

Andrzej Nowak

The sociocultural conditioning of violence

Keywords: *sociocultural conditioning, violence, domestic violence*

Upon considering the reasons for domestic violence occurrence, one needs to take into account at least several different models. J. Woliński and K. Olejniczak distinguish between three theoretical approaches.

The first approach – intra-individual indicates the role of personality, psychopathological, neurological and physiological factors in violence occurrence. The most frequently mentioned disorders that violence perpetrators suffer from are: narcissistic and antisocial, dependent and compulsive personality disorders and disorders caused by somatic illnesses or psychoactive substances abuse. The role of alcohol as well as drug abuse as risk factors of violence occurrence should be stressed, too [Łączek, 2009].

Upon taking of one of these substances, the man ceases to fully control his (her) conduct. He (she) becomes much more courageous, and does not obey any norms or regulations that are in force in his (her) environment. It does not mean, however, that any person drinking alcohol or taking drugs becomes immediately aggressive. Indeed, these substances play only an indirect role, they are not an indispensable factor of violence occurrence but can act as a catalyst for aggression occurrence and, hence, clear the way for violence [Wolińska, Olejniczak, 2007: 9-18].

The theories of social acquisition of aggression combine both behavioural and cognitive conceptions. Violence, which is a form of aggression, is

a learnt behaviour on the basis of observation, modelling, reinforcement, identification and training. Attention should be paid to the fact that this kind of behaviour can be transferred from generation to generation. This dependence is referred to as violence social hereditariness because its perpetrators very often in their childhood were domestic violence witnesses or victims of such behaviours themselves, which proves the existence of the social pattern of the role of a torturer and victim. Early traumatic experiences of domestic violence at one's own home are the source of severe stress. They can lead to the formation of psychopathological states, the consequence of which can be bullying own family members. Social hereditariness of violence patterns from one's home is regarded as a risk factor that facilitates violence occurrence in future [Wolińska, Olejniczak, 2008: 9-18]; [Łączek, 2010]; [Badura-Madej, Dobrzyńska-Mesterhazy, 2000: 11-116].

The sociocultural approach puts violence reasons and sources in social stress affecting the family. Such stress mainly originates from one's material status. Such factors as: low income, unemployment, poor living conditions, crowded flats, isolation, difficult conditions at work – all of them influence, in a negative way, interpersonal relations and create favourable conditions for conflicts to arise. Obviously, domestic violence also touches higher social classes and appears irrespective of one's status and social or material level [Badura-Madej, Dobrzyńska-Mesterhazy, 2000: 11-116]; [Dąbkowska, 2007: 4]; [Formański, 2004: 180-189, 300-302]; [Wolińska, Olejniczak, 2007: 9-18].

Violence, similarly to aggression, requires certain factors which provoke it. Individual factors are concerned with an individual. These are biological factors concerned with the history of life of a given person, demographic factors such as age, education, income or psychological factors, personality abnormalities and individual history of aggressive behaviour or abuse experiences. Relational factors are concerned with relationships and relations of a given person with family members, friends, partners.

Talking of social factors – these are the factors that facilitate the occurrence of social relations, that is, for instance, school, neighbourhood, workplace. Sociological factors, in turn, are the ones that create climate for violence occurrence (availability of weapon, cultural and social norms) as well as factors concerned with health, economic, social and education policy of the country [Łączek, 2008]; [Łączek, 2009].

Sometimes violence occurs without any significant reason. It is enough when someone finds pleasure in causing physical and emotional pain to others.

Domestic violence is unfortunately a common phenomenon. Its perpetrators are most often close family members. Around 64% of all women's rapes and sexual assaults happen from the side of men well-known to them. Violence takes place in all social groups. The risk of a serious injury is even greater when the partner is a perpetrator. According to the data published by WHO, as much as 20-50% of women inform that they were their partner's victims [Dąbkowska 2005: 3].

The extent of violence against one's partner in married couples amounts to 25-28%, and in the group of those with alcohol abuse this rises to 70-80% towards wives and to 41% to children. The dominant partner is more prone to violence towards the child although mothers apply softer and fathers – more rigorous, forms of violence [Wolińska 2007: 9-18].

Violence victims do not want to talk about these issues for they feel embarrassed. It is easier for them to give examples of the aggrieved rather than talk about their own experiences. Therefore, when trying to estimate the scale of this phenomenon it is useful not to ask a direct question but the one that is concerned with conflicts observed in the nearest environment.

According to CBOS [2009], more than one third – 37% of the respondents know at least one woman – a victim of violence from the side of her partner. Nearly two thirds – 64% do not know any such a woman. 41% of women know in their environment at least one woman hit by her husband while 22% know at least several such women. Even more difficult to reveal

are personal experiences regarding domestic violence. Some such cases are left unsaid by the respondents because of psychological mechanisms such as for example the denial from one's consciousness of any facts incompatible with one's own idea of the world in which one lives.

Another factor can be cultural restrictions such as norms according to which one does not reveal any family problems at all. 12% of Poles admit that they were hit at least once during an argument by their partner. Half of the people from this group state that they were victims of aggression several times. Women, more often than men, declare that they were victims from the side of their partners. They also state more often that they were hit many times. More than half of those people – 59% who were victims admit to aggressive acts. As per violence from the side of growing up children, this was experienced by a relatively small group of respondents – 3%. 11% of adults admit that they experienced aggression from the side of other family members – siblings, parents-in-law or grandchildren. 22% of parents bringing up children up to the age of 19 admit that sometimes they were hit by them. 62% of parents claim that they never hit their children. A significant number of those questioned – 16% do not remember any such events, which does draw attention.

Summary

The main aim of the present article is to look at, among other things, biological, demographic, education- and income-related, psychological, social, cultural or sociological factors conditioning (domestic) violence.

- [1] Badura-Madej, W., Dobrzyńska-Mesterhazy, A. 2000. *Przemoc w rodzinie interwencja kryzysowa i psychoterapia*. Wyd. UJ, Kraków.
- [2] CBOS: *przemoc i konflikty w domu: komunikat z badań*; Warszawa, 03/2009
- [3] Dąbkowska, M. 2005. *Psychiatryczne następstwa przemocy domowej*, in: *Psychiatria w praktyce ogólnolekarskiej*.
- [4] Dąbkowska, M. 2007. *Ocena występowania lęku społecznego u ofiar przemocy domowej*, in: *Psychiatria w praktyce ogólnolekarskiej*.
- [5] Formański, J. 2004. *Psychologia środowiskowa*, PZWL, Warszawa.

-
- [6] Łączek, M. 2008. *Prawa i obowiązki chrześcijańskich rodziców*, in: *Społeczeństwo i Edukacja. Międzynarodowe Studia Humanistyczne* No 2.
- [7] Łączek, M. 2008. *Rodzina płaszczyzną wychowania i uświęcania człowieka*, in: *Społeczeństwo i Edukacja* No 1.
- [8] Łączek, M. 2009. *Rola rodziny w religijnym wychowaniu dzieci – perspektywa pedagogiczna*, in: *Społeczeństwo i Edukacja. Międzynarodowe Studia Humanistyczne* No 2.
- [9] Łączek, M. 2009. *Zadania wychowawcze współczesnej rodziny*, in: *Człowiek – świat – filozofia*, Warszawa.
- [10] Łączek, M. 2010. *Znaczenie wychowania w rodzinie*, in: *Społeczeństwo i Edukacja. Międzynarodowe Studia Humanistyczne* No 2.
- [11] Wolińska, J. M., Olejniczak, K. 2007. *Geneza i dynamika psychologicznych zjawiska przemocy w rodzinie*, in: Szczukiewicz P. (ed.): *Przemoc domowa – wybrane zagadnienia*. Wyd. MAD, Lublin.