What is and what is not violence?

Lecturer Florin-Mihai CĂPRIOARĂ, Ph.D
„George Bacovia" University, Bacau, Romania
mihaicaprioara@yahoo.com

Alina-Cornelia CĂPRIOARĂ, Ph.D
Association mutatis mutandis, Bacau, Romania
alinacaprioara@yahoo.com

***Abstract*:** *The study aims to analyze the concept of violence, in an attempt to delineate it from related concepts. The goal is the extensional and intentional fixation of this term, as well as the identification of the main theories on the causes of violence and highlighting its consequences. The importance of the research is to map out an expanded concept of violence, to restructure and streamline the forms of manifestation of this phenomenon. The novelty consists in linking the concept of violence with the pyramid of needs.*

***Keywords*:** *violence; aggression; forms of violence; consequences of violence; institutional violence*;

Introduction

The classification of the concepts *violence* and *aggression* is a necessary one, since their usage often sends to synonymy, in circumstances where the differences are essential.

The concept of *violence* sparks in the specialty literature many definitions, with multiple overlays and customizations. *Etymologically*, the term is extracted from the Latin root "vis", which means "force". Thus, it emphasizes the idea of power, domination, and use of physical superiority over the other.

Eric Debarbieux believes that "*violence is the brutal or continuous disruption of a collective, social or personal system that translates into a loss of integrity, which may be physical, mental or material. This disruption may be operated through aggression, through the use of force, consciously or unconsciously, but also violence may exist only from the point of view of the victim, without the offender's intent to do harm*" [1]. This definition highlights the discrete nature of violence, which would consist, in the author's opinion, not only in physical acts but also actions at the psychic level or the affected person's objects.

Psychologically, violence designates the predatory behavior manifested through socially undesirable ways. This perspective requires a clarification of the concept of aggression, which, in the etymological sense, signifies an individual potentiality to overcome an obstacle, to confront with other one and not back down in case of difficulty. This requires analyze violence further intensional and extensional legally.

1. Intension and extension of the term violence

The dictionary of psychology highlights several definitions of aggressiveness: "*behaviors charged with brutal, destructive and challenging reactions; pugnacious attitude; the quality of living and providing the vital primary needs (food and sex) by force; it's an innate reaction as a*

form of adaptation; a result of frustrations" [2]. The dictionary reveals the many usages of the term, but also the difficulty of discrimination between aggression and violence.

Moreover, some authors provide definitions of the term aggression which cover much of the characteristics of violence. Thus, the term *aggression* refers to any form of conduct directed with intent towards objects, people or itself, in order to produce prejudice, injury, destruction or damage [3]. Nicolae Mitrofan, in the study *Aggression*, distinguishes between the various forms of aggression [4]. Thus, depending on the assailant, there is an *aggressiveness of the young man and one of the adult, male and female, individual and collective, spontaneous and premeditated*. Depending on the means used to finalize the aggressive intentions, the author distinguishes between *physical and verbal aggression, between direct aggressiveness, with direct effects on the victim, and indirect aggression, between aggressor and victim with intermediaries*. Depending on the objectives pursued, there is an *aggression that aims at obtaining benefits, material gain and one predominantly aimed at harming and even destroying the victim*. Finally, depending on the form of manifestation, he differentiates between *violent and non-violent aggressiveness, between manifest and latent aggressiveness*.

Michel Floro proposes a differentiation of the two terms using three criteria [5]. The first is the functional one, according to which aggression is a potentiality that allows routing of the action. It belongs more to thinking than analysis. By contrast, violence is more directly related to the concrete activity, to the action adapted to the objective that is to be attained. The second criterion is of topological order: aggressiveness is internal, while violence is mostly external. Finally, the ethics criterion assigns to aggressiveness a potentiality which enables the individual to face problems and which, from this point of view, may be considered acceptable, while violence, understood as action that produces pain, is unacceptable.

With regard to aggression, there are many explanatory theories regarding this. Thus, Sigmund Freud believed that aggression is innate; people are born with the instinct to bully and be violent as "impulses of death" alongside libido "impulses of life" [6].

Gestalt psychology identifies an opportunity in aggressiveness, because it has an adaptive function, using the arguments of Konrad Lorenz according to which any healthy animal has a healthy aggressiveness which nourishes him, defends him and protects its territory. Konrad Lorenz formulates the psycho-hydraulic model via analogy with a water tank [7]. Violent behavior is the product of frustration which reaches a certain level, as the pressure generated causes the water to flow. John Dollard also considered that aggression is a response to frustration [8]. Thus, he argues that aggressiveness is determined by the external conditions. In the same line, Albert Bandura believes that aggression is a learned social behavior. According to it, aggressive behavior is learned either directly through punishment or by rewarding certain behaviors, or by observing certain patterns of conduct of others, especially of adults.

Therefore, violence is considered to be any manifestation that leads to a loss of physical, mental or material integrity and that modifies, in a brutal or continuous manner their own activity (violence can also be auto-referential) or that of another person, of a community or society as a whole. Violence is always destructive. By contrast, aggressiveness is innate and can manifest itself as violence as well as desirable social behaviors. The aggressiveness' area is broader, and besides violence it covers the excitable, impulsive, aberrant behavior.

Another related term is *abuse*. This designates any act which produces bodily injuries, emotional psychological disorders or exposures to dangerous situations or perceived to be dangerous by a person of a subordinate category. In this sense, abuse is correlated with the term

power, understood as the possibility and update to exploit, to coerce, to manipulate the situation, to use the position of social, psychological or physical superiority in their own benefit. However, paradoxically, often, even the lack of power leads to violence. The consciousness of lack of power, of the inferiority, may create a need for affirmation so strong that it becomes destructive aggression.

In legal terms, it can be concluded that violence is the general violation of human rights: right to life, to security, to dignity and to physical and mental integrity. In a general sense, it refers to the use of physical force or other persuasive means to bring prejudice to some goods or injuries to a person's integrity. In this sense, an act of violence, most often, has a premeditated character and is developed intentionally or it signifies the intent to cause suffering or physical injury to another person. The term can be correlated with *delinquency*, which means all behaviors that violate the rule of law having as core the notion of crime or misdemeanor. The notion *crime* has a triple meaning: 1. *crime as a way of interpreting*, which results from the processes of social interaction and defines the emotional reaction of the group to the fact that a crime was committed; 2. *the offence as an expression of the power of the criminal system to label certain behaviors*; 3. *the offense as a distancing societal effort*, given the constant tendency of the group to remove/marginalize offenders [9]. Therefore, from this point of view, the phenomenon of violence covers the majority of crime. But, on the other hand, violence can mean passivity, indifference, ostensive refusal of dialogue, so that violence and crime are notions found in a relationship of intersection.

Therefore, from *the intensional* point of view, the concept of violence receives the following characteristic notes: form of manifested aggressiveness which can take a destructive form, related in particular to the action. *Extensionally*, violence means murders, wars, robberies, rapes, destruction, threats, insults, fights. It can take active forms (physical, psychological or material violence) or passive as non-action, the refusal to collaborate, to communicate. Violence may apply to others, but also to itself, like self-mutilation, suicide, injury.

We note, from a psychological viewpoint, a constancy of violent demonstrations. In all cases we are dealing with an action directed intentionally against general human needs: basic needs (food, shelter, water, sleep, sexual), secondary needs (security, self esteem, communication, etc.).

Therefore, we will assume in this research a concept of violence which has the following specific notes: *form of manifested aggression, destructive intent, frustration of general human needs*.

2. The forms of violence

This section aims to provide an overview of the main types of violence, in order to provide the opportunity to highlight the coverage area of this term. In these circumstances, in order to provide an overview of the forms of violence, we will conduct a series of its taxonomies according to criteria such as scope, depth and hardness of the violent action, the courts to which it is subject.

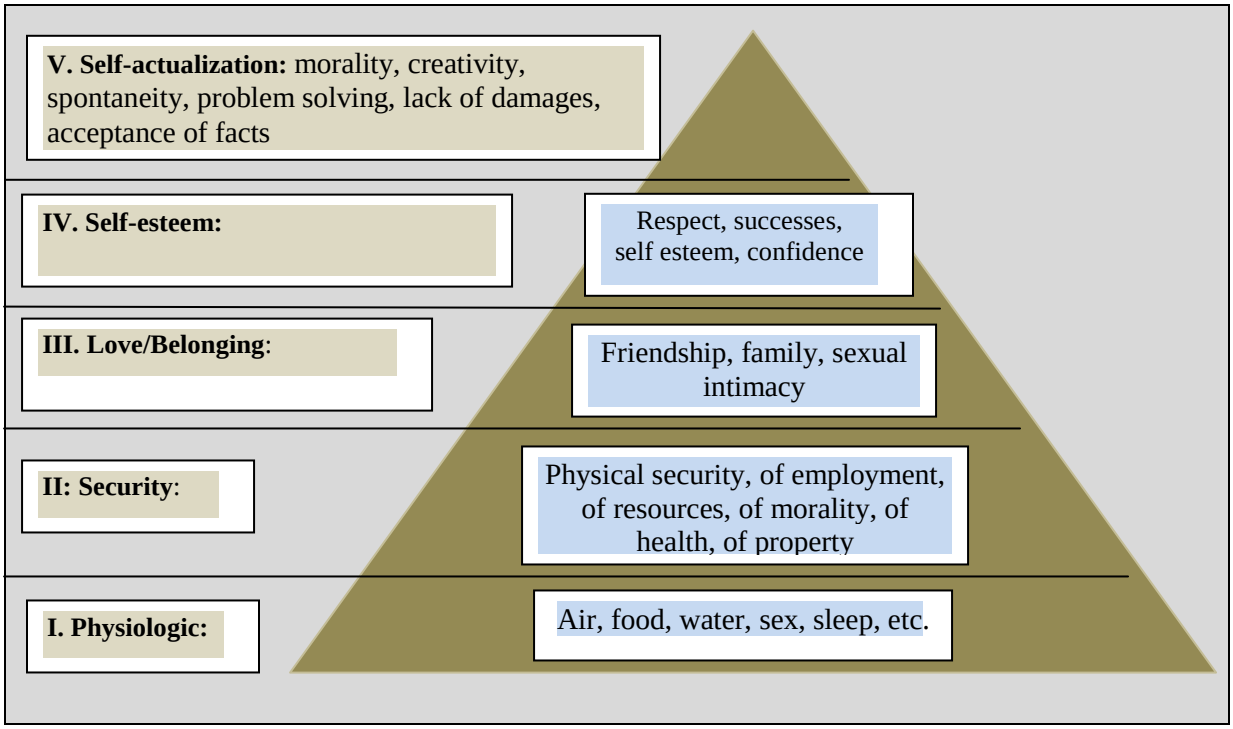
A classification of the forms of violence is given by Ina Curic and Lorena Văetişi, who distinguish between: 1. *direct violence* (physical, sexual, psychological, economic and social), which is the most easily observable form of violence; 2. *structural violence* which is the violence existing in the social, political and economic systems of society (it's about the inequality between men and women, between old and young, between adults and children, as social groups); 3. *cultural violence* refers to those aspects of culture that make violence a "normal" thing, an acceptable way to respond to various conflicts and so legitimizing the direct and structural violence [10]. The three forms of violence rarely occur separately. All three forms of violence serve to maintain unequal

power relations. In the same vein, Ana Muntean distinguishes between *the manifestations of violence in unique, isolated situations* and *long lasting, processual violent manifestations* [11]. Thus, cultural violence can be identified as a lasting violence which can stimulate, cause and legitimize direct violence.

Depending on the type of social actor involved, one can classify human violence as: *personal, institutional and collective violence*. In the scope of the *personal violence* notion we include those acts committed by an individual against others (interpersonal violence) himself (self-mutilation, suicide), animals or objects. *Collective violence* subsumes the violence of citizens against power (revolution, strikes, terrorism), of the power against citizens and war. *Institutional violence* is a form of collective violence based on the interests of a religious, political or cultural institution. Bufacchi distinguishes between the concept of violence, as destructive force, and violence as a violation with or without intention of general human needs [12].

We are interested in the correlation between the forms of violence with the frustration of human needs. That's why we will make a classification of the violence's forms starting from the famous Maslow's classification, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Piramid of needs. A. Maslow

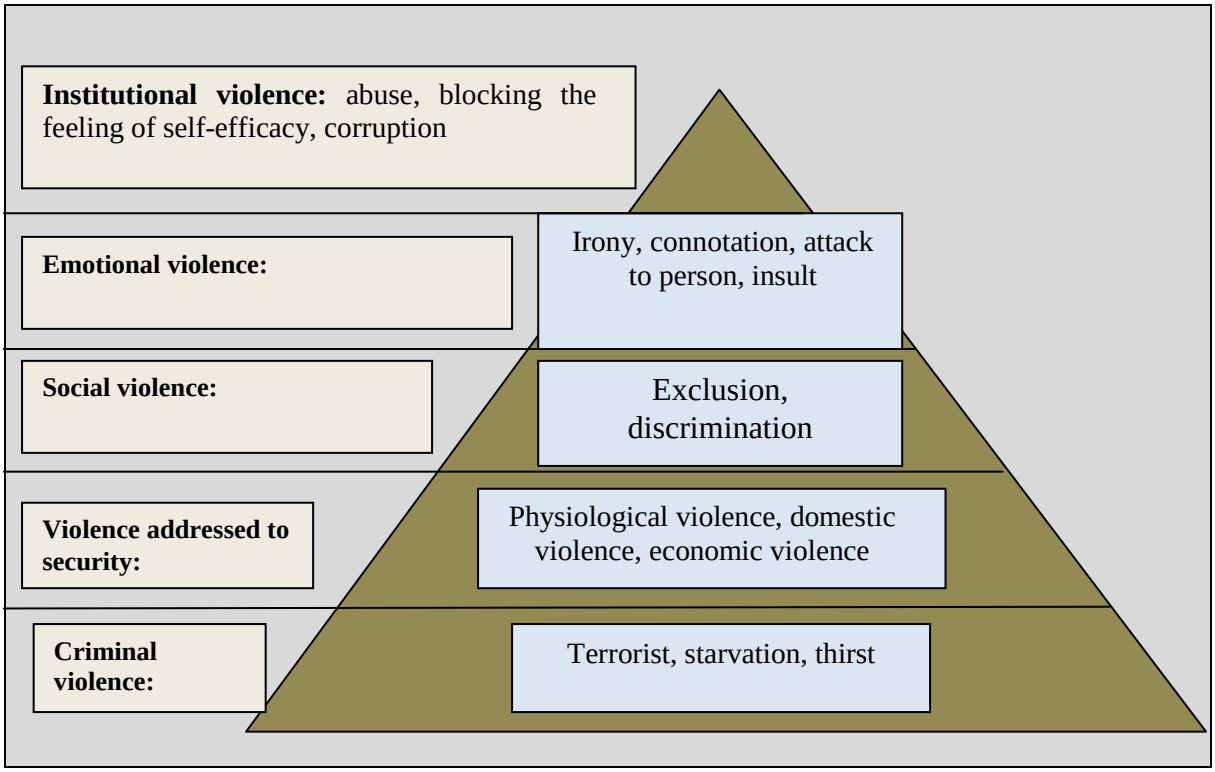


According to Maslow theory, the most powerful needs were fitted at the base of the pyramid. The more a need ascends towards the top of the pyramid, the weaker and specific it is to the individual in question. It is observed that the *primary needs* are common to both people and animals: food, water, air, hygiene, sleep, sex, etc. Once the individual meets this required level of needs, he can focus on the *security* ones. These have to do with stability and consistency in a world somewhat chaotic. They are more related to physical integrity, such as home and family security. They are then fallowed by *the need for love and the need to belong*. This level includes the need for friendship, family, belonging to a group, or engagement in a non-sexual intimate relationship. At the fourth level we can find *the self esteem needs*, that comprise the recognition arising from other individuals (which result in feelings of power, prestige, acceptance, etc.), as well as self-esteem,

what creates feelings of confidence, adequacy, competence. Unmet self esteem needs lead to discouragement and, on the long-term, to complexes. *The needs of self-actualization* come from the instinctive pleasure of man to make the most of their own capabilities, to become increasingly better. In the work *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Maslow writes that people who have reached the state of self-actualization often fall into a state of transcendence, during which they become aware of not only their personal potential, but also of the whole potential of the human species [13]. Although these individuals often live an ecstatic joy, they also feel cosmic sadness. On the first four levels of the pyramid we can find the so called "deficient" needs: a person does not feel anything special if they are satisfied, but they feel a discomfort when they are not satisfied. These types of needs are fallowed by the "increase" ones. They do not disappear when they are satisfied, in turn, they continue to motivate the individual.

Understood under the meaning of manifestation of the frustration of human needs, the notion of violence receives determinations on each level of the pyramid of needs. Thus, on the physiological level we encounter criminal violence, consisting in actions such as terrorist, starvation, thirst, abuse. On the next level, we encounter the security violence: physiological violence, domestic violence, economic violence. They are fallowed by emotional violence. On the level of self-esteem we find verbal violence: irony, connotation, attack to person, insult etc. Finally, relating to self-actualization we identify institutional violence, manifested in phenomena such as blocking the sense of self-efficiency, corruption. The pyramid of violence can be represented as in the following image:

Figure 2. The piramid of violence



The diversity of violence's forms is, often, disconcerting; the casuistry stands out through originality and paradigmatic changes. The classifications mentioned above put some order in the multiplicity of facts and the taxonomies point out the main types of violence manifestation.

3. The consequences of violence

We know that the suffering caused by violence is always physical as well as mental [14].

The study of the violence's effects on the psyche and physic of an individual was done starting from the dichotomy victim-perpetrator. *The abuser* was understood as a source of violence and may be represented at the same time by terrorist, tyrant, robber, abusive parent, aggressive colleague etc. *The victim* can be defined as a direct or indirect target of violence and may be represented by a child, a woman, an elder a man, a band, a whole society.

Exposure to violence causes multiple effects in the short, medium and long term. The most noticeable are the physical trauma, however, in a deep manner and, often, incurable, there are also the non-physical ones, caused by various forms of interpersonal conflict, including intimidation, threats, deprivation, neglect, obstruction of free behavior etc. The effects of violence can be analyzed on several plans: physical, psychological, social, economic. We will use the organization of the consequences of violence on the victim depending on violence pyramid since it is well structured.

Criminal violence refers to those forms of violence that leaves traces on the body, and goes until its suppression (death). The victim may suffer a series of injuries that may require medical care: fractures, affected internal organs, transmissible diseases, cranial trauma, mutilations, hemorrhage, loss of organs. At the same time, child abuse and child neglect have significant effects on the physiological disorders of the adult, such as ischemic coronary disease, liver disease and lung cancer. They are probably mediated through risk behaviors for the health of the individual. Therefore, criminal violence affects the healths of the individual, the traumas left are in the first place, physical, even if not just physical.

Fear, intimidation, insecurity as effects of violence brought to *security* are obtained through the aggressions such as: blackmail, threats, attacks, etc. Whether there are just linguistic realities, either the attack itself is carried out, the trauma and psychological tension are equally present. In the case of domestic violence, there is an interesting way of getting these effects: economic violence. The victims may be deprived of a permanent job, opportunities for personal and professional development.

Satisfying the need to be loved and to belong represents the condition of a harmonious and balanced mental life. Any failure to satisfy them means traumas, abandonment state, antisocial behaviors. The favorite environment to satisfy this need is family, even though it is not exclusive. From the social point of view, the victims of violence risk community isolation (of the group of friends, colleagues, social support services), as well as family isolation. Some victims are forbidden to leave the house without the agreement of the partner or if they are not accompanied by them. Not loved or not integrated the victims of social violence have a poor general condition, with low emotional resources. Victims can suffer a range of emotional disorders, such as trauma, anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks, phobias, behavioral and personality disorders, suicidal attempts, depression.

Low self-esteem as a result of emotional violence has a series of chain tracks. First, the suffering emotions affect the development of the human being. The victim will avoid any situation of personal or professional development due to anxiety and lack of confidence in its own forces. This will reverb on the health and personal relationships, but also on the social success.

Humiliation, high tone, ridicule, used systematically, at home or at school will result in a self-image that will turn into a system of blockage of the personal and professional development.

Conclusions

Violence is a constant in the life of the contemporary man. At home, at work, on the street, on television. Day after day, we encounter a form of violence. From attacks to swearing at the wheel, a whole host of aggressive behaviors inhabit the Romanian public space. This cannot go unnoticed, because violence and suffering are inseparable.

The main consequences of institutional violence are: unupdating their potential, stress, decreased sense of self-efficacy. The violent atmosphere becomes an oppressive environment in which the optimal functioning of the psyche and personal development become impossible. The institution not only hosts violence but also generates it through the frustration that it determines in the personnel involved.

The distribution of the consequences of violence on levels of need has an instrumental function of organization. It is obvious that trauma, mental tension, stress, low self esteem are the consequences of criminal violence, social violence, and emotional or institutional. Here, however, we have tried to identify a specific dominance depending on the main need attacked by the violent act.

References

[1] Eric Debarbieux, La violence en milieu scolaire T.1: état des lieux, 1996, Paris, ESF, pp. 45-46;
[2] Şchiopu Ursula, Dicţionar de psihologie, 1997, Editura Babel, Bucureşti, p. 78;
[3] Mitrofan Nicolae, în Neculau Adrian - coordonator, Psihologie socială, 1996, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, p. 428;
[4] Mitrofan Nicolae, în Neculau Adrian - coordonator, Psihologie socială, 1996, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, pp. 428-429;
[5] Michel Floro, Question de violence a l`ecole, 1996, Editions Eres, Paris, p. 53;
[6] Sigmund Freud, Three essays on the theory of sexuality, 1991, Maiastra Printing Press;
[7] Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression, 1973, New York: Bantam Books;
[8] John Dollard et al., Frustration and Aggression, 1939, Yale University Press;
[9] Neamţu Cristina, Devianţa şcolară, 2003, Polirom, Iaşi, p. 30;
[10] Ina Curic şi Lorena Văetişi, Inegalitatea de gen: violenţa invizibilă, 2005, Editura Eikon, Cluj Napoca;
[11] Ana Muntean, Anca Munteanu, Violenţă, traumă, rezilienţă, 2011, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, p. 17;
[12] Vittorio Bufacchi, Two Concept of violence, Political Studies Review, no 3, 2005, pp. 193-204;
[13] Abraham Maslow, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, 1993, New York, Penguin;
[14] Ana Muntean, Anca Munteanu, Violenţă, traumă, rezilienţă, 2011, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, p. 13;