

## THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE ADULTS

Oana Lavinia FILIP<sup>1</sup>, Lavinia Elisabeta POPP<sup>2</sup>, Felicia ANDRIONI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant, PhD., University Babeş-Bolyai of Cluj-Napoca (Romania),  
E-mail: [oanalaviniafilip@yahoo.ro](mailto:oanalaviniafilip@yahoo.ro)

<sup>2</sup>Professor, PhD., "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca (Romania),  
E-mail: [lavinia\\_popp@yahoo.com](mailto:lavinia_popp@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup>Professor, PhD., University of Petroşani (Romania), E-mail: [felicia\\_andrioni@yahoo.com](mailto:felicia_andrioni@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *Violence against children is one of the most serious social problems of contemporary society, and the repercussions of this phenomenon are devastating for the development of future adults. The family is the main environment of children's education and training that provides them with the necessary resources to grow, develop, mature and finally carry on life, and on their future parenting conduct. In the absence of behavioural patterns worth following, children who are victims of domestic violence may perceive aggression as a normality to apply later in their own families. This study includes an extensive analysis of the consequences of domestic violence on the emotional development of children growing up in an abusive environment. The purpose of the investigative approach was to analyse the effects of domestic violence in the training of future adults. The quantitative research consisted in a questionnaire applied to 100 persons from Caraş-Severin county. The aim of the research was to identify the main consequences of domestic violence on children and to observe how adult life suffers. Violence against children is a very complex phenomenon with multiple effects on the development of adult life.*

**Key words:** *domestic violence; children; adult repercussions; quantitative research; behavioural patterns.*

### 1. Introduction

Domestic violence against children is one of the most serious social problems in contemporary society. Although it is very difficult to estimate the number of children abused in the family environment, due to their natural reservations to respond to surveys, various studies and published statistics indicate that this number is constantly growing (Rădulescu, 1999:55-57).

From a legal perspective, the definition of domestic violence (Law no. 217/2003) for preventing and combating domestic violence is as follows:

"Domestic violence is any physical or verbal act committed intentionally by a family member against another member of the same family, which causes physical, mental, sexual or material harm."

According to the World Health Organization (1999), domestic violence involves "corroborating all forms of physical and / or emotional abuse, sexual neglect, neglect or neglect, economic exploitation or any other type of exploitation that harms or may harm health, survival, development or dignity of the child in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power" (Krug et al., 2002:59).

### 2. Forms of violence against children

The issue of domestic violence against children is addressed in the literature taking into account the following types: physical abuse (sexual abuse), sexual abuse (sexual abuse), emotional abuse (emotional abuse) and neglect).

Abuse is defined in Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights (art. 89, paragraph 1) and can take various forms, being classified as

physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse (GD no. 49/2011, Annex 1, Chapter II.2.1 Operational definitions).

- **Physical abuse** is defined as the totality of acts committed by a caregiver against the child, which produce or the potential to cause physical harm to the child (Krug et al., 2002:60). Blows, burns, slapping, pushing, suffocating, scalding, abruptly can be identified as forms of physical abuse.
- **Emotional abuse** refers both to the failure of a parent to provide the child with a supportive and harmonious developmental environment, and to all acts that have an adverse effect on the child's emotional health and development. Emotional abuse does not refer to singular situations in which the child is rejected by a parent who has other priorities, is concerned and tense, over a short period of time, but aims at a stable behaviour that characterizes the relationship between the two, which leaves no trace. physical, but it is all the more dangerous. This makes emotional abuse difficult to demonstrate (Killen, 1998:34)
- **Sexual abuse** involves the "use" of the child by parents or others to meet their own sexual needs. This type of abuse includes a wide range of behaviours, from caressing, forcing children to watch sexually explicit pornographic magazines and movies, to assisting an adult during masturbation, participating in sexual games, oral, anal or genital interference. These acts are addressed to children of all ages, may be repeated for a long time or may be an isolated incident (<https://www.revistadesociologie.ro/pdf-uri/nr.5-6-2008/02-Puscas.pdf>).

### 3. Consequences of child abuse and neglect

Traumas experienced in childhood have both short-term and long-term effects on children's physical and mental development. According to the World Health Organization, these consequences can be physical (bruises, fractures, disability); sexual (reproductive system problems, unwanted pregnancies, sexual dysfunction, sexually transmitted diseases), psychological and behavioural (substance abuse, aggressive behaviour, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, hyperactivity, eating and sleeping disorders, behaviour suicide and self-harm (Rujoiu & Rujoiu, 2012:136).

- **The consequences of physical abuse emotionally:** feelings of guilt and inferiority persist into adulthood; violent behaviour is manifested interpersonal in most social interactions, especially if the child has internalized a parental model of aggression; there is a strange identification with this model because the violent episodes were perceived by the child as a sign of the parent's interest in him.
- **The consequences of physical abuse on a social level:** the child victim sometimes does not recognize the abuse and does not report it, the child refuses to separate from the aggressor parent, in adult life will adopt masochistic attitudes, has school problems, has behavioural disorders in relationships with other children (physical aggression, verbal, impulsivity), these behavioural manifestations result in social isolation or the establishment of relationships only with recalcitrant, aggressive children, which determines their inclusion in the vicious circle of devaluation-exclusion.
- **The consequences of child neglect in social terms:** establishing fragile interpersonal contacts, difficulties in adapting, trying to meet unmet needs, by committing antisocial acts (individually or as part of a group), consumption of

prohibited substances, running away from home, absenteeism, poor learning of ethical moral norms (Hogaș, 2010:52).

- **The consequences of neglecting the child emotionally:** Sustained emotional abuse has especially long-term consequences on a child's development, mental health, behaviour, and self-esteem. The contexts of this type of abuse are usually those related to domestic / family violence, adults with mental health problems and parents with low parental abilities (<https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sci-ro/files/a2/a271a06c-4e1e-4a6f-831a-b1c8de0917bd.pdf>).

#### **4. The effects of domestic violence on adult life**

Episodes of domestic violence experienced in childhood have important repercussions both in the short and long term on the physical, mental and emotional development of victims of domestic violence. The World Health Organization shows that these repercussions can be identified at the physical level (fractures, bruises, burns, disability); sexual (sexual dysfunctions, reproductive system problems, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases); psychological and behavioural (alcohol and drug abuse, violent behaviour, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, eating and sleeping disorders, suicidal ideation).

The occurrence of diseases such as cancer or infertility are presented by the WHO as long-term effects on physical health as a result of violence. Milner (2010) presents as a consequence of physical violence against children, in addition to injury or death in cases of extreme violence, low self-esteem, cognitive impairment, poor school performance, addictions such as alcohol, drugs, sexual disorders or running away from home, depression, integration and adjustment problems. Sexual abuse is associated with consequences such as (substance abuse, anxiety and depression) and physical health with (chronic fatigue for example) (Greenfield, 2010). Windom and Maxfield (2001) conducted a comparative analysis of cases of physical, sexual, and neglect violence, concluding that "childhood abuse and neglect are responsible for increasing the risk of arrest by up to 59% in adolescence, with 28% in adulthood, and for committing crimes with about 30% ". Therefore, sexually abused children compared to those who are physically abused or neglected are more prone to commit acts of delinquency (Smith, 2011:53). Another consequence of victimization is post-traumatic stress disorder. Defined in DSM IV as a "constellation of symptoms that occur as a result of exposure to an extremely traumatic episode: wars, natural disasters, serious road accidents, sexual or physical victimization, terrorist attacks and diagnosis with a potentially latent disease" with the statement that it is not limited to these, post-traumatic stress syndrome can present the following symptoms in children who have been sexually or physically abused, or who have witnessed violent scenes: emotional problems, uncontrolled and self-destructive behaviours, experiencing emotions such as shame, despair, helplessness, social isolation, permanent fear, deteriorating sense of danger, dissociative symptoms (Wilmushurst, 2007:273-277).

#### **5. Data analysis and interpretation**

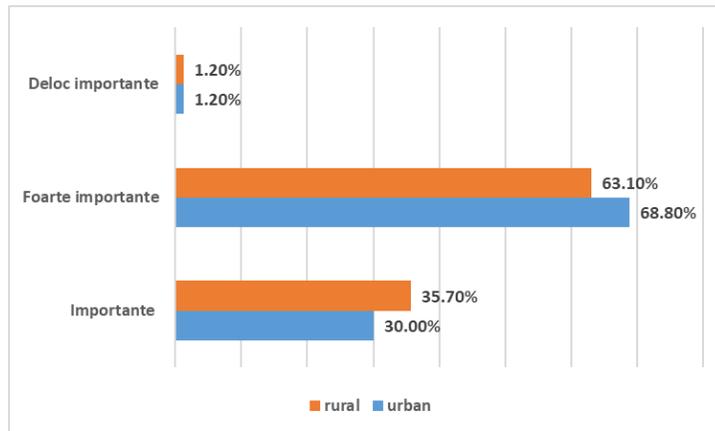
To investigate the problems, (...) a set of tools can be used that can be applied at Community level: social inquiry, opinion poll, intervention, etc. (Andrioni, 2009:5).

The quantitative research applied consisted of the application of a questionnaire to a number of persons people from Caraș-Severin county. The aim of the research was to identify the main consequences of domestic violence on children and to analyse how it influences the lives of future adults. Violence against children is a very complex

phenomenon, with multiple effects on the development of the future adult. The research method used was the sociological survey, the technique applied being the sociological questionnaire, the research questions following the three main themes, essential for the validation of the hypotheses:

- I. The role of behavioural models in the development of future adults;
- II. The importance of the power of example;
- III. Respondents' opinion on the consequences of domestic violence on children.

**Figure 1. The role of behavioural models**



**How important are behavioural patterns for the harmonious emotional development of children and adolescents?**

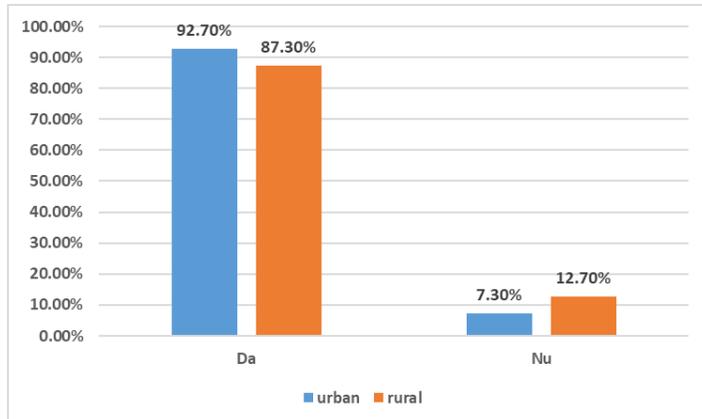
		Environment		Total
		urban	rural	
How important are behavioural patterns for the harmonious emotional development of children and adolescents?	Important	30.0%	35.7%	33.1%
	Very important	68.8%	63.1%	65.7%
	Not at all important	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Distribution of answers: one can see that the majority of respondents in urban areas (68.80%) and (63.10) in rural areas consider behavioural patterns to be very important.

**Figure 2. The power of example**

**Can children and adolescents who have been physically and emotionally abused in their own families become future aggressors?\***

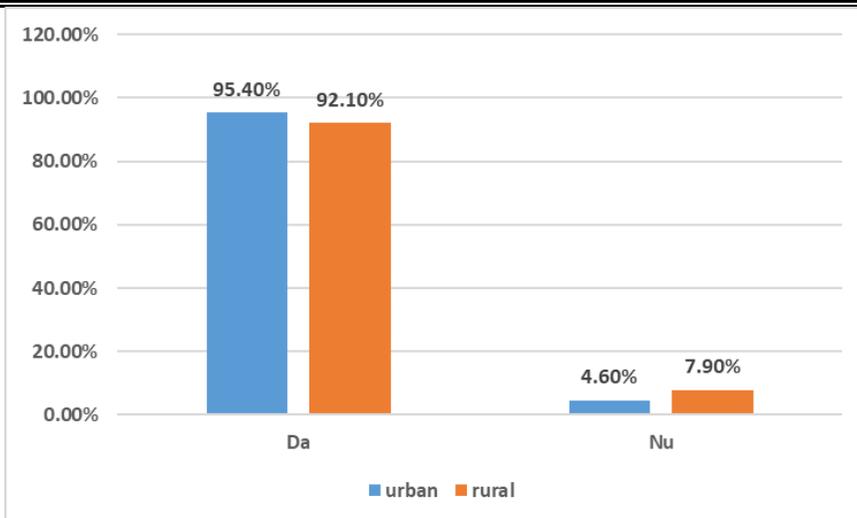
		Environment		Total
		urban	rural	
Can children and adolescents who have been physically and emotionally abused in their own families become future aggressors?	Yes	92.7%	87.3%	89.7%
	No	7.3%	12.7%	10.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



It is observed that (92.70%) of the respondents from the urban area and (87.30%) of the respondents from the rural area consider that children and adolescents who have been physically and emotionally abused in their own families can become future aggressors, and (7.30% ) of those surveyed in urban areas and (12.70%) consider that the power of example is not important.

**Figure 3 The consequences of domestic violence**  
**Are children and adolescents living in a violent environment more prone to depressive episodes, suicidal thoughts, anxiety?**

		Environment		Total
		urban	rural	
Are children and adolescents living in a violent environment more prone to depressive episodes, suicidal anxiety?	Yes	95.4%	92.1%	93.6%
	No	4.6%	7.9%	6.4%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



It is observed that 94.40% of respondents in urban areas and 92.10% in rural areas consider that children and adolescents living in a violent environment are more

prone to depressive episodes, anxiety and suicide, and 4.60% of people from rural areas and 7.90% from urban areas consider that there are no repercussions.

## 5. Conclusions

The evolution of society has shown that, over the years, violence has acquired cultural, economic and social valences. All forms of violence have repercussions both at a particular level (individual and his private life) and in general (the social macrosystem).

We conclude that domestic violence has become one of the visible crimes, due to the alarming increase in the number of cases of domestic violence, which has generated increased attention from the authorities, non-governmental organizations, the media on the causes, forms and consequences of this phenomenon. „ Child abuse and neglect have long-term effects, clearly proven on adult mental illness. There is growing evidence that child abuse and neglect also have significant effects on adult physiological disorders, such as ischemic coronary heart disease, liver disease and lung cancer, which are probably also due to the patient's health risk behaviours.” (Kessler et al., 2008: 625). The intervention of the social worker has clear objectives: to reduce the impact of stressors; to put into practice the crisis situation in order to stimulate the affected people not only to solve problems, but also to control similar problems in the future (Coulshed, 1993: 76).

Scenes of domestic violence in the family environment have devastating effects on children who are witnesses or victims of domestic violence. During childhood, some children show a state of disinterest in school activities, others have difficulty adjusting and focusing, may exhibit behavioural disorders, anxiety and even depression. Adult life also suffers because individuals who grow up and develop in an abusive environment perceives violence as a normality, which the adults can later apply within their own family and can raise their children with the conviction that education it is done by applying corporal punishments, without having remorse related to the physical and emotional wounds they can cause, being followers of the idea "nothing happened, I slapped the child around, what's the big deal?"; they can consider their children as utilitarian objects: they exist rather to satisfy their unfulfilled needs, projections and aspirations (they must be submissive regardless of the situation and fulfil exactly what is required of them). Therefore, behavioural patterns play an essential role in a child's development, the power of example, but also the atmosphere in which children grow and develop contributes to the construction of adult life. Intense emotions are generated by the relationships that the human being has with others, in the case of children, the most important people with whom they have a significant-determining relationship, are the parents. The mission of community specialists is to actively participate in solving the problems of children and adolescents living in a violent environment, to help them live an emotional life without reversible variations suffering-happiness.

Violence against children has long-term effects and is generated by a multitude of factors: financial, social, psychological, emotional factors. In order to prevent this phenomenon, the intervention of the authorities is also needed by adopting effective laws to protect victims of domestic violence. It is necessary to develop and implement an individualized protection plan for victims of domestic violence, which will really come to their aid, only thus feeling safe. It is particularly important that civil society does not remain indifferent to domestic violence, any abuse must be reported to the

competent authorities and specialized institutions, so that many of the effects of domestic violence can be prevented.

### References:

1. Andrioni, F. (2009). Caracteristicile serviciilor sociale guvernamentale și neguvernamentale din România – Analiză comparativă, (18). *Studii și cercetări din domeniul științelor socio-umane*, Filiala Cluj-Napoca: Academia Româna.
2. Greenfield, E. A. (2010). Child abuse as a life-course social determinant of adult health. *Maturitas*.
3. Hogaș, D. L. (2010). *Patriarhatul, subordonarea femeii și violența domestică*, Iași: Lumen.
4. Kessler, R. C.; Pecora, P. J., Williams, J. et al. (2008). Effects of Enhanced Foster Care on the Long- Term, Physical and Mental Health of Foster Care *Arch. Gen. Psychiatry* (65):6. Alumnii.
5. Krug, E. G. (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
6. Killen, K. (1998). *Copilul maltratat*. Timișoara: EUROBIT.
7. Milner J. S.; Thomson C. J. et al. (2010). Do trauma symptoms mediate the relationship between childhood physical abuse and adult child abuse risk? *Child Abuse & Neglect*.
8. Organisation Mondiale de la Sante (1999). *La violence a l'egard des femmes: une priorite pour l'action de sante publique*. Geneve: WHO/FRH/WHO/97.8.
9. Rădulescu, S. M. (1999). *Devianță, criminalitate și patologie socială*, Bucharest: Lumina Lex.
10. Rujoiu, V. and Rujoiu, O. (2012). *Violența în familie între percepție socială și asumare individuală*, Bucharest: ASE.
11. Smith, D.E; Springer, C.M. and Barret, S. (2011). Physical Discipline and Socioemotional Adjustment among Jamaican Adolescents. *Journal of Family Violence*.
12. Wilmshurst, L. (2007). *Psihopatologia copilului. Fundamente*. Iași: Polirom.
13. \*\*\* GD no. 49/2011, annex 1, chapter II.2.1. Operational definitions.
14. \*\*\* *Law no. 272/2004* on the protection and promotion of children's rights (art.89, para.1).
15. \*\*\**Law no. 217/2003* for preventing and combating domestic violence. *Official Gazette of Romania*. (367): 1, 29.
- 16.
17. \*\*\*<https://www.revistadesociologie.ro/pdf-uri/nr.5-6-2008/02-Puscas.pdf>
18. \*\*\*<https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sci-ro/files/a2/a271a06c-4e1e-4a6f-831a-b1c8de0917bd.pdf>.