



The Management of Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Managing family conflicts is crucial, beginning with early identification and ongoing monitoring, alongside implementing legal measures to prevent violent acts stemming from these conflicts. Various socio-economic factors such as discrimination, social alienation, and inequality contribute to frustrations that can lead disadvantaged individuals towards hostility and, in extreme cases, violence. Economic struggles like poverty, marital breakdowns, and unemployment exacerbate these tensions. These conditions significantly impact child-rearing and education. Specifically, physical child abuse, domestic violence, familial mental health issues, and substance abuse are particularly implicated in the emergence of violence within families.

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1. Introduction

The family is a social reality, establishing a community of life between spouses, between parents and children, as well as among other relatives. The family is a biological reality in the sense, that procreation is achieved within it, through the biological union between man and woman. Lastly, the family is a legal reality, because the most important relationships within it are regulated by legal norms.

Contemporary society highlights the evolution of measures and interventions by specialized institutions in social control against delinquency and crime, noting a multiplication of violent and aggressive offences, as well as those in the economic and financial-banking domains (fraud, extortion, bribery and corruption).

Violence is a social problem, whose manner of manifestation and resolution interests are both the agents of social control (police, judiciary, administration) and the public opinion (Minculete, G et al, 2021). The committed offences and crimes through violence and corruption tend to become extremely intense and dangerous for the stability and the security of institutions, groups and individuals. They are often associated with organized crime, terrorism and institutionalised violence, specific to "subcultures" of violence and organised crime (Neculau, A., et al, 2003).

A significant issue for humanity is human violence and aggression—those types of personalities corresponding to social existence and survival (Bonea, 2012). Whereas in animals, aggressive behaviour appears as motivated (sexually, related to defence instinct or for obtaining food), for humans, it often occurs without such motivations (groups of young people assaulting passers-by, hostage-taking). Numerous authors discuss, in a social sense, aggression in terms of competitive behavioural ambitions. Man is described as a being with underdeveloped instincts, due to the emergence of a being that is dangerous for himself and the environment (Schin, G. C., et al, 2023). This proves that the human being does not always have the capacity to lead and control the symbolic universe that makes communication possible. In nature, people live together without leaders, in relation to justice and natural laws, as a community of virtuous anarchists, this natural law being of divine origin. However, the offender, like the mentally ill, participates in the same mythology of the alienated man.

2. Literature review

The aetiology of violence is multi-factorial, with socio-economic influences and psycho-emotional and educational development being predominant over the biological factors (Bonea., 2012).

Among the socio-economic factors, discrimination, social alienation, social inequality leading to frustrations that make those who feel disadvantaged become hostile and, in certain situations, violent; poverty and the inability to sustain minimal standard of living, marital breakdown, and unemployment, all play a role. Clearly, all the economic and social conditions mentioned have an impact on the conditions for raising and educating children. Among these, the most involved ones in the emergence of violence are physical child abuse,

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violence within the family, the presence of major mental disorders in the family, and the abuse of psychoactive substances.

There are several types of violence: (a) physical violence (the core of violence which includes: murder, attempted murder, rape, serious voluntary assault, theft, robbery); economic violence (refers to destruction and the degradation of property); moral or symbolic violence (determined by the ways authority and domination are exercised). The various typologies of violence bring forth the notion that there are different degrees of violence. We cannot equate a crime, a rape, a robbery with verbal violence. The acts of violence delineated by the penal code represent only one level of violence. At another level lies within what the French have termed “les incivilités”, a term encompassing a series of acts that affect individuals and which relate to the breach between good manners and lifestyle in society (insulting words, humiliation, begging etc.).

In common perception, there exists an idea that violence can only be addressed when it manifests itself physically. However, violence (or abuse) can manifest just as strongly at a psychological level. But because its traces aren't visible to the naked eye, this type of trauma is often easily disregarded. Verbal violence is an example in this respect. Even neglect is considered a form of abuse, particularly in the case of children.

From a clinical perspective, a widely accepted definition of *domestic violence* is the following one: “*Domestic violence is a threat or occurrence of physical injury, within the relationship between social partners, regardless of their legal status or domicile. The physical or sexual attack may be accompanied by intimidation or verbal abuse, by the destruction of the victim's property, the isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support; threats against other significant individuals for the victim, including children; theft; control over the victim's money, personal belongings, food, movements, phone, and other sources of care and protection*”.

The family, which develops a ground for domestic violence, becomes less transparent and open to the immediate social environment: the extended family, neighbours, friends and colleagues. The social isolation of these families is evident. They acquire a stigma in the eyes of others and at the same time, a sense of stigma and guilt that determines them to isolate themselves (Cristache, N., et al, 2023).

The violent spouse typically does not wish for his wife to maintain social relationships, in which she might be able to express her suffering and potentially to receive support.

On the other hand, violent men often lack communication skills and the joy of communicating. For these abusive partners, communicating within the intimate setting of their homes becomes more of an opportunity to verbally attack the other, while at the workplace, it remains a routine of superficial relationships with others, a role played within the limits of working hours.

Domestic violence is encompassed within the broader phenomenon of family violence. *Domestic violence* involves a series of systematically repeated behaviours: physical assault, verbal and psychological aggression, sexual and economic abuse, that one partner may commit towards the other, within the official framework of the family or in a cohabiting relationship.

If we consider the family as a space for meeting the existential needs of all its members, there is an obvious need for a moral framework based on knowledge and on love, to regulate relationships among family members. In the absence of this moral framework, the weaker members of the family will be at the mercy of the stronger ones, hence, the subject to transient sentiments that can lead to notable behavioural fluctuations. The best predictor of domestic violence is the existence of a previous incident before discussing the risk of family violence. Regardless of the form the violence took, its appearance within family relationships represents a breach that gradually allows for increasingly extensive, varied and frequent manifestations. A comment such as “*I don't like how you arranged your hair*” or “*I don't like how you're dressed*” will lead, over time, to more dramatic consequences (Woodredge, J., et al., 2002). These remarks may be perceived by the recipient as an expression of their partner's interest, in other words, of love. It's an appropriation of the right to impose limits on the other's existence and expressions, according to the preferences of the one considering themselves in the dominant position. The submissive individual lacks the right to be in control of their own existence and needs. Their existence and needs will be regulated according to the principles and the constraints imposed, often arbitrarily, by the one in control.

Over time, variations emerge concerning the severity and the duration between incidents. After several years, the incidents may become increasingly serious, as the phase of remorse, pleads for forgiveness and of reconciliation becomes shorter, eventually leading to its total absence.

The primary function within a family, that of raising the younger generation, making them capable of having an independent life and taking responsibility for the upbringing of the next generation, is profoundly disrupted by violence.

Brazelton and Greenspan identify the needs of a child for normal development as follows:

- 1.The need for warm, close and stable emotional relationships.
- 2.The need for physical protection, safety and a regular life.
- 3.The need for experiences tailored for the child's level of development.
- 4.The need for boundaries, a structured daily life and age-appropriate responsibilities.
- 5.The need for experiences tailored to the child's individual differences and particular interests.
- 6.The need to live in a stable community, benefiting from its support and culture.
- 7.The need for a protected future (Greenspan, et al., 2023).

Children exposed to violent parents are at physical risk, either through being targeted during violent incidents or through direct neglect.

The consequences of the harmful effects of violence have prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to launch a program for preventing violence, particularly the manifestations of violence within families.

The program outlines 4 levels of risk and at the same time, the necessary interventions when addressing the phenomenon:

1. The individual level:

The risk of violence is associated with past experiences of abuse and rejection, as well as with mental health issues. It is clear that extensive community education programs can be of great utility at this level.

2. The interpersonal level:

The risk of violence is linked to alcohol or drug consumption, male control over family assets and conflicts within the family. Prevention involves enhancing family cohesion, cultivating good relationships between parents and children and encouraging women to participate in the management of household finances.

3. The institutional level:

This level is represented by causal factors for violent behaviours such as low socio-economic status, unemployment etc. Prevention can be materialized through attending schools and community education programs, developing services and facilities for families in the neighbourhood, etc.

4. The structural level:

The risk of violence is associated with cultural tolerance of violence in dispute resolution, the promotion of rigid gender roles and the cultivation of male dominance.

Protection is represented by political stability, labour market control, promotion of gender equality and non-violence in society.

In conclusion, the statement is that family violence lies at the root of the most challenging social problems within communities. It's incredible that the public and the expert's attention towards this social malady is relatively recent. As long as domestic violence is ignored and allowed to continue its secretive and devastating existence, we cannot speak of a real social policy aimed to improve the quality of life, for individuals and families. (Neamțu, G., 2011)

Interpersonal conflict can occur at the level of an economic organisation, a commercial entity or any other type of organisation.

Interpersonal conflict is the process by which a person, a group or a department frustrates another group and distracts it from achieving its intended goal.

There are several causes that can lead to the emergence of interpersonal communication conflict; therefore, there are various ways in which such conflict can unfold. However, all experts in the field share the view that we can study two types of interpersonal conflicts: the horizontal conflict - which involves a conflict between two people with the same level of power, responsibility, training etc., and the vertical conflict - between two individuals who differ in all the aspects previously mentioned.

We all react differently in conflict situations: some of us become nervous, we withdraw into ourselves or we tend to seek external help. Hence, we arrive at the existence of five types of behaviour, regarding individuals in conflict and their resolution strategies: *the Avoiding style, the Accommodating style, the Competitive style, the Compromising style and the Collaborative style*.

Mediation, as a way to solve conflicts of any nature, is gaining more interest and credibility in Europe due to the its offered advantages it, in comparison to the adjudication by courts or arbitration.

Firstly, mediation can alleviate the workload of the judicial system, potentially leading to an improvement in the quality of the judicial process.

Secondly, on a social level, resolving conflicts between parties through negotiation in the presence of a mediator aims to reach consensus, thereby restoring balance in interpersonal relationships.

Additionally, mediation ensures the preservation of relationships between the parties even after the conclusion of legal proceedings, which is particularly significant when the decision directly affects third parties, such as children in divorce cases (Bonea, 2013)

Negotiation is both an natural talent and a skill acquired through experience, training and learning. Although some individuals may possess intuitive abilities that enable them to reach negotiated solutions more easily, the techniques concerning the knowledge of negotiation are crucial for the success of this process. Moreover, intuitions can sometimes prove themselves to be unproductive and may misinformed individuals may fall into traps set by parties using manipulative techniques without gloves. The necessary initial step is to define the negotiation process. Negotiation refers to any form of unarmed confrontation in which two or more parties with conflicting, yet complementary interests and positions, seek to reach a mutually advantageous commitment, as their terms are not initially known.

Analysing the type of negotiation we engage in is always important. Knowing a to some extent, the behaviour the partner will adopt and preparing our own behaviour and to evaluate it means foreseeing a certain response. In this way, the risk of a breakdown, of misunderstanding or the risk of concluding a disadvantageous agreement decreases.

The fundamental principle in negotiation is the use of tactics and techniques to master the interaction of demands faced at the negotiating table and prevent open conflict. Deliberate tactics can be an effective communication technique, a rhetorical trap or a psychological trick. They help us maintain control and take the initiative. Examples of tactics include: the "YES... BUT" tactic; Stressing and pressuring tactic; Time pressure tactic and Altering the negotiators tactic (Brânză, S. et al, 2005).

The management of handling conflicts within the family is of particular importance, both in terms of understanding them from their early stages and monitoring them, as well as taking all legal measures to prevent the commission of violent offences by solving conflicts.

3. Research Purpose

The purpose of this work is to highlight the important aspects related to physical conflict between spouses, aiming to develop forms of assistance and intervention. The research primarily aimed to define a set of theoretical aspects related to the family from a legal perspective, the theoretical aspects of the physical violence within the relationship of married couples, especially physical violence directed towards women, both at the local and international levels. It also focused on theoretical intervention models concerning physical violence within marriage to improve and re-establish the balance for the relationship between the couple, as well as presenting the population that was the subject of the research from the perspective of individual, social, cultural and relational dimensions.

4. The Objectives Pursued

The objectives in this work aimed to present the theoretical intervention models for cases of physical violence between spouses, to improve and to re-establish balance within the relationship between the two actors in the couple. It also involved presenting a sample that was the subject of the research from the perspective of the individual, social, cultural and relational dimensions.

The objectives pursued in this research were:

- Presenting the family from a legal standpoint.
- Addressing theoretical aspects regarding physical violence within marital couples.
- Establishing theoretical intervention methods for cases of physical violence between spouses.
- Presenting a sample studied from the perspective of individual, social, cultural and relational dimensions.

5. Materials and methods used

The theoretical documentation represents a primary source of data and information in the field of social work. A first step in conducting an investigation is establishing the bibliography, together with gaining knowledge of published works on the respective subject and understanding the results obtained by other researchers, in similar research.

The interview is a technique within the purpose of service practice for conducting investigations, which obtains material information and maintains ongoing contact with the client. The interview is the technique where the social worker meets and establishes personal contact with the client in order to obtain the necessary data, especially for preliminary evaluation and explanatory synthesis. The interview is at the heart of social work, placed between observation and interrogation. Its advantage lies in bridging the gaps in questionnaires or interviews, as well as the limitations of pure observation.

As for the process of direct observation, we may mention that it is the primary technique in sociological research, providing factual information that constitutes the richest material amenable to qualitative analysis. The genogram represents the family diagram, similar to a genetic tree. It highlights the relationships between family members spanning two or three generations. The process of creating the genogram of the family helps in interpreting and assessing the available resources.

6. The presentation of theoretical methods for intervention in cases of physical violence between spouses

It aims to primarily employ intervention methods in cases of physical violence within the couple, in order to ameliorate and re-establish balance within the relationships between the two actors of the couple. Additionally, it presents the population that was the subject of the research from the perspective of individual, social, cultural, and relational dimensions.

7. The general characteristics of couples

The subjects of the research were a total of 9 married couples. The subjects were recruited from couples undergoing divorce proceedings at the Civil Court of Bacău, Romania. The investigations into the couples and their issues were conducted through a single partner of the couple, that was the wife.

8. Forms of assistance and intervention in the studied cases

Applying scientific methods of collecting information to the subjects, who were the focus of this research, revealed numerous causes that have favoured physical violence within the couple's marriage. The

large number of problems specific to this characteristic is the factor that determines many individuals to become clients of social services, in need of assistance.

In the presented cases, alcoholism is a feature exclusive to men. Thus, in these families, the first victims are the wife and the children. They are subjected to psychological and moral tensions, to verbal and physical violence, as well as to emotional, material and financial deprivations. In this respect, the behaviour of family deteriorates, as the husband no longer fulfils his role within the family.

9. Conclusions

Violence has existed in domestic settings since immemorial times, probably starting with Adam and Eve and the causes are, as we have seen, multifaceted, ranging from socio-economic influences to psycho-emotional development, finally ending with biological factors.

The public's perception of the phenomenon of domestic violence, the lack of information, the numerous difficulties in understanding this topic, recognizing and accepting its existence in society in general and within a family, in particular, have led to a series of myths and prejudices regarding causal and predisposing factors.

The Romanian family experienced developmental stress and restrictions during the years of dictatorship, which increased anxiety and undermined emotional stability.

The family, no matter the new forms that the industrial and post-industrial society might proliferate (such as childless families, families as homogeneous work units at home, according to A. Toffler, 1973-1983), will continue to exist as the most crucial link in societal development and life experience. It remains the most faithful bearer of the torch of peaceful and creative living from one generation to the next.

Acknowledgements

Therefore, the issues concerning both normal and pathological families continue to be the focus of complementary specialities (psychiatrists, psychologists, sexologists, endocrinologists, gynaecologists, paediatricians, sociologists). There are increasingly frequent opinions and ideas about the necessity of scientifically organised family assistance, with significant implications in professional education and responsible demographic behaviour. While important steps have been taken in ensuring genetic space and prenuptial consultation, psychological, psychotherapeutic and educational assistance for premarital and marital couples facing "difficulties" remains more of an aspiration than a functional reality in the social realm.

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