assistance professionals.		
General objective 2 – To ensure the access of women and girls to information, education, and counselling services about their sexual and reproductive health in the context of the increase in the number of teenage mothers and of the risk of child abandonment.			
Specific objective 2.1 – to create a center for social services to prevent unwanted pregnancies with teenagers and young girls for combating sexually transmitted diseases and to prevent child abandonment in governmental care institutions.	▪ Decreasing the financial pressure on the social services system in Iasi County through activities to prevent unwanted pregnancies and/or social assistance for children born to minor mothers. ▪ Of the total budget of a county council, between 30 and 60% is allocated for social expenditures, depending on the complexity of the existing social problems and the degree of economic development	▪ Preventing the abandonment of children born to minor mothers in residential institutions or in the care of relatives means continuing the care of the child in the biological family, avoiding problems related to endangering his psycho-emotional balance. ▪ Preventing deviance and delinquency phenomena in children born to teenage mothers, who do not have educational resources in the family of origin. ▪ This specific objective contributes to achieving the targets in SDG	

	of the county. Preventing social and/or health problems is a less costly financial measure than effective combating, preserving budgetary resources that can thus be directed to finance public investment projects by contracting services provided by companies.	3- Health and Welfare of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	
Specific objective 2.2 – to develop information, awareness, and education campaigns about the risks of unprotected sexual relations, with multiple partners, or of unwanted pregnancies.	▪ Reducing the costs necessary to finance social and psychological assistance services, and medical services through preventive measures. ▪ Reorientation of the funds thus saved towards the financing of public investment projects that generate economic effects on the horizon, involving labor, equipment,	▪ Prevention and control of sexually transmitted diseases, contagious diseases, and other types of diseases that can affect social relations and the health of couples, and the local community. ▪ Prevention of unwanted pregnancies also contributes to reducing the abandonment of children born to teenage mothers in residential care institutions. ▪ This specific objective	

	and technologies provided by companies, which means supporting the private environment through public investments.	contributes to achieving the targets in SDG 3 - „Health and Welfare" and SDG 5 - „Quality Education" from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	
General objective 3 – To promote several measures for holding back women from the Iasi county exposed to the risk of external migration, to prevent migration caused by a low level of living, and to encourage the return of women left to work abroad.			
Specific objective 3.1 – to organize an extended sociological research, both quantitative (based on a questionnaire) and qualitative (based on an interview) with the goal of identifying and analysing the reasons for the external migration of women from the Iasi county – currently an insufficiently investigated phenomenon.	▪ Carrying out a procedure for the procurement of research services in the social field, according to ongoing legislation, by contracting a private provider. ▪ The dissemination of the research report to partners of social dialogue from the economic environment (employers, companies) to know the economic causes of external migration of the female labor force sensitizes the employment policy by hiring female	▪ Knowing the social consequences (family breakdown, child abandonment, placement in the care of relatives or social assistance institutions), as well as demographic ones (decreased birth rate and fertility in the country of origin) contributes to lower social costs. ▪ The development of social services aimed at solving the problems of women and girls brings benefits to local communities and other types of beneficiaries.	

	labor in Iasi County.		
Specific objective 3.2 – to develop a center for monitoring and evaluating the situation of women from the Iasi county who have gone to work abroad and of women who have returned to Romania to develop needs-oriented social services.	▪ Promoting a set of measures to increase the retention of women at risk of migration by employment in the country of origin avoids the import of labor from abroad which involves higher costs for local companies. ▪ Increasing women's employment, and equal pay to men for similar positions contributes to economic development. ▪ Women working legally abroad send money to the country (remittances) that support domestic consumption and local production activities, which generate an economic impact in connection with achieving SDG 8 - „Decent work	▪ This center for monitoring and evaluating the situation of women working abroad contributes to maintaining connections with children and families in the country of origin. ▪ The development of the center contributes to the diversification and professionalization of local social services. ▪ Remittances have a significant social impact on the well-being of the population in the country of origin, contributing to the achievement of SDG 3 - „Health and Welfare" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ▪ External migration diminishes the pressure on the internal labor market, and increases employment in	▪ Preventing and combating illegal migration can have beneficial effects on the environment in countries of transit and destination; immigrants do not always have decent housing; and improvised homes and temporary settlements affect the quality of the environment.

	and growth" in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	the destination countries, being a temporary measure to solve some problems related to the standard of living in the country of origin.	
General objective 4 – To increase the employment of women from the communities affected by poverty in Iasi County, to combat employment without legal forms, to give more value to the working women in their households, and to reduce the pay gap			
Specific objective 4.1 – to develop information, awareness, and outreach campaigns about women working without legal forms in the Iasi county and of women left to work abroad.	▪ According to the European Commission, increasing women's employment will lead to an increase in EU GDP per capita by up to almost 10% by 2050. ▪ Preventing and combating work without legal forms contributes to the increase of taxes and the state budget. ▪ Maintaining women in the country of origin contributes to increasing employment.	▪ Declared work, taxed according to legal provisions, ensures women's access to social, medical, and retirement services. ▪ Working with legal forms prevents employers from abusing against women, both in the country and abroad.	
Specific objective 4.2 – to increase the employment of women from the communities or areas at risk of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion through services for	▪ Increasing the employment of women through professional training courses, and through the development	▪ Increasing the number of jobs for women leads to economic growth favoring inclusion and lowering	

assessing the social and professional situation, through counseling, orientation, mediation, and integration on the labor market, starting from the „no one left behind" principle.	of entrepreneurial skills contributes to entrepreneurship and business development. ▪ Increasing women's employment and decent work contributes to achieving SDG 8 - „Decent Work and Growth" in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	poverty, one of the major priorities of the 2030 Agenda. ▪ Increasing women's employment and decent work contributes to achieving SDG 10 - „Reducing inequalities within and among countries" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	
Specific objective 4.3 – to organize information, awareness, and outreach campaigns about the role of women in the sustainable development of cities and communities.	▪ The estimated impact of increasing gender equality varies considerably from one member state to another, depending on the current level of achievement of this equality goal. Overall, the results are very good, with some countries growing by about 4% of GDP, in others exceeding 10%. ▪ Equal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities and lowering	▪ Lowering pay disparities is also associated with the implementation of flexible work regimes, favourable for family life. ▪ Improving the balance between professional and private life for those who have children or other people in care stimulates the creative potential of women, the participation in socio-cultural and educational activities, and strengthens the role of women in the local	

	wage disparities between women and men contribute to employment and economic growth. ▪ Eliminating the pay gap between women and men, and improving women's access to higher-paying jobs attracts women to the labor market. ▪ This specific objective contributes to achieving the targets of SDG 10 - „Reducing Inequalities" in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	community. ▪ Higher wages can help women out of poverty and reduce the gaps between women's and men's retirement funds. ▪ This specific objective has a social impact on the development of cities and human settlements so that they are open to all, safe, resilient, and sustainable - SDG 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	
General objective 5 – To promote gender equality in political and economic life, to increase the representation of women in leading positions, to empower to role of women in the sustainable development of cities and communities from the Iasi county.			
Specific objective 5.1 – to initiate online conferences/workshops (webinars) with the leaders of political parties in order to increase the level of political involvement of women and their representation in decision-making political structures,	▪ The political involvement of women and assuming decision–making positions at national, and local levels contribute to increasing the quality of public policies and lead to	▪ The social problems of women and girls, of mothers and children, of children in difficulty and vulnerable people receive adequate solutions by involving women in politics at the	▪ Increasing women's political representation contributes to achieving SDG 17 - „Partnerships to achieve the objectives" of the 2030 Agenda, by

including through introducing political representation according to gender quotas.	long–term economic growth.	national and local levels, straight from people who know these problems.	strengthening the means of implementing and revitalizing the local, regional, national, and global partnership for sustainable development, including environmental protection, increasing resilience against climate change, promoting the „circular economy".
Specific objective 5.2 – to create a multi-institutional work group to analyze concrete ways to stimulate women's involvement in the sustainable development of cities and communities from the Iasi county.	▪ Gender inequality directly affects the economic life of women, with indirect effects on the entire population, regardless of gender and age, with an impact on household consumption. ▪ Improving gender equality also contributes substantially to achieving smart, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth. ▪ Promoting gender equality has a positive impact on the production capacity of the economy, lowers prices, and improves trade balance.	▪ Gender inequality directly affects social life, children's access to education, access to health services, etc. ▪ Improving gender equality in education and labor market participation, together with a more balanced sharing of unpaid care work between women and men, could lead to increased fertility rates, according to recent research.	

5. Consultation process, public policy adoption, and post-adoption measures

For the public and inter-institutional consultation process of the public policy proposal, the legal tools established by Law no. 52/2003 on decisional transparency in public administration, republished, will be applied. Following the

public consultation process, a report will be prepared and annexed to the public policy proposal. This report will include information on:

- ▪ The results of the consultation process with experts from the Department of Sustainable Development, Promotion and Project Guidance for the Local Councils within the ICC, and other departments with legal responsibilities in the analysis and endorsement of the County Council's draft decisions.
- ▪ The positions of other consulted public institutions, including the Prefect's Institution of Iași County, the County Agency for Benefits and Social Inspection, the Territorial Labour Inspectorate, the County Agency for Employment, the General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Iași County Pension Department, the Immigration Services of Iași County, Iași County Directorate of Statistics, and Iași County Directorate of Public Health.
- ▪ The outcomes of the consultation process with non-governmental organizations, social dialogue partners (trade unions and employers), and other stakeholder categories.

After selecting the implementation option for the public policy proposal, it proceeds to adoption within the Iași County Council. The first phase involves obtaining expert opinions from the Technical Commissions of the ICC, where county counselors are active. Once all approval conditions are met, the process moves to the second phase, which includes debate and voting in the plenary session of the county council. Upon adoption, the public policy proposal becomes a county council decision to be executed by the president of the ICC, who represents the executive body of the ICC and has a specialized apparatus at his disposal. The effective implementation of the public policy involves ongoing consultation with all stakeholders (public institutions, non-governmental organizations, professional groups, the business environment, and direct and indirect beneficiaries). Additionally, implementation requires using a system of indicators to monitor and evaluate (both quantitatively and qualitatively) the activities and results, continuously comparing them against the proposed general and specific objectives.

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Biodata

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THE DYNAMICS OF TEACHER AND STUDENT ROLES AS AN ONGOING RELATIONSHIP

Mara-Sînziana PASCU[1]

Abstract

The term „role" is used to designate realities of psychosocial relationships. Consequently, the definition of the concept will always be interdisciplinary, from a psychological, sociological, praxeological, axiological, and, in the context of our work, a pedagogical one, whereby the interdependencies involved in the educational process are analyzed, in which the teacher is the coordinator and the one responsible for the effects. The various taxonomies include „roles: specialised (according to status), those that are the expression of aspirations (in essence) and assumed, organised, possible to modify, because they are created or imposed, but also have a certain degree of freedom. To these can be added permanent or current roles (in terms of temporality), individual or collective (by origin), psychosocial, pedagogical (by content), weak, balanced or strong (by consistency), flexible or rigid (by form), simple or complex (by difficulty)" (Joiţa, 2000, 40). Their importance is evident from the perspective of relations between people - understood as a continuous present of joint action. The analysis focused on the teacher-student relationship is an opportunity to record psychosocial conditioning and ways to eliminate the potential for symbolic violence.

Keywords: role, teacher's role, pupil's role, relationship, identity, having a role.

Abstract

Termenul „rol" este utilizat pentru a desemna realităţi ale relaţionării psihosociale. În consecinţă, definirea conceptului va fi mereu interdisciplinară, din perspectivă psihologică, sociologică, praxiologică, axiologică şi, în contextul lucrării noastre, una pedagogică, prin care sunt analizate interdependenţele implicate de procesul educaţional, în care profesorul este coordonatorul şi responsabilul pentru efecte. Diversele taxonomii includ „roluri: *specializate* (după statut), pe cele care sunt *expresia unor aspiraţii* (ca esenţă) şi *asumate*, organizate, *posibil de modificat*, pentru că sunt *create* sau *impuse*, dar au şi un anume grad de libertate. Acestora li se adaugă rolurile *permanente sau curente* (ca temporalitate), *individuale* sau *colective* (după origine), *psihosociale*, *pedagogice* (după conţinut), *slabe*, *echilibrate* ori *puternice* (după consistenţă), *flexibile* sau *rigide* (după formă), *simple* sau *complexe* (după dificultate)" (Joiţa, 2000, 40). Importanţa lor este evidentă în perspectiva relaţionării dintre persoane – înţeleasă ca un prezent continuu al acţiunii comune. Analiza

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concentrată pe relaţionarea profesor-elev este prilej de consemnare a condiţionărilor psihosociale şi a căilor favorabile eliminării potenţialului de violenţă simbolică.

Cuvinte cheie: rol, rolul profesorului, rolul elevului, relaţionare, identitate, a avea rol.

Résumé

Le terme „rôle" est utilisé pour désigner des réalités de relations psychosociales. Par conséquent, la définition du concept sera toujours interdisciplinaire, d'un point de vue psychologique, sociologique, praxéologique, axiologique et, dans le contexte de notre travail, pédagogique, afin d'analyser les interdépendances impliquées dans le processus éducatif, dont l'enseignant est le coordinateur et le responsable des effets. Les différentes taxonomies comprennent « les rôles : spécialisés (selon le statut), ceux qui sont l'expression d'aspirations (par essence) et assumés, organisés, modifiables, car créés ou imposés, mais aussi dotés d'un certain degré de liberté. S'y ajoutent les rôles permanents ou actuels (en termes de temporalité), individuels ou collectifs (par l'origine), psychosociaux, pédagogiques (par le contenu), faibles, équilibrés ou forts (par la consistance), flexibles ou rigides (par la forme), simples ou complexes (par la difficulté) » (Joiţa, 2000, 40). Leur importance est évidente dans la perspective des relations entre les personnes - entendues comme un présent continu d'action conjointe. L'analyse centrée sur la relation entre l'enseignant et l'élève est l'occasion d'enregistrer les conditionnements psychosociaux et les moyens d'éliminer le potentiel de violence symbolique.

Mots clés : rôle, rôle de l'enseignant, rôle de l'élève, relation, identité, avoir un rôle.

Introduction

The specificity of the teacher's role is that of the educator, in general, for whom his formation and affirmation as a personality is always conditioned by the growth of the other, the student, whom he teaches, but also knows as an important source for his own continuous learning. The teacher learns from the pupil what (more) he needs to be of use to both and how he can make the most of what he knows. The student learns everything he does not know and „takes note" (Șoitu, 2019) of how what he has received can be used in various situations, and contexts, as specific behavioral models (Bandura, 2003). The student also learns that each person also fulfills roles imposed by his status, at a particular time and by the organization of which he is a part, understanding that assuming them is the path to affirmation, development, and growth (Pianta, Hamre, Allen, 2012). This dynamic of role exchange between teacher and student, then intergenerationally, through constant takeover, is accompanied by many known or hidden conflicts in the symbolic violence of the relationship between non-equals.

Role acceptance. In the teacher-student relationship we speak about the distinction between „role culture" and „task culture", because they are presented as „a relationship between the general and the particular, between the normative and the situational, between strategic rationality and procedural creativity" (Joiţa, 2000, p. 40), but also as a relationship between being (as a person's identity) and having (a role to fulfill) - a relationship that we have analyzed on several occasions (Pascu, 2024a and 2024b). The teacher's roles are fulfilled through concrete goal-oriented tasks, which take into account pedagogical principles, and criteria that

allow success. Task culture (Dygert, Dygert, Jacobs, 2006) concerns the role-specific activities that the teacher carries out in the classroom - in relation to the groups that make up the classroom and to each individual pupil. On the other side is role expectation - the expectation from pupils (who gradually become aware of the importance of their place in the school), plus the (motivationally) different perception of the role by peers, parents, and community. Role perception and role-playing - which we consider essential for the quality, intensity, and duration of the relationship - dimension the role performance - dependent on the methods used, the contents offered, the criteria of the student's evaluation, the self-evaluation applied to themselves, the re-evaluations made during the activities. Effectiveness is always given by the assumed relationship but also based on the expectations of others (Goleman, 2019). Hence, the need for good interaction - and a correct perception of the relationship. The good representation of both parties in this relationship makes it possible to project their actions and effects, to glimpse role conflicts - present, but not inevitable as an exacerbation. We will come back to these aspects.

Role classifications. The first criterion can be that of assumption: being entrusted - by someone or given professional status - or taken over, self-imposed - in contexts where the relationship with the pupil requires something extra (Neculau, 1998). In both cases, the scope is only apparently flexible since uncontrolled assignments are possible neither in terms of status nor of self-involvement. In fact, it is the relationship and its quality that creates the impression, both for the two and for the external evaluators, that the boundaries are more or less resistant, because, in any case, the returned tasks are „norms, prescriptions of a functional type" (Potolea, D., Consequently, Professor Dan Potolea retains as the main roles those of class organization and management, school and professional counseling and guidance, guidance in extracurricular activities, professional development and pedagogical research, initiator of socio-cultural activities - identifying here a strong intention to preserve the functions of the teacher. At the same time, the teacher is the specialist in a particular school subject, or curriculum area, is a head teacher, adviser, methodologist, member of the teaching or administrative council, head of a cabinet, leader of a group, director of a project, representative in certain forums, organizations. The fulfillment of all of these depends on „the relationship between objectives - skills, and competences - methodology - evaluation, based on criteria of success, success, progress, efficiency, quality" (Joiţa, 2000, 34). It is clear that, in no context, the teacher will ignore his responsibility in his relationship with pupils, a position that requires certain behaviors and attitudes. The relationship between teachers and pupils is the result of the meeting between the competences of the former and the expectations of the latter, which are also dependent on the same elements: the presence of objectives, knowledge, motivations for success, and the meanings they attribute to success. The psychosocial roles of the teacher - stimulating, encouraging, helping, advising - intervene in the dialogue, directing, and guiding the pupils' desires by harmonizing them with the possibilities, contexts,

requirements, and even the tasks (re)set before the growing pupils. The teacher is in a position to act as a member of a community of specialists in a social, cultural, and political environment, accountable to all for his or her actions (D'Hainaut, 1981) – even if there may be obstacles generated by the same factors to his or her professional success (Joiţa, 2000). Beyond the professional responsibilities included in the status of the teacher, towards the social, political, and economic environment, there is also the category of moral responsibilities (Pavelcu, 1976; Neculau, 2007, Şoitu, 2001) more profound, towards the pupil, the growing pupil.

A comprehensive overview of the diverse and complex roles offered by the extensive literature is almost impossible to achieve – as their analysis is always subordinated to different perspectives and stages – from initial training to continuous and self-training to that of a member of a particular political social environment, of the restricted community or the one with duties in the „global village" (Luhan, Marshal Mc, 1975). We will make use of the rewriting and adaptation made by the pedagogue Elena Joiţa of the role categories presented by D'Hainaut (1981,129-133). The advantage of this takeover is the authority of the sources and the recognition gained in almost five decades of using the taxonomy taken up by Elena Joiţa in several works, mainly in „Educational Science through Paradigms" (2009).

Conflict-bearing teacher roles. Some general roles of the teacher, presented by Elena Joiţa, will be repositioned in connection with the expectations and possibilities of the students. Thus, the teacher who is interested in good relationships reorientates and improves his/her functions. He prioritises the function of receiver of the various messages - received and processed in accordance with his tasks and possibilities, but also with the level of the pupils; of sender of messages, but with a visible concern for their accessibility, intelligibility and usefulness for the pupils; of participant in the activities of the group of teachers of the school and of the wider community of educators, with a desire to take up useful strategies, methods, tools; as an organizer, responsible for certain actions, if they are found in effective dialogue with students; as an initiator (producer) of ideas, hypotheses, models - to improve the relationship with students and their learning environment; as a counsellor, mediator in conflict situations (Neculau, Constantina, 2006); as an agent of progress, as a researcher, creator, innovator, but not at any price; as a disseminator, transmitter of ideas, solutions, content capable of (re)directing or reinforcing students' positions; as a user, practitioner, involved in the application of ideas with a greater degree of resonance with students; as a decision-maker, in the selection of objectives, contents, strategies, methods, tools, resources optimised in specific relationships; as a source (considered reliable) of information and a model of behaviour, bearer of values that are always more tangible to pupils, of symbolic force, correct and permanent protector of common interests. (In support of each of these functions we will add the results of our research).

We note that any classification cannot avoid the teaching-learning roles, whereby the teacher is a „motivating agent", a motivator, an action-motivator for

the students, a leader capable of supporting the group of students and his colleagues, an available and knowledgeable counselor, a recognized role model, i.e. a behavioral, attitudinal example, a „reflective professional" (Nicola, 1996, 474-475), all with the aim of achieving optimal interactions with students (Neacșu,1999, 202) in front of whom he aims to contribute to the development of each of them (Joița, 2000, p. 35) but also to their own simultaneous growth (Șoitu, 2019) by: interventions that can generate and maintain interactions with students and among students; appropriate organization of contents, methods, tasks for self and students; evaluation of students' responses to individual and group tasks; continuous and correct checking, correction and evaluation of reactions; maintaining the position of permanent actor and referee of his/her relationships with students and their relationships in the group – in order to prevent conflicts at any level; improving the presentation, offering/offering (Șoitu, 2019) of forms and means appropriate to the purpose and roles entrusted to the students for optimal and lasting interactions; fostering understanding, the need for motivation through involvement in the students' affirmation; decisions in line with the effects of classroom interactions and own relationship with the group.

Complex personality, continuous, thorough training, awareness of responsibilities, willingness to receive and make criticism, to give suggestions, to improve conflicting situations are assets favorable to the fulfillment of roles located between possibilities and expectations, between objectives and own styles, but always facing the same conditionings present in students (Guțu, 2019, Șevciuc, 2011). In the training equation, everyone enters with expectations, requirements, and resources and society will influence the level and quality of success of the school and actors. This triangle of factors involved in educational achievement is often reduced to a bilateral student-teacher relationship. The analysis of the common and specific roles of teachers and students implies a much broader temporal perspective on the relationship between all the factors over long periods of time (Pascu, 2024b) precisely because of the effects that society has on quality and vice versa – with the aim of identifying ways to continuously improve social relations in general, in the communities where students will enter as graduates with favorable, superior skills, behaviors, attitudes.

Geissler (1981, apud Neculau, 1998, 261) analyzing the complexity of the situations that the teacher manages in relation to the students, but also to the expectations of society, which supports the school, education, observes the existence of contradictions between roles and their fulfillment: as a specialist in a particular scientific field, the teacher remains distant from the students who have a long way to go, but provides them with relational models necessary for their training and development; as a partner of the student - engaged in their growth is involved as one of the closest, but being also an evaluator, can only be objective with students and with himself; as a human model, through conduct is the one who provides examples of moral rigors, axiological and as a teacher gives instruction by demanding what „must" do students.

Other possible contradictions between roles and forms of fulfillment are pointed out by Professor Emil Păun (1999, 79-87) among which: are certain inconsistencies, which students and/or other observers note. These are between different categories of expectations of the teacher - from parents, colleagues, pupils, decision-makers, community. Pupils' expectations of the teacher are mainly centered on their relationships. Colleagues' expectations are also generated by the existence of professional competition. At the same time, Emil Păun (1999, 99) distinguishes between intra- and inter-role conflict. The former is caused by differences between professional training and job requirements, the latter stems from the simultaneous fulfillment of several roles. Romiță Iucu (2000, 131-146) dwells on the particularity of the teacher's roles compared to all other professions, because they concern the process of development of students' personalities and are essential for the correct and efficient training of human resources. Sociologists (Bârzea, 1995, Chelcea, 2005) talk about status and role, stressing that status is pre-established or acquired, being given by the position in the group, and organization so that others will have specific expectations and attribute to the holder obligations, rights, authority (Șevciuc, 2011). From these elements are derived the roles that can fulfill the conditions imposed by the status, according to the possibilities, peculiarities of the „actor".

Learner roles. The analysis of the roles, the functions of teachers, is important if they are always reflected in the effects on the students and, above all, if they take into account the roles they have in the process and in all the moments of the actions designed, carried out and evaluated by the teacher. Pupils' roles, like those performed by teachers, have effects on them and on their main partner, the teacher. Although there are fewer studies focusing on pupils' roles (Joiţa, 2000, Peretti, 1986), they are, on the one hand, the „mirror of effectiveness" of teaching actions and teachers' behavioral reactions and, on the other hand, the starting point for any initiative on their part. The two authors further note that the student is stimulated and motivated not only by the relationship with the teacher but also by the work of his/her peers. The very motivation for participation and involvement is provided by the quality and specificity of the relationships between them. These make it possible to mobilize the group to solve tasks, they dictate the pace of affirmation of each one and of the class because the answers to each one's problems are reflected in the reactions of the others, in reformulations much closer to their understanding; the effort concentrated on the group is more easily accepted, rather than on each pupil; each pupil supported by the group becomes more active and more involved; the relationship based on trust in the group and the teacher relieves shyness, egocentrism, eliminates negative feelings, allows connection to the value system, harmonization of opinions. In summary, the students' role-playing, as shown in our research, is as broad and significant as the teachers train them in role-playing – which they consider essential to becoming a community - and stimulate their role performance.

Psycho-pedagogical and social conditioning of roles. Conditioning becomes a norm, a rule because the success of pupils and teachers depends on it.

The fulfillment of teaching roles is conditioned by the many relationships that are established in the classroom, in the learning group, and between the teacher and the group. In the relationship specific to the instructional and educational process, the classroom brings together the following relationships: teacher-pupil, teacher - group of pupils, pupil - pupil, pupil - group of pupils, pupil - subject of study, pupil - teaching and assessment methods, pupil - teaching aids, pupil - place of learning, pupil - moment/time of the request in relation to age, stages in his/her school and out-of-school life (Șoitu, 2001, Neculau, 2007). Each of these interdependencies are centred on an element of the process and according to specific situations, in which the teacher designs, organizes, carries out, motivates, and evaluates his activities together with the students, whom he advises, but who will not cease to react and determine, in their turn, other corrections to the initial projection (Joiţa, 1999, 170-246). In other words, roles are conditioned by the pedagogical situation - defined by its general and particular conditions - by specific traits and behaviors, by the pedagogical functions carried out because we are always faced with „the changed roles of teachers" who „have become, forced by circumstances, much more active as curriculum designers" (Păun, 2022, 152) and the pandemic is credited with having brought „flexibility and local creativity". In a similar synthesis that the work cited above proposes, another author, Simona Sava, calls for schools to be an institution that is „open to the community", from which it is always „learning". „If the role of the school is to produce learning, it is natural that it should also learn how to learn to be an institution that learns continuously" (Sava în Păun, 2022, 71), completing an idea very present in our work regarding the continuous learning of all actors, among which teachers are first, including because they are living models of learning.

The need for dynamic, emergent models is also required by another important condition, which reminds us that any of the „openings remain only short-term innovations if they are not framed by serious reflective exercises if they are not decanted in the form of substantial restructuring" (Nedelcu, în Păun, 2022, 153). The teacher is required to be completely dynamic because „assessment itself should be a learning opportunity and should not be used to guess or select who has certain skills, but rather to develop them in all students" (Ion în Păun, 2022, 178), and Professor Laurenţiu Șoitu repeatedly expands on the idea that we all have „special needs" for education and learning when interacting with people who have similar requirements (Șoitu, 2013).

Whenever teachers' roles are discussed someone will assign new ones. Monica Elena Mincu, from the University of Turin, in a chapter of the same work, coordinated by Emil Păun, identifies specific functions for „Innovation and evaluation at the time of the educational crisis", because the responsibility „is linked to the tension between educational problems in context and the nature of effective innovations" (Mincu în Păun, 2022, 162). Alis Oancea, debunks the myth of the 'digital native' and the need for immigrant teachers to rise to the occasion, as Prensky demands of them. „Students of this generation - and there is multiple research to support this - are not always as digital as Prensky claims. They are not

everywhere and regardless of conditions masters of the internet; they use technology frequently, it's true, but mostly for recreational and entertainment purposes and less for educational purposes. In other words, they lack digital and information literacy', precisely theirs (Oancea în Păun, 2022, 150).

Some of the most beautiful metaphors have been attributed to the Professor, including that of „apostle of the nation", of light of the multitudes, who, whatever the context, can only be desirous of the continuity of humanity. It is on the vigor and value of these images that the status of the teacher has been built because that is how he or she has been perceived by groups and society. In this sense, Cătălina Ulrich Hygum identifies a new conditioning of the fulfillment of roles as „returning to the community", through „solidarity and education for citizenship", behaviors that pupils and their parents need. The teacher-student relationship and the learning community involves examples of attitudes and reflections about materiality, corporeality, time and space, and needs multi-sensory reporting to the world in which we live and wish to grow any generation of children. The teacher cannot be anything other than a role model in a constantly changing world, so much so, says Romiță Iucu, that he will always refer to the concepts of „learning, unlearning and relearning" – an attitude, which, first, pupils will imitate, then assume. The transformations, the changes in the hierarchy between instruction and education by „forcing the synonymy between them" have, however, adverse effects on the roles of the teacher because the important distinction between instruction (which is also possible in solitude, with simulators) and education (which necessarily presupposes the presence of the Other) is lost sight of „The ancient Greeks considered that education (paideia) comprises a technique (certain specific skills) and an ethic (a certain type of ideal, the human excellence that only resemblance to divinity can confer); later, ethics referred explicitly to the individual's citizenship as such, to his effective involvement . Today, when the public space is emptying, we again need an ethics of community life" (Stan, 2022, 20-21). Neil Postman notes with bitterness „There was a time when educators became famous for providing reasons to learn; now they become famous for inventing a method" (Postman, 1999, 13) are seen as technicians, engineers, „experts" - an attribute that has also flooded pedagogical language.

Add to that the role of an emerging, but not chameleon-like, person. „An object with a certain mass will accelerate the same no matter where in the world you drop it, but the same individual will behave and react in different ways, depending on the room they are in, the person they are talking to, how recently they ate or what they ate, and so on" (Burnett, Merchant, 2019). We are reminded of the Heraclitean image of the river in which you cannot bathe twice, invoked by Vasile Pavelcu (1976). Only, it is not only the teacher who is in a dynamic of his behavior, unsuspected, sometimes unanticipated, but the „river" itself, flowing and flowing in and out, in which he is fulfilled, then each actor in the process has the same (un)state. All are influenced, but also influence. The teacher in his movement, reactions and utterances also has the role of telling how, in what way something

can be acquired, what is the highest probability of achievement of the task, but especially of each of his students.

Conditionalities, apparently restrictive, rules become guarantees of freedom (Marcus, 2003), they provide the space for movement between what is required and the conditions of achievement, between what is not required but can be offered or acquired together. This space of 'guaranteed' freedom becomes one of conflict relief, of continuing as different and similar.

Complementary or mirror roles. The research focused on the teacher-student relationship and was carried out through a pedagogical experiment in twelve schools in Romania and an equal number in the Republic of Moldova on a group of 185 pupils and 46 teachers. Being a qualitative research, data analysis was carried out with ATLAS.ti6 – Methodological approaches to qualitative data analysis or text interpretation, 2011, Dr. Susanne Friese (QUARC Consulting), Programming: Dr. Thomas G. Ringmayr. Results showed that students' images of teachers overlapped with teachers' images of students. Based on the assumption that the teacher-student relationship is a continuous process of improvement, the experiment introduced the variable of the role-play method. The use of role-play as a teaching method was reflected in the results. We also provide two examples of responses in which teachers define their roles.

In the role play, the teacher is: (Tick the roles you think are most important!)
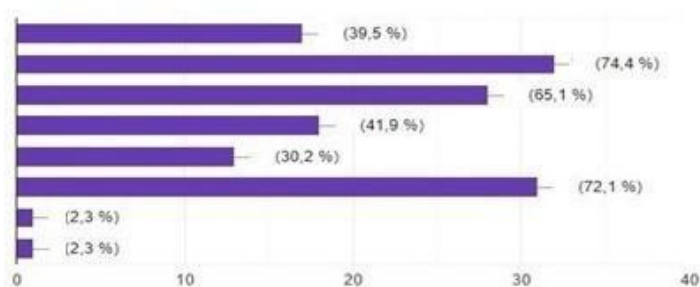
Figure 1. Teacher roles

The first place in the order of roles that the teacher has in the development of the role play is that of mediator, in a broad sense (74.4%), meaning that 2 out of 3 teachers believe that in this way they can mediate all the knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes – listed. The next is an observer and therefore self-evaluator of the action, process as well and the outcome. An even more favorable variant is given by the closeness of the percentages of mediator (74.4%) to that of facilitator (65.1%), which supports the interpretation of the meanings given to the role held by the teacher.

Role-playing and role-playing are methods by which participants:
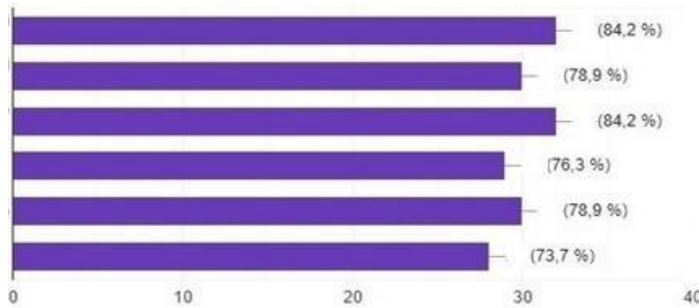
Figure 2. Advantages of role play as a teaching method

A second selected question reinforces the statements about the importance of the role of teachers in the relationship with students. In other words, the answers express the meaning given to their effort to be as useful as possible to the good relationship. 4 out of 5 (79.1%) consider that through role-playing students „experience positive and negative emotions", which become useful to their maturity, their involvement in actions. The second place answer supports the same idea by saying that through role-playing pupils „experience situations similar to real life" (76.7%). The other answers become complementary to the first two, confirming, from the first test, but also in the intermediate and final ones, the importance of role-play. Without losing important percentages, the top two items, the final test gives priority to the idea that „they build their own system of feelings" - placed on a par with „they experience positive and negative emotions", 84.2%. They feel, they accept that relating implies the presence of contrary situations and positions, but understood only as different.

From the students we have taken for example, the question by which the confluences about what the teacher-student relationship represents, in a prioritisation of their roles, are expressed, to some extent.

The graph draws attention to the perfect equality between the answers concerning peer and teacher-student relationships. It can be said that whenever students are concerned with distinguishing between themes, concerns, and important events in their lives, those about school are found only in what they recorded equally and together with their teachers and peers. Moreover, we can find full confirmation of the hypothesis that „the teacher-student relationship is influenced by the relationship between students and vice versa"! In other words, teacher-pupil relations are dependent on the atmosphere that characterizes the tradition, the experience, and the whole life of the school.

The conclusion is obvious: optimal relationships can work. It is not background elements that maintain and sharpen conflicts, but these are contextual and role elements.

If you were asked to write a script with a theme that was very important to you, then it would cover
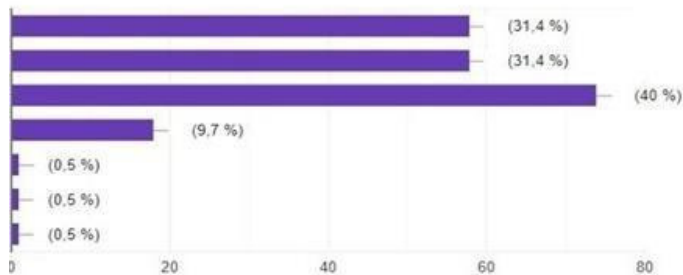

Figure 3. Options for role-play themes

Conclusions

Identity and role. In a public lecture at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy „Gr. T. Popa" of Iași, Professor Mircea Miclea (2023) built his speech on the undesirable effects of excessive identification with role. His request was: to always make a distinction between our identity and our role, between who we are and what role we have. We retain these differences for the act of education, for the teacher-pupil relationship, which is always a source of awareness of each person's role. It is therefore important to know who we are and how to preserve our characteristics, the particularities of our known and recognized status. On the other side is the role, the series of roles to fulfill - by referring to the tasks and expectations entrusted to us by the group, the community. Unity and discontinuity are essential for the teacher, who is invested in and accepts the role of model, the pupils' reference for their future value choices. Not all students will be teachers, but all will be people. The role is about having - a role. The relationship between having a role and being - the one who fulfills this role and others simultaneously or successively - is defined by the person in charge - in our case the teacher, who will not eliminate any role as a possibility. One of the questionnaire questions in our research confirms that in the relationship with students, the teacher does not have roles, which he does not like. Being is not a landmark, but being (Noica, C.) continuous being, an affirmation of a person's acquired status. The teacher's being − as an intersection between the human essence and the particularity of his person − is important for himself, but decisive for guiding, and orienting others, not only students. The relationship with the teacher becomes interesting, challenging, and stimulating to the extent that the pupil finds embedded in one person, much knowledge and the ability to use it in the most diverse contexts and purposes. The art of using knowledge is more attractive than its presentation. The teacher makes it possible to leap over the stages that block, delay, or threaten progress, but this leap over obstacles is of value only if it belongs to the pupil, who has understood how to use what the knowledgeable adult has shown. The relationship between

identity and role is similar to that between continuity and discontinuity. Being is continuity, roles are what can affect or stimulate the essence of the person and, more seriously, of the human being. The teacher provides models for choosing and fulfilling roles so that none threatens the essence of being - as a particular status, one's own, and as a human being in particular. This is the secret of good relationships and of not exacerbating conflicts, which are only role-related. If there are conflicts with the other, they become with oneself. The resolution, in the dynamics of the relationship, is necessary for each party for the unity of being (human, par excellence) and having (one or more roles).

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Biodata

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SELF-ADVOCACY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

Natalia COJOCARU[1]

Rezumat

Articolul explorează conceptul de autoreprezentare a persoanelor cu dizabilități și importanța acestuia în contextul standardelor internaționale privind drepturile omului. Sunt examinate, de asemenea, legislația și politicile Republicii Moldova pentru a reflecta modul în care acestea asigură premise pentru autoreprezentarea persoanelor cu dizabilități. Procesul de aderare la Uniunea Europeană, demarat recent de Republica Moldova, influențează agenda țării privind drepturile persoanelor cu dizabilități. În acest sens, articolul oferă o perspectivă privind standardele și prevederile legale ale Uniunii Europene cu impact asupra autoreprezentării persoanelor cu dizabilități. În realizarea articolului a fost aplicată metoda analizei documentare, fiind analizate publicațiile științifice relevante domeniului, dar și cadrul juridic național și internațional în materie de drepturi ale persoanelor cu dizabilități. Se constată astfel că legislația moldovenească respectă standardele internaționale privind drepturile persoanelor cu dizabilități, oferind un fundament legal solid pentru autoreprezentarea acestora. Totuși, succesul autoreprezentării depinde de nivelul de implicare al persoanelor cu dizabilități în promovarea propriilor interese și de accesibilitatea mediilor și informațiilor asigurate de factorii de decizie pentru a facilita participarea lor efectivă.

Cuvinte cheie: persoane cu dizabilități, autoreprezentare, drepturile omului, politici incluzive.

Summary

The article delves into the concept of self-advocacy among persons with disabilities and its significance within the framework of international human rights standards. It analyses the legislation and policies of the Republic of Moldova to demonstrate how they establish conditions for the self-advocacy of persons with disabilities. The recently initiated process of accession to the European Union by the Republic of Moldova has implications for the country's approach to the rights of persons with disabilities. Consequently, the article also offers insights into the standards and legal provisions of the European Union that affect the self-advocacy of persons with disabilities. The article employs the method of documentary

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analysis to investigate relevant scientific publications and to scrutinize the legal frameworks at both the national and international levels that are relevant to the rights of persons with disabilities, enabling their self-advocacy and participation. The article concludes that Moldovan legislation is aligned with international standards on the rights of persons with disabilities, providing a robust legal basis for their self-advocacy. However, the effectiveness of self-advocacy depends on how actively involved persons with disabilities are in promoting their own interests. Additionally, it depends on whether decision-makers make media and information easily accessible to them, thus enabling their full and meaningful participation.

Keywords: persons with disabilities, self-advocacy, human rights, inclusive policies.

Résumé

L'article explore le concept d'autoreprésentation des personnes en situation de handicap et son importance dans le contexte des normes internationales en matière de droits de l'homme. Il examine également la législation et les politiques de la République de Moldavie pour déterminer dans quelle mesure elles favorisent l'autoreprésentation des personnes en situation de handicap. Le processus d'adhésion à l'Union européenne, récemment entrepris par la République de Moldavie, influence l'agenda du pays en matière de droits des personnes en situation de handicap. Dans cette perspective, l'article présente un aperçu des normes et des dispositions juridiques de l'Union européenne ayant un impact sur l'autoreprésentation des personnes en situation de handicap. Pour rédiger cet article, la méthode de l'analyse documentaire a été utilisée, consistant en l'examen des publications scientifiques pertinentes dans le domaine ainsi que du cadre juridique national et international concernant les droits des personnes en situation de handicap. Il ressort que la législation moldave respecte les normes internationales en matière de droits des personnes en situation de handicap, offrant ainsi une base légale solide pour leur autoreprésentation. Cependant, le succès de cette autoreprésentation dépend du degré d'engagement des personnes en situation de handicap dans la promotion de leurs propres intérêts et de l'accessibilité des médias et des informations assurées par les décideurs pour faciliter leur participation effective.

Mots-clés : personnes en situation de handicap, autoreprésentation, droits de l'homme, politiques inclusives.

1. Foreword

Since emerging as a prominent academic theme in the 1980s, the self-advocacy of people with disabilities has experienced remarkable growth, becoming an important research topic both internationally and nationally. Several key factors have contributed to this significant surge in interest. Firstly, *changes in the perception of disability* have been notable. There has been a gradual paradigm shift in how society views disability, moving away from a traditional perspective focused on limitations and deficiencies towards a more inclusive outlook that recognizes functional diversity and values the significant contributions of people with disabilities to society.

Secondly, *advancements in human rights* have bolstered self-advocacy by promoting principles of non-discrimination, inclusion, and full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. The ongoing development of the

human rights legal framework has provided a solid basis for increasing the visibility and voice of people with disabilities in decision-making processes and society at large.

Additionally, the everyday *challenges faced by people with disabilities* have underscored the necessity of self-advocacy as an effective tool for amplifying their voices and addressing the specific difficulties they encounter. Self-advocacy provides an essential platform for highlighting and addressing these issues, contributing to the construction of a more inclusive and equitable society.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova, where the concept of self-advocacy is in its early stages, it is important to develop and support initiatives that promote the active involvement of people with disabilities in self-advocacy and advocacy processes to ensure that their needs and rights are understood and addressed appropriately. Analysing the legal framework represents a crucial first step in this regard. It is important to assess whether national legislation provides the necessary premises for self-advocacy in accordance with international human rights standards. This analysis could identify gaps in existing legislation and provide guidance for improving or developing new laws or policies that better support the self-advocacy of people with disabilities.

2. Conceptual Approaches of Self-Advocacy of Persons with Disabilities

Throughout history, persons with disabilities often faced significant barriers to self-expression and were frequently excluded from decision-making processes, leaving them voiceless. Self-advocacy is essential for participation of persons with disabilities in social, political, cultural, economic, and other aspects of life, requiring the ability to articulate and advocate for their own needs and desires in various situations. When individuals do not represent their own interests or express their opinions and preferences, several negative consequences may arise; they may feel misunderstood or undervalued, be compelled to act against their values or what they perceive as right for themselves, develop a negative self-image, undermine their confidence in their abilities and decisions, lack control over their lives, among others.

In the realm of disability studies, self-advocacy is primarily discussed in relation to intellectual or learning disabilities (Callus, 2013), (Gray and Jackson, 2002), (Goodley, 2004), reflecting the complexities therein. Individuals with intellectual disabilities may face challenges understanding their identity and self-perception, hindering precise expression of thoughts and emotions. They encounter higher degrees of discrimination and stigma, often experiencing more severe marginalisation than other disability types. Some individuals with intellectual disabilities may find it challenging to communicate verbally, impeding effective expression of their ideas, needs, and preferences.

There are various definitions of „self-advocacy" covering multiple facets: from self-determination to influencing public policies in the disability field, from

identifying one's own needs to qualitative changes in a person's life, and more (Cojocaru, 2019).

Thus, some definitions focus on the individual experiences of persons with disabilities speaking for themselves, asserting their rights, making decisions, and taking responsibility for their actions and lives. Other definitions offer a perspective of collective action, where groups of persons with disabilities unite for social justice (Callus, 2013) (Gray and Jackson, 2002).

Rapley M. interprets self-advocacy through the lens of social roles (Rapley, 2004) by examining how individuals with disabilities navigate and assert themselves within societal structures and expectations. This perspective views self-advocacy not only as a means for individuals to express their own needs and interests but also as a way to challenge and redefine the roles traditionally assigned to them by society. It can be seen as the rejection of predefined social roles or stereotypes associated with disability. Instead, persons with disabilities adopt roles that better align with their own perception and understanding of themselves. This rejection is driven by the fact that people with disabilities do not exclusively identify with their disability, as it is influenced by various contexts and environments. In essence, it highlights how self-advocacy can empower individuals to actively shape their identities and roles within the social context, asserting their agency and advocating for their rights and inclusion.

Whitehead T.D. and Bernard J. define self-advocacy within the dynamics of social power. They analyse how persons with disabilities represent themselves within social relationships, where power often lies with others, and persons with disabilities are frequently negatively perceived by society (Whitehead and Bernard, 2004). Discriminatory policies and practices, such as forced institutionalisation or segregation, exemplify power over persons with disabilities. Despite recent positive changes like deinstitutionalization, power dynamics have not significantly shifted. Persons with disabilities often struggle with control over their choices and resources, and self-advocacy becomes a means to address this imbalance.

A common thread among these approaches is that self-advocacy empowers persons with disabilities to advocate for themselves and others in similar situations, amplifying their voices and experiences. It serves as a tool for defending and promoting their rights, encouraging active engagement in society (Goodley, 2004).

Given its fundamental role in respecting and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, self-advocacy holds particular importance within international human rights standards. By fostering self-advocacy and ensuring access to effective participation mechanisms, countries can fulfil their international human rights commitments and promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

3. Legal Foundation for the Self-Advocacy of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova

As of January 1, 2023, the number of individuals recognized as having disabilities in the Republic of Moldova was 162.3 thousand, representing 6.5% of the total resident population of the country (NBS 2023). The rights and interests of persons with disabilities in Moldova are represented by at least 60 civil society organisations, which are members of the Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities from the Republic of Moldova (AOPD 2024). In Moldova, there are no dedicated organizations for self-advocates with intellectual disabilities. However, since 2015, NGOs active in the field of disability rights have supported self-advocacy by establishing an informal national network of self-advocates, comprising approximately 150 individuals.

The right to self-advocacy is intertwined with the broader concept of freedom of speech, as it allows individuals to speak up for themselves and assert their opinions without fear of repression or censorship. The right to freedom of opinion and expression was initially acknowledged through the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Article 19 of the UDHR stipulates that „everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression." (UDHR 1948). This right underpins many others, such as assembly and the ability to participate in public affairs, etc. In 1990, the Republic of Moldova ratified the UDHR, committing to safeguard and promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens in line with the standards outlined in the UDHR (Law on UDHR ratification 1990).

The UDHR served as the cornerstone for various international human rights agreements. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD 2006) stands as a significant example in this regard, setting specific benchmarks for safeguarding and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as providing the groundwork for their self-advocacy. The CRPD was negotiated and drafted through a participatory process involving persons with disabilities themselves (Pineda and Catalano, 2024).

The preamble to the CRPD acknowledges „that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind," as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and asserts that „persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programs, including those directly concerning them." The principles of self-advocacy are enshrined in the CRPD's General Principles, particularly emphasizing the principle of „Full and effective participation and inclusion in society" (Article 3, c.). The CRPD's motto „Nothing About Us Without Us!" underscores the importance of inclusion, emphasizing that persons with disabilities should have a say in all matters concerning them. Participation provides a platform for self-advocacy. When persons with disabilities participate in public life, including voting, holding public service positions, engaging in policy discussions, etc. they could express their views and influence decisions that affect them.

Furthermore, the CRPD outlines the groundwork for self-advocacy within its General Obligations by advocating for close consultation and active involvement of persons with disabilities in the development and execution of legislation and policies to implement the CRPD, as well as in other decision-making processes pertaining to issues affecting persons with disabilities (Article 4 (3)). Simultaneously, Article 21 of the CRPD, „Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information" mandates all state parties to „take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their right to freedom of expression and opinion [...] on an equal basis with others [...]."

The CRPD highlights the right of persons with disabilities to form their own organizations (article 29 (b, ii)). These organizations are seen as a way for persons with disabilities to collectively express their needs and interests. This collective action is a key aspect of self-advocacy. In addition, participation in these organizations can help persons with disabilities develop advocacy and negotiation skills, which empowers them to better represent themselves and their goals.

The CRPD was ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 2010 (Law on CRPD ratification 2010). The ratification process followed significant advocacy efforts by civil society, with prominent contributions from organizations active in the disability field and persons with disabilities themselves. Approximately 63 organizations and advocacy groups were actively involved in advancing the ratification process of the CRPD in the Republic of Moldova. Hence, civil society activism, inclusive of the utilization of self-advocacy mechanisms and advocacy by persons with disabilities, played a pivotal role in effecting substantial reforms in the realm of disability within the country (Munteanu, 2018).

An additional mechanism for enforcing and protecting the rights outlined in the CRPD is *The Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (Optional Protocol 2008). It is an international treaty that allows individuals or groups to file complaints with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Committee) if they believe their rights under the CRPD have been violated. Self-advocacy skills are crucial for individuals to understand their rights and navigate the complaints process. Essentially, this Optional Protocol serves as a significant avenue for self-advocacy for persons with disabilities. The Optional Protocol also enables the Committee to investigate complaints and conduct inquiries into systematic violations of the rights enshrined in the CRPD. Persons with disabilities can use self-advocacy skills to provide information and participate in these investigations, ensuring their voices are heard. While the Optional Protocol doesn't directly focus on self-advocacy, it creates mechanisms that can be used by people with disabilities to advocate for themselves and hold governments accountable for upholding their rights.

In 2021, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova ratified the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, affording them access to an international grievance mechanism in instances of rights violations (Lege ratifiable Protocol Optional 2021), and thus enhancing opportunities for self-advocacy.

The integration of international standards concerning the rights of persons with disabilities (as articulated in the CRPD) into national legal frameworks was effectuated through Law No. 60 of March 30, 2012, on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The foundations for self-advocacy are embedded within the principles of law application (Article 5), encompassing aspects such as freedom of choice and autonomy, liberty to make independent decisions, and comprehensive and effective engagement in societal affairs. Adherence to these principles is obligatory for all rights enshrined in the legislation (Lege Incluziune Socială 2012).

To fulfil the provisions of the CRPD and of Law 60 on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, several policy documents have been developed and implemented. An important legislative achievement is the National Program for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for the years 2024-2028 (draft), which includes a Specific Objective – 1.3. Expanding opportunities for all persons with disabilities to actively engage in social and political life over the next 5 years. Achieving this specific objective has important potential to contribute significantly to strengthening the self-advocacy of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova because their involvement in social and political life provides them with the opportunity to express their opinions, experiences, and needs from a personal perspective.

This policy document was preceded by the National Program for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for the years 2017-2022 (Program Incluziune Persoane cu Dizabilități 2017), whose intervention priorities were established as a result of consultations with various stakeholders, including persons with disabilities. This Program, in turn, was preceded by the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2013) (Program Incluziune Persoane cu Dizabilități 2010). However, at that stage, persons with disabilities were not directly involved in the drafting processes and public consultations, which was only possible through civil society organizations representing their interests. Therefore, it is noted that between the three policy documents, persons with disabilities have become more active and engaged in decision-making processes, demonstrating an increased level of civic participation, including through advocacy and self-advocacy.

The premises for self-advocacy of persons with disabilities are found in the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding the initial report of the Republic of Moldova on the implementation of the CRPD (Finally Observation ONU 2017). The UN Committee alerts to a low level of participation of persons with disabilities in political, social, cultural, etc., life and recommends that the state take action to provide opportunities for their participation. At the same time, the UN Committee's Observations serve as a basis for advocacy actions among persons with disabilities.

At the end of 2023, the Republic of Moldova initiated the process of accession to the European Union (the EU), which entails aligning national legal frameworks with the EU standards. The EU social inclusion policies provide premises for self-advocacy. *The European Commission's Strategy for the Rights of*

Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 (European Commission 2021), adopted in 2021, aims to progress towards ensuring that all persons with disabilities in Europe [...], enjoy their rights, have equal opportunities to participate in society and the economy, [...] regardless of their support needs, and no longer face discrimination. The Strategy contains an ambitious set of initiatives in various areas: accessibility, deinstitutionalization, and independent living, equal participation in education, culture, sports, and tourism, health services, justice, and the global promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, including supporting their self-advocacy efforts.

In addition to the general aspects described above, there is a cross-cutting aspect in ensuring opportunities for self-advocacy for persons with disabilities: accessibility. The EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 stipulates that „accessibility to physical and virtual environments, information and communication technologies (ICT), goods and services, including transport and infrastructure, supports rights and is a prerequisite for the full participation of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others." (European Commission 2021). In the last decade, the European Union has adopted a series of rules in different areas to make the EU more accessible to persons with disabilities: the European Accessibility Act (which sets common accessibility requirements, covering certain ICT products and services) (EU Directive 882 2019), the Web Accessibility Directive (which sets common accessibility requirements, so that anyone can read, understand, and complete administrative procedures on websites and mobile applications in the public sector) (EU Directive 2102 2016), the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (which relates to sign language, subtitles for persons with hearing impairments, audio support for persons with visual impairments) (EU Directive 1808 2018), and others. For persons with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities, the EU supports initiatives to develop guidelines for adapting information into easy-to-read and plain language (Inclusion Europe 2021).

The European Commission recommends that member states develop and approve mechanisms to ensure the accessibility of physical, informational, and communication environments for persons with disabilities, in accordance with approved standards. EU membership would likely lead to increased attention to and investment in improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in Moldova, as the country would be expected to adhere to EU standards and regulations in this area.

The legal framework of the Republic of Moldova recognizes the importance of physical, informational, and communication accessibility for persons with disabilities. The CRPD and the Law on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities define accessibility as a set of measures, including identifying and removing obstacles to full, equal access to physical environments, transportation, information, and communication, including information and communication technologies (ICT), and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas. The principle of accessibility is included in national policies and legislative and regulatory acts, but deficiencies are noted in the

implementation of the principle. To date, a stable institutional and organizational framework for ensuring accessibility has not been established.

The start of the process of association of the Republic of Moldova with the European Union entails aligning national policies and practices with European standards, with a potential positive impact on the self-advocacy of persons with disabilities.

Grounds for self-advocacy are also shaped by the global framework of action – *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (the Agenda 2030) (United Nations, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2015). Adopted in September 2015 by UN member states, including the Republic of Moldova, the Agenda 2030 aims to forge a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable future for all inhabitants of the planet by 2030.

One of the guiding principles of the Agenda 2030 is „Leaving No One Behind," emphasising the importance of including and safeguarding vulnerable population groups, including persons with disabilities, in the efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The previous global plan, the Millennium Declaration, did not adequately address the needs of persons with disabilities. Consequently, during the development of Agenda 2030, there were widespread calls from various agencies and organisations, including those representing persons with disabilities, to ensure that the new framework explicitly addresses their issues and needs (Cobley, 2023). As a result, persons with disabilities actively advocate for their interests, leading to a commitment to ensure that everyone is included in the development process (Lee and Perez Bello, 2024).

The Agenda 2030 is driven by 17 overarching SDGs encompassing all crucial aspects of economic growth, social inclusivity, and environmental preservation. Each SDG is accompanied by 169 specific targets, seven of which explicitly address disability. Within a framework that prioritises the needs of persons with disabilities, global and national development initiatives must incorporate concrete measures to tackle barriers to inclusion, such as discriminatory legislation, inaccessible environments, negative attitudes, and stigma. Moreover, there is a pressing need for increased investment in monitoring and evaluating progress towards disability-related SDGs and for enhancing the implementation of laws, policies, and services for persons with disabilities. Agenda 2030 promotes collaboration among governments, international bodies, private enterprises, and civil society, including persons with disabilities, to achieve these objectives and confront global challenges. It emphasizes the crucial role of active and inclusive participation of persons with disabilities, providing them with opportunities to voice their opinions and advocate for their perspectives and needs in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

The role of self-advocacy in the context of implementing the SDGs is crucial. Through self-advocacy, persons with disabilities can ensure that their needs are integrated into development strategies and programs, thereby contributing to the formulation of more relevant and effective policies and actions regarding their inclusion and well-being. Additionally, by expressing their own

experiences and concerns, persons with disabilities can draw attention to issues that may be overlooked in the process of SDG implementation.

In 2015, Moldova pledged to implement Agenda 2030 nationally, followed by adapting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to its specific context and aligning national policies accordingly (nationalisation of SDGs) (Cancelaria de Stat 2017). A few years later, in 2022, Moldova's Parliament adopted the „European Moldova 2030" National Development Strategy (NDS) (Lege 315 2022), outlining the country's vision and development directions until 2030, closely linked with Agenda 2030, and the Government approved the national framework for monitoring Agenda 2030 implementation, serving as the basis for reporting Moldova's progress domestically and internationally (H G. 953 2022).

Self-advocacy plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the principles of inclusion, equity, and social justice are woven into the implementation of the „European Moldova 2030" NDS. By advocating for themselves, individuals with disabilities can assert their rights to access services and opportunities outlined in the NDS, while also pushing for the elimination of barriers that impede their complete participation and inclusion. Moreover, through self-advocacy, individuals with disabilities can actively encourage authorities and accountable institutions to honour their commitments to advancing the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities as outlined in the NDS. Therefore, self-advocacy processes significantly contribute to the empowerment and full participation of individuals with disabilities in Moldovan society.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the landscape of disability rights advocacy, the concept of self-advocacy stands as a pivotal mechanism for empowering individuals to assert their rights and participate actively in societal decision-making processes. This article examines the legal provisions that enable self-advocacy within Moldova's legislative framework.

Central to its contribution are several key impacts. First, it provides a comprehensive analysis of existing legal frameworks, offering clarity on the rights of persons with disabilities who engage in self-advocacy efforts. By elucidating these provisions, the article serves as a foundational resource for stakeholders – from policymakers to advocacy groups – seeking to navigate and leverage legal mechanisms in alignment with international human rights standards.

Furthermore, the article advances scholarly discourse by delineating avenues for future research. It prompts longitudinal assessments of legislative impacts, and explorations into intersectional dimensions of disability rights advocacy. These insights pave the way for evidence-based policy interventions that uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of ability.

Ultimately, this article underscores its multifaceted impact on advancing the practice of self-advocacy among persons with disabilities in Moldova. It contributes substantively to the ongoing pursuit of inclusive and rights-based approaches to disability rights advocacy.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE UNSEEN FACES OF VIOLENCE

Review by Carmen PALAGHIA[1]

The book „The Unseen Faces of Violence" is a collective volume coordinated by Mihaela Rădoi and Gabriela Irimescu, published by the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Press" in Iaşi in 2021.

Mihaela Rădoi is a Ph.D. in Sociology and an associate professor within the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Human Resources, Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science, at „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iaşi. She is the author of several books, chapters in collective volumes, and studies published both in Romania and internationally. She is the coordinator of the paper „Violence against Women: Facets, Explanations, Interventions," 2017.

Gabriela Irimescu is a Ph.D. in Sociology and an associate professor within the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Human Resources, Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science, at „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iaşi. Her main areas of interest focus on family and child social work, social work for child victims of abuse, family violence, family crises, group dynamics in social work practice, and family therapy. She published the work „Social Protection of the Abused Child" in 2006 and coordinated the work „Violence against Women: Facets, Explanations, Interventions" in 2017. She is a co-author of several volumes and author of university courses and textbooks for social workers.

The volume „The Unseen Faces of Violence" consists of works by professionals and academics from „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iaşi and the Republic of Moldova, presented at the third and fourth editions of the Conference on Violence against Women: Facets, Explanations, Interventions. The event is part of a series of conferences organized by the Department of Sociology and Social Work. The work captures both the seen and unseen aspects of violence, its areas of manifestation, the effects of violence, and strategies for addressing this serious and unresolved issue in Romanian society.

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Topics addressed include violence against women of all ages, from minors to elderly individuals, as well as various forms of violence ranging from neglect to physical and emotional violence. Different spaces of occurrence and manifestation are also explored, from the domestic sphere to the workplace and virtual spaces. The authors of the volume „The Unseen Faces of Violence" propose reflections on various aspects. Professor Ion Ionescu addresses the themes of uncertainty, vulnerability, and persistent exclusion. Ioan Ticu delves into the history of domestic violence. Magdalena Roxana Necula discusses the effects of violence on women. Marian Pîslariu examines manifestations of violence against women in the context of the migration phenomenon.

Professor Cristina Gavriluţă and Costel Gîtlan explore „Beyond Appearances" and outline „Current Trends in Domestic Violence in Iaşi County."

Professors Gabriela Irimescu and Mihaela Rădoi, along with Atena Gaspar and Almeida Santos, describe a case study on „Emotional Violence: From Invisible to Visible." Atena Gaspar and Almeida Santos also detail „Symbolic Violence in the Third Age: Between Recognition and Acceptance," alongside Cristina Crudu, who presents „Social Aspects of Elderly Abuse in the Republic of Moldova."

Professors Irimescu and Rădoi reveal „The Hidden Face of Neglect," while Sergiu Bortoş outlines the emergence, evolution, typology, and possible solutions identified for reducing cyberbullying. Paula Acatrinei, Delia Elena Pavel, and Raluca Ioana Toma detail the types of cyberbullying, the means of propagation, the consequences of such acts, data about cyberbullies, and the impact this type of aggression has on victims.

Elena Pătrău draws attention to aspects related to physical, verbal, and emotional violence among students. Mihaela Denis Gălăţanu develops specific aspects for two phenomena of discrimination in the workplace: mobbing and bullying, while Costel Gîtlan details aspects regarding the application of provisional protection orders in Iaşi County. Professors Cătălin Mircea Dîrţu and Camelia Soponaru present a program for anger management. Bianca Farcaş conducts a comparative analysis of violence against women in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, and Tatiana Sincovschi presents myths and realities about violence against women, as well as intervention models in the Republic of Moldova.

We note the existence of volume in a context where the World Health Organization estimates that globally, approximately 1 in 3 (30%) women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, with the majority of perpetrators being their intimate partners. Violence significantly impacts women's health once it occurs, which is why we emphasize the importance of prevention.

Biodata

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