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*Cătălin-George FEDOR*

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# Domestic Violence on Children and Parental Education

*Cătălin-George FEDOR<sup>1</sup>*

## Abstract

The violence on child in an intra-familial medium is a reality of current society we are living in. The social impact of domestic violence is extended because it affects not only the victims but also the witness persons knowing about the domestic violence situations. The protection and promotion frame of children rights can be achieved by implementing parental education programs. In this paper, we reviewed the actual stage of the researchers in Romania on the family violence phenomenon on the child, highlighting the categories of risk factors which influence the phenomenon's dynamics. With regard to these factors, we defined the parental education and we presented the different levels of necessary intervention in the parental education programs.

*Keywords: intra-family violence; child abuse; child neglect; risk factors; parental education; parental educational programs.*

## Introduction

The parental education represents a field of research and interdisciplinary action, which has appeared relatively recently in the education sciences (Vrășmaș, 2002). The parental education programs, also recently developed, aim at offering solutions to one of the most important problems with which many communities in Romania are confronting with: a low level of the parental education and the poor development of the parents' abilities in order to deal with the changing conditions of the actual society, conditions which often lead to moments of crisis, to children abuse, neglect, exploitation, institutionalization and even abandon (Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2011). The necessity of implementing some parental education programs is compulsory because of the consequences' amplexity that family violence has on children (Graham-Bermann, Hughes, 2003; Gewirtz, Edleson, 2007). At

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Scientific researcher III, „Fr. I. Rainer” Institute of Anthropology, Iași Division, 2 Codrescu St., 700481 Iași, Romania, phone: +40745646339, email: cgfedor@yahoo.com

present, there are not published studies undertaken rigorous about the situation of parental education programs in Romania. A first assessment of parental education programs is underway and will be published soon.

In our study, we start from the hypothesis that the parental education has, first of all, a prevention function and that the risk factors for the appearance and the development of family violence are multiple and they do not action in an individual manner, but in relation to each other. By analyzing the actual stage of the development of family violence phenomenon, we can identify and present several intervention stages which are necessary in the parental education programs.

### **The violence on child - a particular form of intra-familial violence**

The awareness process of public regarding the extent and the severity of domestic violence phenomenon in Romania was recently developed, at the end of 1990s and beginning of 2000s. The conflicts due to poverty, absence of education and lack of access to information as well as to other risk factors, generate private life contexts where violence is a tolerated behavior, even accepted, a behavior learned by children and later reproduced as a natural way of interpersonal communication. In most of the cases, the violence acts take place behind the closed doors and are hidden by the victim due to the fear feeling to the aggressor and embarrassment to the society. These aspects slow down the knowing "at the domicile". The published surveys and the attempts of some researchers to work out some explicative models related to the intra-family violence phenomenon, as well as its influence on society, are frequently not correlating due to the fact that this field of research is still at the beginning (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Dănilă, 2009). There is an inconsistency in the way of framing and interpreting the behaviors and the attitudes in the violence range conferred by different perception degree as well as by awareness degree both at community level and the societal one.

Child abuse represents an increasingly present and covered issue in our society. The abuse is a violence manifestation to children by profiting of the difference of physical, psychic, economic force between adults and children, intentionally provoking their physical and psychical affection. The violence may be considered as a result of interaction between parent and child within a culture that critically provides alternative models regarding the conflict resolutions or which do not provide restrictions regarding the use of physical force against child.

The violence on children is a hidden, unknown and underestimated issue. It is hidden because the domestic violence is one of the most frequently met violence forms but at the same time one of the most serious one because is less visible. Moreover, an obstacle is represented also by the state reticence and its bodies to intervene in a field still considered private. The children are afraid to talk about

violence acts committed against them. The parents that would protect them remain silent when one member of their family subjected them to violent action. The family honor is placed by parents higher above the security and welfare of their children. There is a lack of trust on behalf of population in legal authorities/system that could efficiently intervene. The violence on children is underestimated because the violence, especially the one applied in order to discipline the child, is accepted by the society as a normal thing. Also, the private character that makes the victim to have restricted access to supporting resources is interwoven with the tendency of other not to interfere, the social tolerance towards the phenomenon being further on high (UNICEF, 2007). The children and parents do not address to the empowered authorities when confronting with violence cases towards children. Many of them do not trust in professionals of various social and law services (Cojocaru, D., 2008). In spite of the fact that the child abuse consequences may vary depending on its nature and severity, the short and long term repercussions are very severe. The violence on children is unknown because practically, there is no mechanism of collecting statistics for the child mistreated chapter. The majority of cases of endangering the physical and psychic integrity of persons, usually, remain unregistered. At present, the National Authority for Children Rights Protection collects data concerning the total number of abuse, neglect or exploitation cases, the person which reports the abuse (the child himself, a professional, another person), the reporting channel (child's phone, the phone of the General Directorate for Social Services and Children Protection, other ways, child's residence environment (urban/rural), age, sex, the place where the abuse occurred (in the family, in the foster care family, in residential institutions, schools, other institutions or places), but also regarding the measures which have been undertaken (the child remained in the family with a support, the emergency foster care has been implemented, measures against the abuser have been initiated), the services provided (psychological mediation, psycho-therapy, other types of therapy, educational or medical services, juridical mediation or assistance).

These statistics show that in 2010, of the total number of 11,232 cases of family violence on children reported to the General Directorate for Social Services and Children Protection, 1,218 cases have been of emotional abuse, 1,254 of physical abuse, 623 of sexual abuse and 7,642 of neglect.

Some of these data are greater and other are smaller compared to the year 2009, in which 11,686 cases have been recorded, of which: 1,326 of physical abuse, 1,151 of emotional abuse, 572 of sexual abuse, 8,101 of neglect.

The increase of the number of emotional and sexual abuses, compared to the cases of neglect and physical abuse does not necessarily mean that the incidence of the children abuse in family has increased, but it can show an increase of the phenomenon recognition and of the report of the cases found by the great number of institutions/professionals/community members ([www.copii.ro](http://www.copii.ro)).

When we are talking about the violence on children, the majority of specialists are referring to mistreatment and abuse. The mistreatment or abuse is taken into consideration mostly regarding the childhood experience, although the term of violence is equally frequently used. However, when referring to the adult, the violence concept is preferred. Child mistreatment usually is a family business and both parents are signing in to it. This represents a dysfunction of child and adult relation on whose power the child is subjected to (Ciofu, 1989). If this power is used to harm the child, if the adult does not take responsibility of care, the child seems as victim in the relation with the adult. The child abuse may be defined as intentional causing of some harm affecting the physical and/or psychic health of the child. The child abuse takes place by profiting of the power difference between an adult and a child by disconsidering of latter. Always, the child abuse is carried out with destructive intention, and the negligence takes place usually on the background of parental indifference and ignorance towards the child needs. Also, the private character that makes the victim to have reduced access to supporting resources is interwoven with the tendency of others not to interfere, the social tolerance towards the phenomenon being further on higher.

Placing the child in the middle of the society concerns must be a priority of all the factors and actors involved and responsible of its protection (Cojocaru, D., 2009). Child protection since birth against any forms of abuse or exploitation on behalf of family adults represents one of the points stipulated in the Convention regarding the Children Rights, signed on November 20, 1989 and ratified by Romania on September 25, 1990. Due to the age specificity, to lack of social experience and mainly due to total dependence from adult, the children represents the most vulnerable social category.

The physical abuse seems to be considered, mostly in the families with a medium or poorly developed level of education, as being not only allowed, but even indicated for getting some good educational results. Any adult believes that can exercise its free right to punish the child, mostly its own child. The physical punishment is used for provoking pain. The most of violence cases, the abuse pattern includes associated forms of physical, sexual, psychological, economical violence and social isolation. After the first episode of violence was consumed, irrespective of the fact that it was an episode of physical, psychological or sexual violence, the violence is repeated and escalates in frequency and severity. Often, the abuse is carried out on long periods of cohabitation, making possible the diversification and amplification of violence forms. All these violent manifestations on the child have a series of consequences both on long and short term as well as on various levels (emotional/affective, social, level of psychological development, physical/motor/autonomy, and education level). Shortly, the violence effects are easily identified, analyzed and improved but most of the times, its evil effects accompany the individual during his lifetime. In studying the effects of child punishment by forms of physical violence on the tomorrow adult,

some consequences were discovered in relation with the construction and keeping the child attitude to violence: the child learns to associate love to violence as soon as the parents are telling him that they love him and beat him; learns that it is normal to commit violence acts on other family members; learns that a person may use justified violence in certain circumstances; learns that violence is, in certain circumstances, understood and legitimate. Irrespective of the specific type of violence, the consequences on the child development seem to appear as initial reactions of victimization involving post-traumatic stress, changes in the normal development of the child, painful affection and cognitive distortions, but accommodation to abuse continuation, involving cooperating behaviors in order to increase the security and/or the decrease of pain during victimization (Mighiu, 2008).

As a reaction to a conflict and to a problem, the abused children develop behavioral problems in order to sort out their problems or to satisfy their needs (Yates, Dodds, Sroufe, Egeland, 2003). The violence is a way of the abused child to avoid the anxiety and helplessness feelings. To live in an environment where the beating is a usual way of living and of sorting out the problems, leads to assimilate this way of living. However, it would be a mistake to place the entire causality of violence on what is learned or experienced in the family in childhood period. Many persons committing violence acts come from families that experienced various forms and degrees of violence, but many persons which experienced violence in childhood are not violent.

### **The risk factors for emergence and development of domestic violence on children**

The risk factors for emergence and development of domestic violence on children may be determined by interpreting the results of research performed at national level, (*Perception of children in need by the Romanian public opinion*, IMAS, 2000; *Abused and neglected child. National survey*, ANPCA, 2000; *National research on family and workplace violence*, Center Partnership for Equality, 2003) and by updating and respectively adaptation of: the traditional psychological theories, the central paradigm of which is the idea that women are subordinated, because of their unconscious belief that they must suffer, followed by the theories of social psychology, from another perspective, which bring into discussion a new category of factors involved in the formation of the violent behavior: the information provided by mass-media (Mândrilă, 2009); the feminist theories which suggest a historical, contemporaneous, future-oriented point of view on this topic, considering that the mistreatment of the wife is cyclical, transmitted from one generation to the other, imposing, under this particular aspect, a global approach, meant to determine educational and legislative changes at society level

(Roy, 1982); the power distribution theory, given the fact that, in recent years, theoreticians of feminist orientation seem to have abandoned the idea of violence based on gender differences and to have focused on explaining violence through the concept of power (Perilla, Frndak, Lillard & East, 2003); the theory of the interaction patterns and of the roles that the members of the family adopt, because the explanations that were given up to now associate violence either with socio-economic changes, which took place in the recent past and which had consequences on the dynamics of the role of the members of a couple or with the couple's incapacity to interact (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Dănilă, 2009; Cojocaru, D., 2011); the social learning theory, followed by the violence subculture theory which argues that some groups accept and promote values which allow the use of violence, the unequal distribution of violence prevalence in different groups, especially in those belonging to the lower class, being one of the reasons provided by the violence subculture theory (Walker, 1979); the transgenerational theory, often invoked in explaining violence, although no longitudinal research has been conducted so far in order to confirm the postulates of the theory. This theory advocates the idea that each person is receptive to the behavior of others, which they record and internalize (Fantuzzo, Mohr, 1999); the genetic theory in which violence is seen nowadays as having a socio-cultural determination, to which personality characteristics and economic and environmental factors contribute (today, this theory is no longer supported and promoted); the ecologic model, in which the approach is centered upon the interaction between the individual's personality and the social factors that exist in the environment where this individual lives, including elements of the formal and informal structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); and, respectively, the content theory, which operates in two directions: the individual's capacity to cope with internal and external pressure of behaving in a violent way and the norms and values developed by a group in the direction of non-violence (Henslin, 1990).

Regarding the child abuse, the associated factors to this social issue are not singular but the child abuse comes out from the interaction of many categories of factors trying to offer a complete explanation of the extent range of phenomenon, of child-parent relation, of marital relation, of family relation and of the existing social structure (Rădulescu, 2010). The factors associated to child abuse have gradual influence acting in various proportions since its emergence and during the entire development course of the phenomenon.

An important factor is the status of witness or victim of violence in childhood time (UNICEF, 2006). There is an increased risk for the boys witnessing violence to develop in their maturity violent behavior and for the girls to become victim of spouse violence (Murell, Christoff, Henning, 2007). Regarding the child age, it is noticed a decrease of age the child is abused in close relation with the increase of abused children. As for the child gender, an increase is noticed of abused boys'

number, compared to the girls but currently these two indicators are on the same position (Save the Children, 2000).

There is a major risk the violence to develop in future generations when, besides the status of witness or victim of violence in childhood, another major risk factor is present: the poverty or a low income seemed to be the highest risk factors in facilitating the development of violent behavior (Gewirtz, Edleson, 2007). Depending on the family type, most of the poor children come from numerous families and from mono-parental families. The number of children in a family is the main predictor of poverty risk (Center Partnership for Equality, 2003). Each additional child from the second one should considerably increase the family chances to reach poverty, and moreover, a severe poverty state. The performed research show up the poor families deprived of decent living conditions as families with increased risk of emergence of abuse and neglect. The poverty influence emerges as relevant indicator of violence development. Although in practice we may encounter the cases confirming that the poverty-associated violence favors the trans-generational transmission of violence model, theoretically it was not yet demonstrated the direct relation of violence on woman and her status as violence witness during her childhood.

Another major risk factor in developing some violent conducts in family is the alcohol consumption (Ritter, Stewart, Bernet, Coe, Brown., 2002). In order to be able to monitor the relation between alcohol consumption and the use of violence in spousal relation however we have to consider a series of variables such as: quantity of consumed alcohol, consumption frequency, behavioral pattern and the context of alcohol usage (Thompson, Saltzman, Johnson, 2003). The violent manifestations are more frequent in families with a lower socio-economic level. The said surveys demonstrated that the violence is present in the families where the husband recently entered in the unemployment period or in families where a powerful stress is manifested due to poverty, but there is also the explanation that the violence, mostly manifested during the social transition periods, is not determined by poverty but by the frustrating states emerged as a consequence of non-existence or inability of institutions to meet the new expectations of individual. In this respect, not only men face the risk of becoming violent, the relation between violence and appertaining to gender is excluded (Center Partnership for Equality, 2003). The surveys indicated that women may be as violent as men, but the violence manifestation is determined by the degree of social-economic acceptance.

The stress frequently associated with the abuse may be generated by high number of family members, by inadequate financial resources, by drug or alcohol consumption, leading to emotional frustrations among the other members of the family (Roth-Szamosközi, 1999). The man employment on labor market was not directly related to lack of spouse violence. For example, the stress due to working conditions was associated with spouse violence episodes. On the other hand, the woman employment on the labor market and the transition to role distribution as



well as the modifications emerged in the way of relating were associated with developing some violence forms on woman in a spousal relation (Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra, Lee, 2001).

The surveys pointed out a high percent of family violence preserving the traditional concepts regarding the superior statute of man and the legitimacy of making use of violence against woman based on this status. The violence against woman based on man superiority to woman is part of a larger range of violence manifestation in family the literature in the fields frame it within the concept of patriarchal violence (Turliuc, Tobolcea, 2008). The theme of violence on woman explained through the concept of man superiority over woman was the main thesis of feminist approach although only the feminist approaches included the traditional concepts within the risk factors in developing the family violence (Roy, 1982).

By role and gender stereotypes, the parents develop beliefs and expectations in relation with child behavior depending on its gender and the role it have to exercise, and not framing of these criteria by the child within these criteria may result in abuse and neglect. Among the factors determining an increase of violence prevalence we may render also those factors creating a climate of violence acceptance (IMAS, 2000). The absence of a social visibility of family violence, the blaming of victim, the social tolerance toward the violent man are aspects reducing the reaction to violence and make difficult for the victim to take the necessary steps in leaving the abuse relation or the actions of diminishing the violence. Within a context of social passivity to family violence, the risk of developing and perpetuation of the models of violence interaction increases and at the same time case signaling possibility decreases.

The risks generated by some of the social factors in developing the spousal violence gain more attention from the specialists, although so far it was not worked out an integral explicative theoretical model. For example, the debate included a factor favoring, at a higher extent, the development of violent behaviors namely the social distance defined as the way in which the community members participate to one another's life. In this respect, it is expected that the violence to emerge mostly in communities where the social distance between the community members is large as the families preserve a high degree of intimacy of their private life issues. In a similar perspective, the social isolation of a family member is considered, at the same time, as a form of violence and a risk factor facilitating and maintaining the spousal violent behaviors. The social distance is associated with the social isolation. The social isolation refers also to the family as a whole as a consequence of material shortages and marginalization that have as effect the fact that the families become socially isolated as they have not access to the available social services and do not participate to the activities of the community they live in, and these families, in most of the cases, may show violent behaviors

to the persons considered by them as “inferior” or “weak” (children) as a response to accumulated frustrations (Michalski, 2004). Regarding the social isolation, the reduction of woman access to resources and services represents another factor facilitating the violent manifestation to the spousal woman with consequences on the child. The theme of access to resources was mainly used by feminist approaches thus explaining the violence through gender discriminations (Kury, Oberfell-Fuchs, Woessner, 2004). Within the communities where there is no equal access of woman and man to the economic and political resources the risk of woman abuse increases in spousal relation, with direct consequences on the child.

The surveys carried out indicated that it is difficult to set up the action of a single risk factor on developing the violent behaviors. The violence development in spousal relation is under the associated incidence of risk factors. It is ascertained that persons declaring forms of family violence showed, usually, as indicators: alcohol consumption, a large number of children and a long lasting unemployment (Center Partnership for Equality, 2003). The association between the large number of children and alcohol consumption in family was estimated as an increased risk factor mainly for the jobless persons. The alcohol and unemployment represent a risk factor in violence development, but it was not identified the personal and social characteristics associated to alcohol consumption. Among the factors reducing the risk of generating the violent events we identified the age, family life satisfactions (other than the marital life) and the relation with friends. The statistical data evidenced in the researches we related to help us in identifying another risk factors as well facilitating the development violence on woman in a spousal relation with direct consequences on child such as: criminal conviction of partner or psychic disorders of aggressor may contribute to develop some psychological violence forms, mainly, the absence of a parent generated an imbalance that could lead to emergence of abuse forms. Regarding the variable the appertaining to social class, the surveys indicated that the families of higher education abuse less the children in family environment compared to the worker where the abuse risk is higher (Center Partnership for Equality, 2003).

The individual, family and socio-economical factors cannot be separately analyzed, as singular factors of child abuse in the family but they frequently must be taken together as they determine by themselves in a causal chain where the dysfunctions at the family level may generate problems at community level leading to emergence of some imbalances at society level (Save the Children, 2000). From a sociological perspective we may talk about the existence of a vicious circle: the violence created in family leads violence in society and, on the contrary, a society accepting violence in all fields of public life emphasizes the tendencies of family violence.

## **The role of parental education in exercising the family functions**

The family responsibilities were in time very well outlined: keeping the biological continuity of society by children procreation, forming and education; maintaining the cultural identity and transmission of cultural inheritance; providing safety and maintaining of identity; social integration of their members. The family has the status of regulator of interactions between child and social environment. Responsible for providing the necessary conditions for childhood development stages, it carries out the first social integration of the child. The way of making relations within the family, the quality of the affective climate and its social-cultural model provide the success of social integration and social behavior quality (Vrășmaș, 2002). In this way, the family is defined as being a sole social group characterized by natural and biological interdependences where love and consanguinity held the monopoly, the essence of the family is revealed by four terms: compromise, consideration, cooperation, communication (Cojocaru, S., 2009). Unfortunately, the society offers also counterexamples, proving the fact that there are many situations in which the individual is insufficiently valued in its own family, and the generated dysfunctions alter the quality of intra-familial relations.

The failures of socialization within the family have negative consequences at the level of communities and society. Normally, the socialization within the family is convergent with the norms and values promoted by societal level. However, there are also situations where family socialization is accomplished in discordance with the general social norms and values. The children socialized in this way should be non-integrated and in permanent conflict with the society (Miftode, 2002).

The specific characteristics of the family come from its many functions: physiological, psychological, moral, educational, economical, emotional and judicial ones. However, the complexity of family life exceeds all these aspects reaching various levels of society development. The family has a peculiarly complex, well contoured role, providing stability and support in the individual life but mostly fundamentally influences the social development of the child by: basic biological connection of the person conferring identity and supports him in moral, affective and intellectual development; the first social group in which the child exercises his social behavior and discovers himself; provides the climate of affective security needed to his balanced and harmonious personality development; the optimal frame of individuality development and valuation of child potential (Mitrofan, 1991).

The social life changes attract changes in family life, so that it is ascertained that the family institution is drifting as a phenomenon of deinstitutionalization emerges. This fact generated a variety of familial models: the increasing frequency of cohabitations, increase of divorce number, of mono-parental families, option

of some women to have a child outside marriage, the new forms coexisting with the “classical” model of conjugal family and, not last, domestic violence. In a world where all the institutions and all the social relations types are changing in a rapid way, the family can not remain unchanged and a model or another of familial organization should not be generalized (Mitrofan, Ciupercă, 1998). All these changes should be interpreted as a family crisis but mostly as adaptations of individual conduit to demographical, economical and material changes affecting the society as a whole, and the shortages encountered by the family should be sorted out, but mostly they have to be conceived as prevention and control strategies of the deviant phenomena.

We can define parental education as a form of intervention on parents aiming at a good bio-psycho-social development of their children, by providing the affective security climate needed to a harmonious and balanced development of the personality, the family being the optimal frame of individuality development and valuation of child potential (Vrășmaș, 2002; Neculau, 2004). The parental education consists in an ensemble of educational and supporting measures helping parents in the following aspects: understanding their own deficiencies and needs in order to reduce them, knowledge and acceptance of their children needs and supporting their efforts for solving them and respectively construction of some connection bridges between parents and children in order to create a familial climate proper to child development. These bridges represent, in fact, the attachment aiming at opening the correct understanding way of the normal psycho-social development process of the personality in general and especially of children (Miftode, 2003). The interaction between parents and children is very important for the way in which the child perceives himself and the world surrounding him and the way in which develops (Cojocaru, S., 2008). The attachment has a dynamic character, e.g. appearing, forming and reaching the climax in certain childhood conditions, but can be damaged under the incidence of some factors, weakens or even disappears when the attached person disappears as well. Conscious or unconscious, the attachment relations have the role of protecting the weaker person, vulnerable in relation with the external and internal factors or agents (Killen, 1998). In this way, the attachment can be defined as protection mechanism (in close relation to self-defense mechanisms of the individual, self-withdrawal, oblivion etc). The child personality can not be achieved but in the family matrix frame. If one of the parents is absent from home or between them there are conflicts, the child should be subjected to contradicting motivations, tendencies and norms that will restrict his corresponding development (Mircea, 2004). However, we can consider that there are sufficient arguments to accept the negative effects of violence in childhood on the future adult. However, the effects are different depending on more variable such as: child age, type of violence to which he is subjected, the existence of other risk factors, witness or victim status of violence and the relation between child and aggressor (Neamțu, 2003).

The importance conferred to the issue of victim protection against family violence, as well as the way in which the system is presently organized necessitates, on one hand, involvement of actors in all governing levels and, on the other hand, a good cooperation and communication between them. The present institutional system lacks a specific and complex approach, adaptation of procedures to the needs of the victims and monitoring of violence cases in families in order to trace if the carried out actions had a result (Low 272/2004). The creation of some common standards and instruments is imposed that can contain relevant and useful information in managing with celerity of violence cases in family. It is necessary the cooperation between specialists and institutions that could protect and recover the victim of family violence and that could lead to identification of the best practices. When we are talking about child protection, the main role comes to the family, by a legalized tradition (Harbădă, 2004). But when the protection of the child in his familial environment is not possible or is not desirable, the specialized institutions of the state have the obligation to intervene by taking measures of alternative child protection and by supporting or integrally taking over the task of his care by measures with temporary or permanent character.

The involvement of both parents has indisputable benefits for the bio-psychosocial development. It is known the fact that the mono-parental families are among the most vulnerable social groups (Zamfir, Vlăsceanu, 1993). A child educated and who grew up with love and responsibility by both parents, even when they are not living together, has more chances of social integration and success. The family climate is in a close relation with meeting the needs of each member. The severity excess on behalf of the parents may determine a rigid familial climate inducing a stressful state, frustrating for the child, as he risks becoming a timid, anxious child, lacking self-confidence (Cheng, Myers, 2005). Regarding his own child, any adult believes that he can freely exercise his right to punish the child. The physical punishment is used to provoke pain. Depending on the gravity of the doing, the abuse degree is also determined. Severe forms, dangerous for child health sometimes appear among the “educative” ways applied to the child by a parent which exercises his right to punish the child. It is very hard to determine when the abuse appears but it is clear, if the physical and psychical health of the child is endangered, we are talking about an abuse. The minor punishment, the one not physically affecting the child, by repeating it or improperly used, in compliance with the committed facts, may lead to psychic trauma and varies from a slap to using hard objects, injuries, tying, burns, hair pulling and even poisoning. The harming of the child can be produced by various ways, with severe consequences for the child (Dobrescu, 2010). The parent attributes to himself the full right one the way in which he raises and educates his child. In some countries, the physical disciplining is already forbidden by law. The physical punishment of the child still is in Romanian society a means of

education considered surer than other alternatives and even a natural one, considering the difference of power and position of child within the family, as the physical disciplining was used by many generations and even the parents had no other kind of treatment in their childhood that could help them to identify other mentalities to educate their own child without affecting his health and physical and psychic development. In Romania, from a cultural point of view, various forms of violence are tolerated. In the Romanian traditional culture, to beat your child signifies to make a man out of him. The parent should call for beating and physical punishments without asking himself too much on the consequences and without finding alternatives (Muntean, Popescu, Popa, 2001).

The negative effects of child separation from parents were demonstrated by numerous surveys in the field. The children who were temporarily or permanently deprived by their parent care are confronting with true difficulties of adaptation to social life. In this respect, the emphasis must be on prevention of separation and giving support for maintaining the family unity. Thus, it is important the early identification of any risk situation that could lead to child separation from its parents. In the interest of the child, we have to have a certain attitude towards his parents, irrespective of their current situation (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, 2008). The parents are the main responsible persons for raising and caring their children, and all others – professionals, communities, local and state authorities – have the duty to support them in fulfilling this responsibility (Law 272/2004). In case the main aim of the intervention is child protection, the secondary aim is maintaining the family because the family is a better solution than the most adequate and endowed protection agency that should not manage to replace the functions of the family group, of brothers, grandparents and mostly the image of parents in the child person. The dilemmas of child protection start from contradictions between parent rights and obligations and child rights, between the family right to intimacy and the obligation (not only the right) of the professional to intervene in the high interest of the child. To this it is added, as in any social system differentiated on social classes and categories, the specific contradictions between the rights of children to equal chances and conditions of social inequality. These dilemmas are specific to all the child protection systems in the world. What differentiate them from one country to another is the degree of awareness of these dilemmas and the regulations aiming to sorting them out.

Law no. 272/2004 regarding the protection and promotion of child rights sets in a clear way to which the responsibilities related to protection of child rights belongs to. “The responsibility for raising and providing child development firstly comes to the parents who have the obligation to exercise their rights and to fulfill their obligations to the child taking into account with priority the high interest of the child” (art. 5, par. 2). According to the principle of subsidiarity (regarding the setting of the intervention level as closer as possible to the beneficiary), “the immediate responsibility comes, after parents, to local collectivity to which the

child and family belongs to. The local public administration authorities have the obligation to support the parents or, as it is the case, the legal representative of the child, in fulfilling the legal obligations it has regarding the child, developing and providing diversified, accessible and quality services corresponding to the child needs” (art. 5, par. 3). The state intervention is complementary. “The state provides the protection of the child and guarantees observance of all his rights through specific activity carried out by the state institutions and public authorities with responsibilities in this field” (art. 5, par. 4).

So, in order to success in preventing family violence on children or in delimiting its effects, the parental educational programs should be orientated to:

- a) Promotion of violence definition including the physical injury, negligence, emotional and sexual abuse to which a child can be exposed in the family frame;
- b) Legal and social recognition of the developing needs of the child and child rights;
- c) Increase of visibility violence phenomenon on children in the family frame and understanding by the population of the negative effects of violence on child development; and, related to this aspect:
- d) Development, within the entire population, of awareness regarding the severity of the phenomenon, mainly when the violence prevalence in the family is not known. It is necessary that all the members of communities to be aware of the existence of intra-familial violence and to assume their responsibility in facing this problem.

## Conclusions

The most important difficulty most protection programs are confronting with is represented by the possibility of identifying the cases and legal intervention in child-adult relationships. The absent or deviant parents, lack of a preponderantly orderly climate, lack of child supervision (including negligence with severe, often tragic consequences), indifference and lack of affective implication, all these may determine violent behaviors, often stabilized and persistent in time, of the children as a reaction to the way they are treated. Beyond the inter-individual differences, the way in which an individual is treated in his early childhood may be defining for his destiny increasing the possibility of deviant behavior emergence. The manifested aggressiveness of some adults (who have or have not a native potential of aggressiveness) sometimes have their roots also in the way in which they were treated by their parents or exposure to violence scenes occurred between parents.

The analysis of parental abuse and negligence cases showed up the fact that family violence is a cause of inconsistent or deficient relationship between family

members. This interactive perspective emphasizes less on the personality of parents (their aggressiveness potential, deviance, their mental health or their psychopathology) than on the structure and content of communication in family. Moreover, the presence of a positive climate in family contributes to diminishing the criminality chances of children, even when they have native tendencies to violent behaviors. In fact, the structure or the organization form of the family does not count, but mostly its functionality, concretized in adequate affective and communication relations between family members, in the educational styles of the parents, in the strategies of parental control, daily parental practices and in moral behavior. The children coming from a family with a violence background shall reproduce the family violence and, in a significant percentage, should become on their turn aggressors, using physical violence as a way of managing the interpersonal conflicts.

From the point of view of intervention in violence on children, we may mention two categories of children: those in risk situations of abuse (referring to a children population unknown as a number or share, to which we are aware of situations and behaviors indicating the possibility of some bad treatments supported by minors (various types of negligence and abuse) but we do not have the certainty of their commitment in the present) and victim children of maltreatment (Irimescu, 2006).

From this point of view, the parental educational programs may have a preventing character (Wolfe, Jaffe, 1999):

1) Primary, because it is part of the general approach of reducing violence incidence before the violence takes place. The informational campaigns addressed to some larger populations regarding parental educational programs for their awareness can lead to reducing the tolerance to violence. This prevention should be conjugated with public efforts to create laws and specialized services within the community.

2) Secondary, when it is included in the activity of specialized services and has the objective to identify the persons in risk situations or to identify the risk factors in violence occurrence. They may be grouped in:

- a) Individual factors covering age, alcohol consumption, depression, personality disorders, level of schooling, low incomes, witness or victim status to violence in childhood;
- b) Relational factors regarding conjugal conflict, marital instability, male dominance in the couple, economic stress, reduced functionality of the family;
- c) Community factors such as weak community sanctions of family violence, poverty, reduced social capital;
- d) Social factors referring mainly to traditional norms regarding the social and gender family roles and the acceptance climate of violence.



This prevention is addressed to groups with an increased risk to manifest a certain behavior or to groups with a victimization risk, such as children and adolescents living in families with violence, unemployed women or women with reduced income or dependant on someone, unemployed people etc. The secondary prevention is set in the identified cases and has as an objective a faster and adequate intervention.

3) Tertiary, referring to diminishing the violence occurrence conditions in couples facing violence. This last form is directed mostly to intervention. The tertiary prevention refers to the actions on the already affected groups by domestic violence: women victims, aggressors, abused children. The tertiary prevention is not the prevention of some behaviors with the risk of occurring for the first time but prevention of relapses, sanctioning and/or recovering of aggressors, safety of victims, recovery or treatments of effects and consequences (post-traumatic therapy, psycho-therapy, treatment of medical and affective disorders, victim autonomization, protection measures, knowledge of the rights etc). The tertiary prevention is performed by intervention of organizations and bodies responsible for developing specialty services.

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