

# THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR TACKLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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**Abstract:** *The concept of domestic violence is widely debated in the literature, as it is one of the most brutal manifestations of inequality in society due to the physical, psychological and legal implications it involves, with multiple causes and forms of manifestation. This Article contains a brief presentation of the theoretical framework to address the phenomenon of violence. Although it is difficult to reach consensus among researchers, the presentation of various theories and perspectives is intended to understand the common thread that essentially permeates the phenomenon of domestic violence and its deeper understanding. This Article addresses the theories considered most representative for a comprehensive research into the phenomenon of violence, namely: Biological, sociological and psychological and psychosocial theories.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence; victim; aggressor; aggressiveness; sociology theories; biological theories; psychological and psychosocial theories; phenomenon

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of domestic violence is present in everyday reality, closer to or further away from our home, our values, our conflict resolution habits and self-control of impulses. By trying to identify the main causes of aggression, various theories in the field of psychology and sociology try to sort out the multitude of definitions in this field, considering aggressiveness as a function of protection or survival of the individual (Lorenz), as an unavoidable expression of energy, pulley (Freud), As a learned behavior (Bandura) or as a response to social stress (GIL). The approaches often differ widely: Some try to explain aggressiveness and others are violent or open aggressiveness; some explain intra-familial violence in the broader societal context; others have a more specific approach, looking in particular at the latter; some explain male violence in particular, and others violence in any gender; some try to explain the aggressor's co-operation and others the victim's specific conduct. Some of these are set out below.

## 2. Biological theories

Developing the Freudian view and the analogy between animal and human nature, K. Lorenz (1952, 1966; water Turliuc, 2007) developed ethological theory, where he claimed that aggressiveness met survival needs, with more aggressive individuals increasing their chances of survival. The aggressors manage to get more easily the resources they need their lives, with natural selection being responsible for preserving and strengthening the aggressive instinct (Otovescu, 2009: 254). Lorenz emphasized the biological-industrial nature of aggressive behavior. It is an instinctual energy, accumulated over a long period of time and, at the same time, a discharge and (re)modeling of it by related and conjunctural factors. The theories that supported the instinct nature of aggressiveness have been subject to multiple criticism, and aggressiveness can be influenced and modified more than suggested in them.

The representatives of sociology insisted, like ethologists, on the adaptive valences of aggressiveness. But they claimed that the aggression occurred in order to

increase the likelihood of the aggressor genes being transmitted to the next generation. E. Wilson (1975) considers that this ultimate goal of genetic survival also imposes limits on aggressiveness because its exacerbation could lead to the elimination of some of the aggressor's own offspring.

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The rejection of the instinctive nature of aggressiveness did not mean denying biological influences on aggressive behavior. The development of the modern vaseness technique in the field of genetics allowed the study of the human carytype, through which the lumbar theory is reconfirmed in the form of the theory of chromosomal aberrations. Thus chromosomal anomalies become the innate, genetic causes of violent behavior. For example, it is known that subjects with double Y syndrome (the phenotypic consequence of XYY trisomy) are characterized by mental lability and aggressive behavior.

The neurobiology model starts from the analysis of anatomical structures and non-orochemical systems involved in the production of aggressiveness "normal" and "pathological". In this context, it is emphasized first that aggressive reactions have a neural mechanism, excessive stimulation or dysfunctions of nervous formations (time lobe, diencephal, language system) producing aggressive behavior. Fernandez-Molina (Art. Stein, 2000) has demonstrated that there is a morphological and functional interrelationship between the temporal and diencephal lobe and that some centers of tonsil influence emotional responses of defense, rage or escape. Other authors also insisted on the important role of the language system and the frontal lobe. D.J. Stein (2000), for example, shows that there are certain data that indicate the existence of specific frontal-lobe dysfunctions in the psyche (such as the deterioration in the processing of materials with a strong emotional echo), which also explains their higher aggressiveness.

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The second aspect of the neurobiology pattern is related to the particularities of the nervous system operation: The operation of the neurotransmitters, the mechanism of polarization, the play of excitation and inhibition, etc. these neurological processes provide the mechanisms for adapting the body internally and externally. Aggressiveness would be, in the deepest biological sense, an extremely adaptable means, which would be the basis of negative emotional States, hatred or anger.

The third component presented in the neurobiology pattern is the involvement of endocrine glands in aggressiveness, the role of testosterone in manifestation of human aggressiveness. After O. Klineberg (1956, water M.N. Turliuc, 2004) the male aggressiveness is less socio-cultural conditionality and it is found throughout the animal world. The injection of male hormones into embryos increases the aggressiveness of animals after their birth in both sexes.

Genetics, neurology and endocrinology have been invoked to explain the differences between the average gender performance on aggressiveness. Researchers argue, for example, that the higher level of sexuality of the male sex has a strong biological determination because: 1. This gender gap is very similar in humans and higher primates; 2. it is universal in the sense that it is present in all cultures and 3. the level of aggressiveness is sensitive to the action of male sex hormones.

The fact that men are more aggressive has encouraged an ambivalent attitude toward aggressiveness and violence. When carried out for the purpose of maintaining peace or love, aggressive acts are considered a good and necessary thing. It is no wonder that domestic violence was so tolerated, that the syndrome of the beaten child was only defined by specialists in the seventh century, that the legal provisions against domestic violence are extremely recent. Male aggressiveness has a direct, particularly serious impact on family or couple life. Violence prevents the development or maintenance of the natural sense of love and mutual respect of partners, favoring resentment, emotional rupture and gradual dissolution of relations.

However, the explanations provided in biological disciplines are far from sufficient or definitive and are often insufficiently correlated.

### 3. Sociological theories

Most often, the sociological perspective of domestic violence tends to explain its appearance through the social stress to which families are exposed. Some authors go further (e.g. GIL, 1978) and say that social stress is the expression of social values and practices that shape the family structure. "Ultimately, society would actually be responsible for the domestic violence," K. noted Browne and M. Herbert (1999).

The social stress model. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, overcrowding, isolation or alienating working conditions are seen – the Gelles note (1987) – as generators of individual frustration and stress that can lead to violence. The author concluded in his paper that violence was a way of adapting or responding to structural stress. But since violence does not only occur in disadvantaged economic categories, but is spread across the spectrum of these categories, this perspective is limited. Other attempts to explain intravital violence in sociological terms are resource theory (Gooid, 1971), general system theory (Straus, 1980) and exchange/control theory (Gelles, 1983).

Gode (1971) says the family, as a social institution, relies to some extent on force and threat to maintain order. The more alternatives or resources a person has to exercise power, the less he or she will be willing to use force openly. Most people do not enjoy strength in these situations because of its high costs. Goode suggested that middle-class families have moved resources from their higher prestige and better economic position and will therefore be less inclined to use violence or threat. O'Brien (1971; water Brown and Herbert, 1999) followed the same line of thought when it made the assumption of the inconsistency of the State. He focused on the husband's economic problems and the different level of training of the spouses, which can generate a lower position of the husband in the family. Violence is seen by him as a solution to remedy the low status and increase self-esteem.

The theory of social exchange/control on family life is based on the concepts of mutual rewards and punishments. Family members exchange or share feelings, services and resources. When the balance of trade matches the appropriate of individuals, peace and order will prevail.

Feminine patterns. An alternative approach suggests that individual violence reflects the micro-system of power relationships in a society. For example, one of the female explanations of violence against women and children takes into account the subordinate position of women in society in general. The purpose of violence is considered to be the exercise of control over other members of the family. Hanmer (1978) extended this theory to one that included the entire state apparatus (represented by men), claiming that the policies of the welfare state only induce dependence on women.

A. E. Dobash and R.E. Dobash (1979, 1987) have identified three basic elements of this theory: 1. Men exercise a domination and systematic control over women, 2. Violence occurs in men who believe in their patriarchal rights, and 3. The use of violence by man over women is accepted by society. The authors claim that in society the man has traditionally been granted with a series of freedoms which are not allowed for the woman. Sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploration, pornography and prostitution are methods that society uses and tolerates for the persecution of women.

The most widespread sociological explanation indicates that cultural values, accessibility of weapons and exposure to aggressive, unsanctioned models affect

personal attitudes toward domestic violence. This, in turn, influences the individual's acceptance of aggressiveness as a form of emotional expression and as a method of exercising control over others. Social groups and communities can develop a high tolerance to aggressive interactions, leading to so-called "violence subcultures".

In conclusion, the sociological explanations have evolved from the mere explanation of violence through social stress (such as poverty) to those involving transactions between the aggressor and the victim in the context of the family and societal structure.

#### **4. Psychological and psychosocial theories**

Psychoanalytical theory. The psychoanalytical explanations of violence are related to the concepts of conflict within the psyche, personality disorders, negation mechanisms, developmental deficiencies or self weakness, narcissism, childhood trauma, masochism, etc. (Hearn, 1998).

The Lombrosian channel, S. Freud has supported the idea of aggressiveness that tends to impose itself as an uncontrollable force that disorganizes and divides. As a matter of fact, his very theory on the three psychic courts (unconsciousness, subconscious and conscious, and then self, self and supremacy) came out of the idea of the dispute between them for determining the conduct of the individual.

People with antisocial behavior are characterized by a weak superego, a lack of coherence of self and poor functioning of sublimation. Violent men tend to use their violence as a mechanism to intensify the ego deficit, because their repertoire of non-violent behavior and communication skills is very limited. The weak superego of people with antisocial behavior does not allow them to defeat their violent and impulsive starts. The sublimation mechanism also plays an important role in solving the Oedipal complex at the beginning of the latency period. It enables the child to change his/her life and to devote himself/her to socially valued activities: social learning, gaming, cultural activity, etc. within the family, this self-defense mechanism will contribute to the development of feelings of devotion, affection and respect for the same-sex parent with which it will identify itself for the purpose of developing its gender identity. Aggressive and anti-social people not only fail to redirect their pulsional energy toward educational activities, but also do not end up developing feelings of love, respect, or devotion in their significant others. The most effective way of explaining the fundamental mechanisms of aggression is provided by the pulsion survey. Pulsion is, in Freud's view, a dynamic process consisting of pressure (impulse, energy load, mobilizing force, somatic force imposed on the psychic device) which forces the organism to eliminate the state of tension. In his first theory of pulsion, Freud opposes sexual and self-preservation pulsions (the survival of the individual depends on; for example: Hunger and food functions); in the second, Freud sets out the dualism of life and death, often assimilated to sexual and aggressive dualism. Death Pulsion competes – most often without great success – with life pulsions that motivate people to survive and reproduce. Here are some of Freud's specifications regarding the pulsion survey (apud J.) Laplanche and J.- B. Pontalis, 1994, pp. 324-343):

"Death impulses are those profound impulses of being, which tend to reduce the pulsations of life, with the aim of suppressing them and restoring life to its inorganic forms. At first, the death pulsions head inward, following self-destruction, then turn outward, manifesting themselves as aggressive or destructive pulsions.

The pulse of aggressiveness is most often used in its extensive direction by the death pulley, directed outwards. The aggressiveness would result from the play of Eros and Thanatos, being an outward direction of death, based on the movement mechanism, arising from the individual's need to protect himself.

"The Pulsion of destruction is most often a synonymous term for the pulsion of death. Sometimes he becomes synonymous with aggressive pulsion, expressing the orientation of death pulsing toward the outside world.

"The Pulsion of domination (of domination, of authority) is aimed at dominating the object by force. It is a non-sentimental pulse, which unites only secondary to sexuality, and which underpins child cruelty before the onset of the feeling of pity and sadism, cruelty which does not initially follow the suffering of the other interpersonal relationships.

The psychoanalytical approach has been criticized mainly by representatives of the feminine movement. For example, women are described as dominating, masochistic, fridges, aggressive psi, over-protection against sons, regularly imposing castration penalties, etc. (Hearn, 1998). They seek or tolerate abuse in order to continue treatment from childhood. The feeling of inferiority suffered by girls is seen as an explanation of the tolerance of abuse and violence of the man in adult age. Furthermore, the Catharist theory that aggressiveness decreases if expressed from inside to outside has been criticized by women who claim that this rather encourages and amplifies aggressive manifestations.

Theories of situational influences. The partisans of the acquired character of aggressiveness claim that this occurs according to situational factors, as an individual's response to concrete environmental conditions and to the increasing temptations in the consumer society (Turliuc, 2007). In this respect, the theory of John Dollard and his collaborators explains the nature of aggressive behavior through the frustration-aggression theory. Their frustrated and aggressive work (1939), one of the most influential research into aggressiveness, starts from two postulated: Aggressiveness is always a consequence of frustration and frustration always leads to some form of aggressiveness.

Blocking the path of reaching a particular purpose creates frustrations which, in turn, are the source of aggressiveness. Blocking access and fear of the source of frustration mean that aggressiveness often does not focus on its source, but is re-directed and re-directed toward a target substitute, less likely to take revenge and make it safer.

As Dollard and his colleagues showed, the Cathar theory claims that the expression of anger leads to an improvement in the emotional state. Bushman, Baumeister and Phillips (2001) consider that, although there is a kernel of truth in this theory, it is incorrect as a whole. Their complex experimental study has denied the alleged liberating effects, the discharge of negative impulses and tensions through aggressiveness. It does not "clean" the psychic of long-term hostile pulses, although it brings a better momentary condition recognized by most subjects. This explains why individuals – unable to reach a state of pleasure, psychologically well, by carrying out socially accepted acts – can resort to aggressive demonstrations to change their momentary mood.

The theory of emotional adjustment says people engage in an aggressive act when they hope that this will get rid of anger and feel better. Those who experience

negative emotional affectives will be more receptive about ways of improving their emotional state. This is why aggressiveness will increase at least to individuals who believe that the expression of anger and its exterior is an effective way of regulating or improving their emotional state.

**Social learning theory.** The theory proposed by Bandura is to fill the existing gap between the psychoanalytical and behavioral-centered theories. Based on the Behaviorist theory, this approach provides a less rigid understanding of human aggressiveness, insisting on observable changes in a person's behavior as a result of learning. Social learning also means acquiring aggressive responses, either through direct learning (as a result of rewards or punishments) or by observing and imitating the conduct of others. The experiments of Bandura and his collaborators (1973) have shown the role of adult as a model for learning aggressive behavior in children: Those who witnessed aggressive behavior by the adult, have also behaved more aggressively. Moreover, aggressiveness has increased when aggressive behavior was rewarded, when the pattern pursued was of the same sex as the child and the model had previously had intense ties with the child. In principle the theory is that we tend to maintain aggressive behavior followed by desirable (or rewarded) results and we avoid aggressive behavior followed by undesirable (punished) results.

Without denying the role of the environment, Bandura (1973, 1977) recognizes the importance of internal processes such as cognitions and emotions. The family environment is one of the psychosocial frameworks for acquiring aggressive scenarios, which are supported by knowledge and assessment structures – perceptions, attitudes, regulatory beliefs – that lead to aggressive behavior. Human beings learn how to perceive, interpret, judge and respond to stimuli from the physical and social environment by crystallizing myriad-behavioral scenarios, which are frequently learned and used, can become automated in time as skills.

The training of gender differences, including those on the level of aggressiveness, is explained by the impact on the development of parents and other social agents. In terms of aggressiveness, it is parents who often encourage aggressive behavior by their children, either by ignoring their aggressiveness manifestations or even offering hidden rewards such as obtaining the desired objects, paying attention and encouraging them by means of gestures and smiles. Bandura (1973) also introduced the term "social hardeners" to explain when a behavioral response is followed by someone else's positive or negative response, which strengthens or inhibits the chance of that behavior occurring.

Bandura's research into aggressive behavior has shown that learning through demonstration can be an important means of processing aggressive models, even without reinforcement. The higher the age of children, the better they understand that aggressiveness is accepted behavior in society, especially for male ones. This theory is used to explain the intergenerational transmission of abuse.

The victim's perspective and the theory of helplessness learned. Some authors (Gelles, 1976; Walker, 1984) have promoted this theory to explain the behavioral and behavioral mechanisms of the abused woman. This theory is part of the depression theories and was developed by Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale. Her authors claim that depression is the cause of negative life events or the non-occurrence of positive events, which lead to a depressive assignment style. It is about the tendency acquired

over time, driven by the aggressor, to attribute negative events to stable and global internal factors.

The theory of helplessness learned is based on three aspects: Information about the event or situation, cognitive representations of the situation and the response to the situation. The second component is extremely important because at this level the person realizes whether or not their expectations can be met. Cognitive, motivational and emotional disturbances can occur at this level. Thus, if a person does not believe yes can control the result of his behavior, he will respond by the trained helplessness (Snyder and Ford, 1998). In the case of the abused woman, if there is no belief that she can control what happens to her, it will be difficult for him to believe that she can influence her abusive situation, which prevents her from being released from her situation. Once she acts according to the belief that she is helpless, her perception will become reality, the woman becoming passive, obedient (Walker, 1984). In describing violent incidents, women assaulted by their husbands do not seem to be as helpless as they believe (Gelles, 1987). The interpretation of their behavior is rather determined by the set of negative cognitive representations, by their belief in what they cannot and less by the reality of their abilities.

Integration theories centered on interaction - On the basis of past experiences, some private partners tend to establish aggressive relationships because they are familiar, have become accustomed to them, feel comfortable within them, considering violence the expression of mutual concern, attention and attachment. In this respect, Hanks and Rosenbaum (1978) have pointed to the extraordinary similarity between the current marital relationship of abused women and the marriage of their parents. Some theories try to move further away from the individual psychological perspective to focus on studying the interactions between family members.

Interpersonal interactive perspective. Toch (1976) analyzed the characteristics of both the aggressive man and his context and victim. He concluded that aggressive manifestations are associated with the macho attitude and the tendency to maintain a private personal identity in relation to the partner. Studies on open conflict show a consistency of aggressive reactions and features associated with them in a development perspective.

The theory of marital power. The foundations of power are the organization and resources that dominate one of the partners. These may include not only skills, information, personality features, social and economic status, but also cultural definition by which a partner has authority within the intimate relationship. Power processing refers to interacting techniques that an individual uses to gain control, such as negotiation, serviability and problem solving. According to the theory of marital power, partners lacking power have greater chances of being physically abused by their life partners.

Serra (1993; water Mandrila, 2003-2004) shows that the use of violence has various meanings, depending on who is used: When used by a man, it means power, and when used by a woman it means lack of power. These meanings are taken from the specific culture of a Community.

The theory of traumatic bonds. This theory was proposed by Dutton and Painter (water Mandrila, 2003-2004), considers that throughout their lives, Masochistic women have experienced and assimilated violent behavior in their subconscious behavior by persons important to them (father, brother, teacher). The



theory is trying to explain why the beaten woman stays with the man who beats her. The authors put forward two common assumptions for all such relationships: The lack of balance in terms of the power in the couple, so that the beaten partner is perceived as being dominated by the other, and the intermittent nature of the abuse. Since abuse occurs intermittently and periods of abuse are characterized by positive behavior (such as attention and love statements, remorse, etc.), it is difficult for the abused to leave the relationship. This loyalty of the victim to her abusers was similar to the Stockholm Syndrome.

This loyalty results from the identification of the victim with the aggressor as a way of dealing with the hazard, in a situation where the victim is powerless: "The more isolated the victim, the more its dependence on the abusers increases, not only in terms of its basic needs, but also in terms of emotional support. The more he is afraid, the more he is tempted to cling to the only relationship he is allowed to have with the aggressor. In the absence of any other relationship, it will try to find support in the one that holds it. Inevitably, in the absence of any other point of view the victim will end up seeing things through the eyes of the abuser" (Voinea, 1993, p. 109).

The multifactorial model of domestic violence. The model developed by Browne (1988; water Browne and Herbert, 1999) was the basis of the one developed by Pirozynski (1991), which we presented earlier. Browne suggested that stressful factors and environmental influences were mediated by relations between family members.

The model suggests that situational stress has the following 4 elements: Inter-marriage care relationships, maritime disputes, livious or concubine parent and natural parent, between custodian and non-monkey parent, etc., relationships with children and dependant elderly persons: the distance between the age of children, the size of the family, the degree of attachment of carers to the expectations of those dependant on them, etc., structural stress: poor housing conditions, unemployment, social isolation, the threats of care and protection authorities, values and self-esteem, etc., stress generated by addicts: for instance, one that is not desirable, that has incontinence, that is difficult to discipline, that is ill, that has physical or mental deficiencies, that is too energetic, emotional or too demanding, etc.

The chances that these situational stress factors will cause domestic violence are mediated by the relationships and interactions of family members. The secure relations between them will devour any effect of stress, favoring the development of the child strategies of the family. On the contrary, uncertain or preventable relationships will periodically trigger an escalation of negative emotions, which may lead to physical or emotional abuse. It will have a negative impact on interpress relations, making the system more vulnerable in the future to different stress. When positive feedback (which amplifies the change in the family system) occurs a systematic overheating (vicious circle) against a background of constant stress that will cause repetitive physical and emotional attacks. This situation is gradually getting worse, known as the "spiral of violence". In some cases, violent individuals will try to cope with their aggressive feelings toward certain family members by neglecting them physically or emotionally, in order to avoid interactions that could cause them injury.

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