SOCIAL COHESION’S DISTURBING FACTORS.
VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM IN SCHOOL

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Abstract
The issue regarding the violent demonstrations within different social environments represents, in the context of contemporary society, including the Romanian Social area, a priority and a fundamental domain, for both scientific research and for specialized social courts intervention. The education unit is significantly affected by the deflective behaviors of the students and also the other categories of participants to the educational and training activities. More than other social spaces, the school requires an immediate intervention, appropriate, and, above all, professional.

Keywords: pupils, school violence, terrorism, deflective behaviors

Introduction

The problem of violent manifestations (Finley 2007) in different social environments represents, in the context of contemporary societies, including the Romanian social space, a priority and a fundamental area, both for scientific research and for the intervention of specialized social resorts. The school institution is affected, significantly, by the deflective behaviors of the students and, at the same time, of the other categories of participants in the educational and training activities. More than other social spaces, school requires an immediate, adequate and, most of all a professional intervention.

There is a diversity of forms of violence that are displayed in the school environment: verbal violence, physical violence, destruction of goods, thefts, drugs consumption, sexual violence and even armed aggressions.

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School violence oscillates between physical violence, extremely mediated lately and the numerous “incivilities”, which affect the school environment. It is associated in general with urban violence, with the outskirts, the difficult urban areas, where poverty is predominant (Cusson 2006).

School violence (Ferréol and Nucleau 2003) has as causes factors outside the school, such as the family environment, the social environment and the personality of the individual. Nevertheless, school itself may represent a cause, a source of violence, because the deflective behaviors of the student may be originated in a poor management of the class, situation that appears especially when the professor has the desire to exert a power. The deviations in behavior (Bryant 2011) such as truancy, absenteeism, lying, vagabondage, being rude to the professors, violence towards the colleagues, are more and more seen amongst students. School resistance (Neamțu 2003) is represented by a refusal of the norms and values that should be specific for the school’s culture, caused by the awareness of the young people regarding the fact that these are incompatible with the world they live in.

The violent acts (Șoitu and Hâvărneanu 2004) are expressed by students on the more vulnerable professors, through verbal aggressions, insults or even hitting the faculty. Other times, violence (Jigău, Liiceanu and Preoteasa 2006) come from the faculties who don’t wish to be vulnerable and display “authority” through reckless gestures.

The deviant behaviors (Clinard and Meier 2011) of the student have become lately more and more violent, and the aggressors are younger and younger. Violence in school (Olweus 1993) is expressed in numerous forms: using humiliating nicknames, bullying younger students, sexual harassment, quarrels between both boys, and girls. The mass-media (Perse 2001) increasingly shows quarrels between students in the school institutions (students use mobile phones to film these incidents and post them on the internet). Our young people are very vulnerable to the messages send by the media (Nakaya 2008) especially television, which has low quality productions, spreading mediocrity and deflected models of behavior. Because there is an uncontrolled consumption of information and mass-media (Gentile 2003) productions, there is also the risk to have deflected behavior. It is useful to convey information
with news programmes but re-enacting crimes, rapes and other anti-social fact is completely harmful, because these can be adopted as a behavioral model.

Verbal violence (Finley 2007) and the psychological one affect the self-esteem of the student. They feel devalued; they lose trust in their own possibilities, becoming anxious. “Normal” conflicts (Stoica-Constantin 2004) between colleagues produce displays of violence caused by misunderstandings, incompatibilities between the desires of the student or incompatibilities of status. Boys and girls fight in school, because here they meet most often the so called “enemies”. Students (Smith, Pepler and Rigby 2004) who receive the least of attention from professors are the ones who show the most violence towards their colleagues. Children who come from poor environments, who witness violence in their own families (Muntean and Muntean 2011) are the ones who fight most often with their colleagues. Some teenagers believe that only through violence they can solve the problems they have with each other. These acts of violence, represent a phenomena to which both family, school and the entertainment industry, mass-media have contributed.

*Investigating and measuring the various forms of displaying deflected behavior* – indiscipline, behavior disturbances, inadaptation to the school environment, “school resistance” that can have a character of pre-delinquency or/and delinquency, both in the school environment and in the family and proximity environment, represent a major objective of our research. We wish to *consolidate the concrete ways of supporting school*, of the education institutions by finding levers that engage cooperation between the schools, family and local authorities in order to reduce the deflected behavior and we suggest concrete ways of action and control. We have “x-rayed” the attitude of students towards school, the frequency of skipping class, discipline in the class-room, the attitude towards the professor and the school property.

**Violence and terrorism in schools**

The phenomenon of bullying (“terrorism” – Cusson 2006, p. 95) in childhood appears in the special literature, at the beginning of 1970, in
Norway. It is one of the main problems of contemporary societies, which represents a reason of concerc, becoming of public interest in many parts of the world: Great Britain, Sweden, America, Australia, etc. At international level, the specialty studies (Garandeau, Cillessen and Antonius 2006) summarize a few tendencies of the displayed forms of violence in contemporary school, of which we remind: passing from physical, direct, visible, legitimate and encouraged aggressivity, sometimes, to more subtle forms, masked under an aggressivity of symbolic type, located at the level of the promoted values, at the level of the types of relationships from the school space and the imposition of certain desirable models of behavior; the proliferation of violence in school that substantiated in the differences of ethnicity, religion, social status or gender; the multiplication of the forms of violence on professors; the increase of the number of the serious violence phenomena, that fall under the incidence of the law (crimes, rapes, using guns) following an escalation of violence in society; the diffusion of the violence phenomena outside school or in the immediate vicinity of school, to the actual school space.\[1\]

In order to color the general concept of aggressivity, the Anglo-Saxon special literature (Şoitu and Hăvârneanu 2003) uses the following terms: aggression, aggressivity, aggressiveness, mobbing, bullying. Therefore, the term aggression (Olweus 1978) means committing an act without being provoked (an attack consumed in a physical or verbal plan), aggressivity refers to the normal component of personality, latent aggressivity, the potential to commit attacks, aggressiveness is a state relatively favorable to the committing of an aggression, supported by certain traits of the person, that can be expressed as forms of socially adapted aggressivity: competitiveness, combativeness, initiative, courage, ambition, etc. Mobbing (Elliot 2003) refers to group attacks, produced by children to another child, actually the sense of this term is covered by the notion of bullying (Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano 2009) that refers both to attack/terrorization/group intimidation and to individual one, and bullying (Rivers, Duncan and Besag 2007) is an act of long term violence, both physical and mental, initiated by an individual or a

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group and directed against another individual who cannot defend himself in that context (Şoitu and Hăvârneanu 2001 p. 32).

„The terrorist child projects the threatening shadow on many playgrounds. He is the type of child who likes to intimidate those around him, especially if they are smaller than him. (…). Children of this kind feel often terrorized and manipulated by themselves. Wanting to respond in the same way, they learn to be strong, imitating the strong one, especially their parents.” (Shapiro and Skinulis 2012).

Terrorism (Romanian DEX 1998 p. 1088) is defined as the totality of the acts of violence committed by a group, in order to create a climate of insecurity and present itself as a form of aggressivity. Aggressor use, in a systematic and deliberate manner violent means or threats meant to create fear and mistrust, panic and insecurity, ignoring any humanitarian forms in the school. The concept of bullying (terrorism) is used also “in the case where the same student is the object of repeated offense (Olweus 1995). The term means a persecution relationship: the victim is harassed, humiliated, robbed repeatedly, and terrorized.” (Cusson 2006, p.95). In the definition of terrorism there must be a “disequilibrium of power, a relationship of asymmetric power, the student who is exposed to the negative acts has difficulties to protect himself” (Olweus, 1995). The authors of the studies regarding terrorism in the school space (Olweus 1995; Smith and Sharp 2003; O'Moore and Minton 2004; Cusson 2006 etc.) have their focus on two categories of people: those who abuse and those who are the victims of abuse. It seems that terrorism within the school space has no other purpose but the pleasure to terrorize, to intimidate. The terrorizing act within the school space can take many other forms, some are direct, physical abuses, hitting, others are verbal, such as giving nicknames, mocking; the indirect ones are often gossip and rumors, badmouthing other people or excluding them from the group.

Smith and Sharp (2003) present a series of researches that show that playgrounds are the most favorable for aggression acts, being the least supervised. Aggression acts in school take place on the hallways, in the classrooms or in other spaces and often happen between two people, without involving a larger group. Researchers such as Olweus (1991), Lane (1989), Farrington (1993), have demonstrated the fact that
aggressors who repeated this kind of aggression acts in adolescence three, four times become adults with antisocial behaviors. A study made by Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukainen in 1992 showed that boys abuse physically and girls verbally, boys aggress directly, girls do it indirectly. Direct Aggressivity is easier to measure, becomes more obvious, whilst the indirect one specific to the feminine gender was and still is underestimated (Smith and Sharp, 2003).

Claire Garandeau and Antonius Cillessen (2006) have made a study on indirect aggressivity, on its lack of visibility and on manipulation in the groups of equals. The authors show that recent studies make references to association, affiliation, popularity and social intelligence. It was proved that there is an association between social rejection and aggressivity. Children rejected by the peer group are generally more aggressive than the ones who are not rejected.

When terror acts (bullying) (Lee 2004) happen in the student’s class, most of them are aware of these and are present when these take place. When children are witnessing the victimization of one of the colleagues, their behavior can never be neutral. They can choose to be on the side of the victim, to take part in an active way in the abusive act or to remain passive. The aggressors present a strong need to dominate others and to have a positive attitude towards violence (Smith 2003) fact that determines them to hurt someone, preferably only one target, they have difficulties to empathize. Generally, even in the absence of witnesses. It is not likely for a person who is part of a group or has friends to be the target of an attack; friendship has a protective role, aggressive children choosing their victims amongst the isolated ones.

In those schools located in the areas that have a high rate of criminality, the risk to become the target of violence phenomena increases and for students, there is a higher risk to develop deflected behavior models, following the fact that they have learned the model by observing it. Aggressivity in the school (Şoitu and Hâvârnenu 2001) environment is displayed also by some people outside school and usually takes place at the school gate, the most of the time the gangs act (Grecu and Rădulescu 2003) and they ask students when they exit for valuable goods, and if they don’t receive them, students are being
threatened and even beaten. Not a few times, the faculties had to ask help from the police to resolve this kind of conflicts.

The case of children criminals and gangs is well known. “Terrorism shows its face when someone want to impose on us their point of view, his way of seeing things, his way of being. When someone tries to attract us in an action where we don’t recognize ourselves.” (Salomé 2008, p. 134). We would call it, starting with this definition, as being an act of terrorism also the attempt of gangs to attract within the gang those students who feel drawn to the idea of havin an affiliation to a group, even if they don’t find themselves in the activities within the band, or in the way in which the members of the gang think and act. They can be aroused, provoked, insulted, ridiculed, humiliated, being valued only when they are recognized as part of that band.

Gangs (Grecu and Rădulescu 2003) develop their own subculture. We can talk about the violence determined by gang rivalries or the domination of one gang in the school when two or more students known to belong to the gang commit together a violent act; when a student commits a violent gang with the support of the gang, as a form of intimidation; a gang leader commands a violent act; a gang receives different rewards as a result of a violent act. The violent act (Finley 2007) is precipitated with the gang (writing the graffiti message of the gang, another gang erases the graffiti message). It can happen that the gangs from the urban environment take control over the school. This happens by asking an “entrance fee” when going into the school or by asking a “protection tax” from the students that do not want to be beaten by the members of the gang. Children express a need for security, and joining a gang represents a way of fulfilling this need. Some students integrate in a gang in order to protect themselves from the abusive situation from home, others join gangs to get protection against the aggressions of the rival gang. Teenagers join such gangs in order to be accepted and value, things that they are refused by family and school.

**Violence in the school environment** (Jigău, Liiceanu and Preoteasa 2006) is displayed also by people outside school and many times it takes place “at the school gate”. Most of the time *gangs* (Grecu and Rădulescu 2003) act here, asking the students when exiting the school
for their valued goods, and if they don’t give them, the students are threatened and even beaten. Not a few times the professors had to ask help from the police in order to resolve such conflicts. Teenagers (Banciu, Rădulescu and Voicu 1987) are trying, by these behavioral displays (such as belonging to a gang), to affirm their independence and moral autonomy. These acts do not bring prejudice to the social values, but affect and/break the moral norm, bringing prejudices more to the one that commits the acts than to his entourage. Such a deviant force (Connor 2002) with a moral character, highlights the situation of those teenagers who live with great intensity the specific disturbance of the adolescence years and who, because of an inadequate family climate and of some educational errors prove a reduced capacity of adapting to the normative exigencies imposed by the community. As a structure, these groups are formed, mostly, by young people, who have serious problems in socializing, which may constitute an increased risk of displaying deviant behaviors. The street groups (Grecu and Rădulescu 2003) appear as a protest reaction to the norms and the values of a society. The individuals integrated in these groups confront themselves with a feeling of blockage of possibilities and access means to the social values and goods. Because of that, each group, subculture (Grecu and Rădulescu 2003) is defined by a series of specific norms and values that sometime contradict with the system of dominant values.

The child becoming irresponsible (Miftode 2010) happens in a true “culture of illiterateness”, a “culture of inculture”, of violence and of social parasitism. The student may question the necessity of going to classes, as long as others, like him “are doing well” without studying. This kind of thinking is frequently met amongst influenceable students. As a consequence, the personal frustration and self-victimization feelings of the individuals who are in the post-dropout phase, lead to the appearance of displaying a true “culture of illiterateness”. Presenting the typology of illiterateness is necessary when there area of science analysis deals with the causes and the effects of the school dropout phenomenon. The requirements of the institutionalized school system are the main cause that makes this phenomenon grows. A child who no longer uses the study time for school activities for sure will commit to
other activities less useful for study and for his current development process (Miftode 2010).

The audiovisual (Drăgan et. al. 2009) is competing with the school, with the difference that his representatives believe they have the right to present no matter what, and the responsibility for what is being watched is in the hands of the adult who can switch the channel. The models presented by the media “produce a mental laziness”, recommend comfort, “promote superficiality”. To better understand the formation process of responsibility on one hand, and the culture of illiterateness (Miftode 2010) on the other hand, we must point out the social reality. The transformations in the family (Ciupercă 2000) area attracted numerous changes in the behavior of children in the sense that the monopoly of family on them has reduced following the multiplication and the diversification of social services, including the decrease of the claims of the individual. Often, the abandonment of education is connected a lot with the role of the individual to obtain subsistence means (Ferréol and Neculau 1999) by performing some unspecialized activities, for socially privileged individuals.

Illiterateness (Miftode 2010) must be understood not only as the incapacity of the person to read and write, but also in the sense that he is unable to use the training and the education received at school, in order to adapt to the social and professional requirements. In fact illiterateness is in a direct relationship with social failure, and this is in a direct relation with the irresponsibility degree frequently displayed in the school behavior of the child.

In the case of criminal children and gangs (Miftode 2010) students simulate roles which are inadequate for their age and status, such as: “the guy who makes money out of anything”, “the slicker”, “the guy who makes it on his own”, etc. and are not aware of the fact that they do not know how to read and write. For them there are also other ways to succeed in life.

School is not a place where students can show their “trendy” clothes, but a space where the student should commit the time spends there for study (Miftode 2010). Violence (Debarbieux 2003) can be prevented in schools when the children are not inclined to the numerous factors of risk. It is necessary to activate certain mechanisms to make the student
responsible, in the face of social norms, which means, in a first phase, to eliminate “the group image” by introducing school uniforms and regimental rolls (Mițode, 2010).

**Effects of terrorism in the school space on the victims**

Specialized literature (Knapp, Jongsm and Dimmitt 2012) presents programmes with a didactic approach that especially involve both counseling the victim of bullying, and the aggressors. Bullying (Olweus 1995) is a form of aggressive behavior that presents a series of characteristics, such as fear manifested by the victim and the evil that the aggressor does to the victim. Bullying (Olweus 1995) always implies a relationship of different power between aggressor and victim. Usually is a form of aggressivity that is not provoked, and the main characteristic is repetition; a single act of aggression does not represent an act of bullying between children. (Olweus 1995).

Terrorist acts (Cusson 2006) from school must be punished, untolerated, having serious consequences on the victims. Measures must be taken because the consequences on the victims may be disastrous. There are physical, mental harms, sometimes the death of the victim, by murder or suicide. The victims of bullying (Smith and Sharp 2003) display a low self-esteem, keeping inside a series of psychological specific issues, such as depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, school phobia and social anxiety; they are usually people without popularity in their peer group, they are passive and have inefficient responses to the attacks of aggressors. Many persons were the victims of aggressivity in school (Gillham 1981) but have never talked about what happened out of fear, they didn’t believe they could change something, or they blamed themselves for what happened. These people display a low self-esteem and have depressive tendencies. Although at adult age they live a normal life, these sorts of experiences can produce long term effects. There is the possibility that self-victimization creates negative effects or that low self-esteem causes a person to become more easily the victim of aggressive acts. Professors and parents often are not aware of the fact that those aggressions take place, because neither the victims nor
the other players in the aggression act (Garandeau, Cillessen and Antonius 2006) communicate with them, especially in the space where they spend school breaks and in the playground. There are situations where faculties are aggressed, especially verbally, and their authority is diminished.

The victims (Garandeau, Cillessen and Antonius 2006) can become themselves aggressive persons, adopting an assertive behavior; they become anxious in the relationships with the people around them. They are not confident in themselves, they become withdrawn, they don`t interact anymore in the peer group. There are situations where they choose to no longer go to school because they fear of meeting the abusers again. Some people say they were both victims and aggressors at the same time. Aggressive acts (Olweus 1978) can be cruel and can hurt both the body of the victims and their soul. The roles of the student involved in the school aggressivity are: aggressor, victim, students uninvolved in the aggressivity act (neither aggressor, nor victim). The students are aware most of the time of the deviant acts within the school, they know most of the abuses that take place, but they don`t declare these, starting from the idea that they cannot change the existing situation.

The aggressor (Rosenthal 2008) also needs support to change. Children who aggress have a high self-esteem; they tend to be megalomaniacs and psychologically defensive. Many times they are part of an entourage and act in an aggressive way, being influenced by the pressure of the group. They want to seem tough, avoiding to be aggressed. There are leaders of the group of aggressors who usually have the initiative and those who follow them participate in the aggression act. School is the most capable to stop this kind of behaviors, applying measures meant to reduce school aggressivity within the space of study.

Professors ignore such situation where students are divided in aggressors and aggressed, and the school proves to be inefficient in the process of changing the behavior of those students who become aggressors, not having programs for victim recovery to encourage them to rise against acts of this kind. There is no school without deviance, but what is important is the method, the procedure that the school applies in such cases. Smith and Sharp (2003) believe that students who are
worried or upset can no longer focus on study, sometimes choosing to skip class to avoid becoming victims of aggressivity in the school space. Later, there are presented also the difficulties of relating with the opposite sex, fear of intimacy, not recognizing the own value, mistrust. The most severe consequences are those when suicide acts are used.

**Conclusions**

It is necessary to have valid tools to identify the children who present risk at very young ages, followed by a reorientation from these destructive routes without ignoring the problem in the hope that it will resolve by itself because for sure it will not go away. The incidence shall be higher in the absence of some interventions and adequate support. It must be considered that, before developing intervention more accessible and more efficient models, we must focus on prevention. Those who approach violence in the school environment, and also these who take decisions, must understand the indestructible relationship between early life experiences and physical, emotional, social and cognitive health. The changes at cultural level can be produced only by providing rich experiences at cognitive, emotional, social and physical level. Before society offers these experiences, it is necessary to educate regarding the development of the child. The education of the professor and of the parents must be continued by a development of the researches regarding the impact of positive experiences on child`s development. All these must be used in the same time with implementing and testing some programmes that enrich the life of the student and his family, and also early identification programs and proactive intervention. Professors must be encouraged to fight the weakness that makes them say that they have no knowledge of these problems, the students with delinquency risk must become fit for a life in society, and the school, as a controlled environment, has the possibility to be build, organized and managed in such a way that children are in a permanent state of safety and that the occasions to commit violence acts are reduced. It was proved that the efficient
school in terms of education is also efficient in terms of violence prevention.

It is necessary to have cohesion between educational teams, where the school principle rallies his partners and each member of the staff knows each student. The school is capable of changing the fate of the students, becoming an efficient school (effective schooling), where the principle applies leadership both for the educational staff of the school, and also for the students, the professors are strict, maintain their sense of reality, are closely following the progress of the students, encourage them in the process of self-improvement, keep order and discipline in the class without using punishments, parent are encouraged by the school’s team to participate in the pedagogical project and the students have the opportunity to be responsible in class.

Starting with the harmfulness of the increasingly violent behavior seen in the school environment and with the need to intervene where this problem proves to be more and more difficult to control, disturbing even the adequate performance of the training-education process and the general climate of the school, the objective is to monitor the intervention on this phenomenon. We have showed, that in most cases, the causes of violence are a combination between factors concerning family, community and the educational institution; the responsibility to intervene to decrease the behavioral problems of the students does not exclusively belong to the school; the school must be supported both at financial-material level, and at human and informational level.

Responsibility is the “big regulator of social life”, and also causes to “give repair works” to the victims of the antisocial deeds, deviant or criminal actions. In the school space, responsibility means, in essence, to respect the school rules, and in the social space, it means, in fact, to behave as a good citizen. In order to avoid school or social sanctions for different forms of deviance, the student must be formed within the family in a spirit of responsibility, which means being accountable for the committed acts and their consequences. In order to impose “school discipline” and to have respect for the law it is necessary that any “crime” to engage a sanction proportional with the seriousness of the act. The concerning dynamics of the violent behavior among students is explained, hypothetically speaking, by ignoring the sanctions provided
for the committed deeds (breaking certain provisions of the school regulation, breaking behavior norms in community, etc.) The responsible behavior of students and the reduction of the deflected, violent behaviors of the students, both in the school space, and in the social space, generally depend, in essence, on the improvement of school duties. Responsible behaviors are taught through “family socialization”, but most of all through school education and, also through a general “societal education”.

References


