

The Effects of the Abuse upon Women

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Abstract:

This paper presents the effects of violence and the costs that a society has to pay to eliminate them. Initially, violence “an imported theme” introduced by foreign researchers and politicians became a research subject for the Romanian sociologists as well. Subsequently, based on the results obtained we may establish the types of necessary services to ameliorate the effects of this phenomenon. The number of cases brought into discussion at first was significant, which determined us to conclude that violence is an ample phenomenon which requires high costs for setting up appropriate services.

Keywords: *domestic violence, victims, shelters, discrimination, child in difficult*

Preliminaries

Domestic violence, at first an “imported” subject, became an interesting theme due to the researches carried on by professionals, administrators and politicians within the country and abroad.

The subject of domestic violence entered relatively recent in the sphere of social sciences, after the 60’s-70’s, and an internal development of the concepts and theories was not possible, but the theme of “domestic violence” spread more and more. The cause was determined by the inheritance of several social representations, of the system of values in which the individual did not count, in which he was not taken into consideration under the aspect of his problems and needs. In the communist society man was a carefree individual, but the frustrations that existed on a social level penetrated into the private life, determining crisis and violence. The victim who could not complain at her job, became an aggressor in the private space. Thus, adultery, battery, rape of the partner meant for the great majority an insignificant violence, belonging to the personal space.

After 1990, there were some timid attempts to approach this subject regarding woman's statute within society, underlining the less favorable attitudes towards equality between the sexes. On the one hand, this created the premises for the equality of women and men in the Romanian society, and on the other hand, there were impediments in creating jobs in which women were decision factors, on the labor market. The audacity to have a place to work required sacrifice from each woman, through a double amount of work at home and at her job, a reason to consolidate inequity ("a woman cannot cope with the requirements of a chief position", one situation being maternity and the other her activity in the domestic space). The discrimination of woman has been perpetuated to the day under different form, such as the manner of protection and education of the child which is attributed to the mother, who is called at school, if the situation of the child is difficult; she has to take the child to the doctor, she has to accompany him to playground, she has to take him into trips when he is little etc. and she is the one to be blamed when she does not succeed to exercise her role, when dysfunctions occur within the family or other aspects of the domestic violence (Ana Munteanu, Marciana Popescu and Smaranda Popa 2001: 45).

The fact that the phenomenon of domestic violence existed from ancient times, its intensity nowadays is determined by the fact that it stays within a private space, behind closed doors of this reprehensible acts, and by the necessity for the specialists' intervention, to underline the determinant factors in order to prevent and erase the negative effects upon woman, children and society.

Although the subject was initially "imported", it comes into the attention of the specialists, politicians and the public after 1995-2000, when we noted the first preoccupations imposed by the foreign researchers, who came to Romania with the intention of creating support services for victims and to initiate a politic of promoting women based on studies with a social impact.

International organization such as UNICEF, PNUD, USAID, Medicins du Monde brought important contributions into Romania by participating to the change of mentality, through the cultivation of a correct attitude of the society, through the stimulation of the researches that had to be done by Romanian specialists, through an approach of the

field and initiation of the appropriate actions by non-governmental organizations.

Initially, the appearance of these organizations required the development of several services, formation of specialists in this field, accessing rehabilitation funds for women and men not only for prevention, developing support network and refuges, the audience corresponding to the extension of the phenomenon.

The initial services required:

- Services to announce the cases:
- Police services;
- forensic offices;
- emergency telephone lines;
- emergency medical services, ER;
- Intervention services:
- hospitals;
- courthouses:
- Counseling services (in situations of crisis or judicial situations):
- services of assistance for the victims of domestic violence (emergency shelters);
- Prevention services:
- church;
- school;
- mass-media.

The theoretical frame for the approach of the phenomenon required a clear emphasizing in the past years within the social space of the determinant factors, the manner of prevention and perpetuation of the violent inter-generation pattern with the eradication of the negative effects. A democratic society, with a high level of development, wishes to provide welfare for all its individuals, equally regardless of gender, with an exploitation of the resources of all the active individuals. To this respect, Sjoberg mentioned (1994, in Ana Munteanu, Marciana Popescu; Smaranda Popa, 2001: 28) that the stage of development of a society depends on achieving gender equality thus providing the advancement of things and the general welfare. Woman cannot be considered less “human” than man. The research in this field disclosed, as

we have already shown, the causes or the determinant factors which enhance the appearance of the phenomenon in society:

- Gender inequality within family and society;
- The long transition with its negative effects;
- Poverty;
- The lack of laws nationwide or the fact that the national and international laws were not respected;
- Complete absence or a reduced number of services both for the victim and for the aggressor.

In the family:

- Presence of psychological illnesses in the aggressor or the victim;
- Traumatic experiences during childhood, both for the aggressor and for the victim:
- Alcoholism;
- Previous record of the aggressor;
- Social isolation;
- Presence or absence of children in the family.

Manifestation:

- The circumstantial context of the manifestation, “the group of equals”, entourage;
- Violent forms of manifestation (directed towards the wife, towards the wife and child, towards the wife and personal goods, towards the wife with destruction of the goods from the house).
- Various profiles of the victim and aggressor.

The consequences may be:

- Social-human costs (effects upon health, upon the children, upon the family, upon society);
- Economical costs (sick-leave, repeated hospitalizations, placing the children into foster care, trial expenses, restriction order, destruction of goods);
- Costs for prevention programs.

The theoretical approach of domestic violence starts from the formation of explanatory theories regarding domestic violence, which try to underline the causes for the appearance of such behaviours, although Gelles and Straus (1979: 78) considered domestic violence “a special

case” which does not need its own theoretical support to be explained. Thus, the theories that exist regarding aggression, such as the theory of aggression-frustration (Berkowitz, 1962; Dollard and co. 1939; Milles 1941), the theory of individual attitude (Kaplan, 1972), the functional theory (Coser 1967) or the theory of violent cultures (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967), have not been applied directly in the study of domestic violence. The only model applied in the case of domestic violence is the theory of social education (Bandura co. 1961).

Sociological theories

The sociological perspectives suggest that even the manner in which the individuals’ lives are organized within the family contributes to the appearance of violence, if it does not care for certain aspects such as intimacy, discrepancies of age, sex, activity, interests, role inflexibility and the rigidity if boundaries in the familiarly system (Ellen Janosik 1954: 78).

Another cause can also be rape in society which contaminates the mass-media, providing models that are projected within the family and also the violence within the family leads to a violent society. The corrosion of the traditional values and the imposition of new values, as well as the lack of positive models can contribute to behavioral changes.

The violent model within the family is transmitted from one generation to the other through the internalization of violence during childhood, according to the theory of learned helplessness by Walker (1979: 40).

The stress of daily life and the inconsistency of statute, of role are factors that enhance violence.

The explanatory theories developed according to three directions:

- theories which explain the abuse against children;
- theories which explain the abuse against wife/husband;
- theories which explain violence in general.

The economic and social model encourage the foundation of new theories:

- the theory of resources (Goode, 1971);
- the theory of general systems (Straus, 1972);
- the theory of exchange (Gelles, 1983);

- the ecological perspective (Garbarino, 1977);
- patriarchy (Dobas and Dobash, 1979);
- the social-biological model (Gelles, 1987);
- the economical explanation (Gelles, 1987);
- the social-cultural explanation (Gelles, 1987).

Psychological theories

Here we may include the theories of feminine masochism, as Freud mentions (1959), which implies a self-destructive behavior, as a result of solving the Oedipal conflict. The theories of the traumatic relationship (Dutton and Painti, conf. Radulescu 2001: 80), imply the internalization of violent behaviors from important persons in women's lives (father, brother etc.). The theory of frustration determined by the aggressiveness which occurs generated by factors that intercede with achieving certain goals.

Feminist theories

In the context of the society based on a patriarchal form of organization there is a consolidation of the woman's subordination before man.

A contradictory attitude appears in the fact that society in its whole is not patriarchal, but matriarchal (Less 1979: 50), where woman imposes the moral values in the family and becomes dominant in the life of the child. The child brought up in a matriarchal environment interacts with his mother through a relationship of dependency, and these needs are also transferred to man in a marriage. Hostility, inhibited during childhood can be exteriorized during marriage (Less 1979: 50-51).

Maria Roy (1977: 75) considers that violence perpetuates violence. A violent society encourages violence when it is tolerated.

Martin (1977: 78) states that men abuse their wives because nobody stops them. "Marriage is an institution in which women are caught playing the role of victims". They are taught, from birth, that marriage and maternity represent their accomplishment and in order to achieve these goals, women must be feminine, and when they assert themselves they are sanctioned for their audacity, and if they are passive, they also

generate discontent for their incompetence. According to Martin (1977: 50), women are never in a position of victory.

One may formulate some myths about the violence upon women, crystallized in this manner, but which are not always real.

Straus and Gelles (1988: 20) maintained the following myths:

- abusers are strangers and the victims are innocent;
- the family is non-violent;
- alcohol and drugs are the real cause of violence in the family;
- children who were abused grow up and become abusers in their turn;
- battered women accept violence;
- violence and love are not incompatible.

The researchers we mentioned above suggested that myths should be abandoned because they only distort reality. The portrait of the abuser and the victim are sketched to apply treatment, recovery plans, to offer certain services.

Elbow (1977) presented the following typology of men who abuse women:

- the type of the controller – is the one who uses his partner as an object, which he controls;
- the type of the protector is the type of man who mixes his love with hate. He feels powerful when his partners depends on him;
- the type that wants to be approved is the man with complexes who wants to consolidate his image;
- the possessive type or that of the incorporator is the man who makes no distinction between him and his partner. He perceives his partner as his own extension.

Saunders (1973: 48) included three more subtypes to this portrait of the abuser:

- the one who abuses only within the family;
- the one who abuses in general inside and outside the family;
- the shy abuser.

Our own researches, based on qualitative analysis, on a number of 600 subjects, regarding the effects of violence upon women, emphasized the manner in which both the family and the woman's participation to society is affected.

The *stress-response syndrome* appears in battered women and consists of a paralyzing terror, with depression, anxiety, guilt and shame, similar to the effect of brainwashing (Janosik 1994: 63).

My husband played cards and kept losing money; when he came home and I asked him for the money it was as if I was asking for his soul, he beat both me and my older son. I always ate in the parks with my children, because we ran away from home and waited for the light to turn off to enter into our home. I spent so many nights outside...he even attacked me with a knife and broke my nose. When my parents saw me they told me to move out. He didn't even care about the children. And the children in their turn didn't want to hear about him...
[female, b. 1961, textile worker]

We may mention the fact that violence was significant in frequency and with a high level of intensity, which lead to the ending of marriage. The toxic effect upon the child is a favoring factor to which we may add the lack of a place to stay "I couldn't get into the house".

Passivity and negation is determined by the fact that many women don't seek help because they fear the husband's revenge or the possible sanctions that some of the responsible factors may impose as a consequence of the abuse.

I got back with him because he convinced me he was a changed person... So I got back to him, I knew he was very stressed because of his work so I tried to do my best. But one day, all of a sudden, the dinner wasn't OK, or it wasn't ready... In the kitchen he threw a kettle then punched me in the eye. I bled a lot and I was taken to hospital with many of my face bones fractured and fearing I will lose sight in one eye. At the hospital they asked me if I had been in a car crash. When they found out my husband did that, they called the police who wanted to know if I want to press charges. I knew that if I did, he will have to pay a fine, or he'll be sent behind bars, he'll lose his job, and this meant less money for children, for food. If he were arrested or if he had to pay anything, he was going to kill me when he got out, so I decided to get a divorce.

Repercussions, possible as a consequence of the aggression, such as the negative labeling of the village, "vox populi" in the case of prison, the material difficulties generated by the loss of the job, these are factors that may influence the preservation or the ending "ex abrupto" (as a self-

preservation instinct, as a consequence of the aggressiveness of violence) of the marriage, “I will be killed”.

Alcohol/drug abuse in the case of battered women is, as presented by Iolanda Mitrofan (Mitrofan 1996: 32), a way to escape the inhuman reality. The researches emphasized the use of alcohol, injectable drug, excessive smoking or medicine abuse as a form of resistance against violence. Alcohol abuse determined in some cases suicide attempts or even the death of the partner, women being imprisoned.

I took two pills to calm down because I was also furious and I used to shout when I got angry...but when I take pills I'm calmer and I don't shake that much, because I was shaking continuously and I was afraid not to hit him in the head and kill him, cause you lose your head when you're angry... [female, b. 1968, textile worker]

I smoke a lot, two packets of cigarettes a day...I didn't use to smoke, but now I'm so irritated when I see him coming home drunk, and I know that the fights and beatings are about to start... [female, b. 1970 worker]

“I don't drink much” was the statement of a woman so I can't be labeled as a “drunk”, I'm a woman who uses, because he also drinks alcohol and he's violent, so I'm not like him, but I have the courage to define well my identity, which he doesn't like. It is a rationalization of the use of alcohol through a projection of guilt upon him. She does not acknowledge the use of alcohol as a factor that encourages violence, but as a motif of resistance.

The *suicidal tendency* is the way through which a woman tries to interrupt the course of abnormal violence. To this respect, “the subjective perception of reality” from the classic literature or “fiction” documenting, as American researchers mention, as a way to accumulate information, brings into the space of the sociological research the case of Ana from the novel *Ion* by Liviu Rebreanu (1983: 25). Suicide or the attempt to abdicate from a marriage that can't be bearable anymore is a failure of the conjugal relationship, a negative labeling of the community, of the family and of the husband. In Ana's case, Savista “the crippled of the village”, a news monger of negative information, brings the news that “Ion continues to live with Florica”, which is a favoring factor along with the recent suicide of “Avrum Dumitru” (associated favoring factors).

Domestic life requires economic and social costs, represented by sick-leaves, by execution of sentences, by the destruction of private or

public goods and long-term costs implied in transmitting the violence pattern between generations and the costs of prevention programs or those for the foundation of services.

I didn't have money to obtain a forensic certificate and to file for divorce. You need money for the doctor, for the lawyer, I don't have a job, where was I supposed to take the money from to do all these, so I kept on being battered.
[female, b. 1961, worker]

The physical trauma affects the health of the woman and especially the capacity to reproduce. Frequent abuse to which women are subjected during domestic violence are the cause of illnesses and the decrease of immunity.

The death of the partner and the death of the victim may determine the interruption of violence. This effect of the domestic violence is the worst and it is an alarm signal for the entire society. Repeated abuse may trigger in the victims violent responses, defense mechanism which transforms the victim into aggressor (Gabriela Carmen Mândrilă Lăzăreanu 2003: 38). Eloquent examples of violent situations appear in the classic literature, in the novels *Ciuleandra* by L. Rebreanu, *Neranțula* by Panait Istrati, *Tănase Scatiu* by Duiliu Zamfirescu etc.

Conclusions

In conclusion, some of the effects mentioned may constitute cooperation-survival strategies, developed by women, through their own efforts (aptitudes, resources), psycho-emotional strategies used to avoid or prevent violence (the imminence of future attacks) and self-destructive strategies, self-destructive behavior, as a consequence of the abuse (alcohol, drugs, over-nutrition) manifested through addiction.

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