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**THE PHENOMENON OF NEGLECT IN GYMNASIUM SCHOOL
STUDENTS. PARTICULARITIES FOR ROMANIA**

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Abstract

In the national legislative regulations, child neglect is defined as being the voluntary or involuntary omission of a person who is responsible for raising, caring for or educating the child to take any measure subordinated to this responsibility, a fact which endangers life, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, body integrity, physical or mental health. Abuse and neglect are behavioral and attitudinal patterns that are well-rooted in cognitive, social and cultural patterns as a result of the action of some risk factors and conditions in the family, institutional and community environment. Neglect takes many forms: *physical neglect*, in the context of the child being not provided with adequate food, shelter or supervision; *medical neglect*, when the child is not provided with mandatory evaluations and vaccines and he/she is not given the prescribed medication; *emotional neglect*, generated by lack of attention or concern for the child's emotional needs, the adult depriving him /her of communication and psychological support; *the neglect of mental health* manifests itself when adults refuse to administer the diagnosed child with emotional disturbances or serious behaviour the corrective or therapeutic procedures recommended by specialists; *educational neglect*, in the situation where the child does not receive the necessary education in the family, he / she is not enrolled, traced and supported in the compulsory education system.

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1. Introduction

In Romanian national regulations, Article 89 (2) of Law no. 272 of 2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights amended and completed by Law no. 257 of 2013, child neglect is defined as "the omission, whether voluntary or involuntary, by a person who has the responsibility of raising, caring for or educating the child, to take any measure towards fulfilling this responsibility, which threatens the life, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, body integrity, physical or psychological health of the child, and may take several forms: food, clothing, neglect of hygiene, medical neglect, educational neglect, emotional neglect or abandonment of the child by the family, which represents the worse form of neglect."

2. Main Body

Article 90 of the aforementioned law prohibits the application of physical punishment in any way to the child, as well as depriving him of his or her rights, endangering his/ her life, development and the bio-psycho-socio-moral and spiritual health of the child, both in the family, and in any institution providing child protection, care and education.

The General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection guarantees the special protection of the neglected child through Articles 92 and 93, with the task of verifying and resolving negligence cases by means of specialized service commitments designed to meet the needs of victims of neglect.

The New Penal Code and the New Code of Criminal Procedure (2014), in Article 197, on ill-treatment of the minor, exemplified as follows: "seriously endangering, through measures or treatments of any kind, the physical, intellectual or moral rights of the minor by the parents or by any person in charge of the minor, is punished by imprisonment from 3 to 7 years and prohibiting the exercise of certain rights", criminalizes neglect by "measures or treatments of any kind " (ranging from denial of needs, non-assurance of proper living conditions, non-provision of healthcare, repeatedly leaving the child unsupervised, over long periods of time, locked in a room (to be safe), exposing the child to inappropriate behavior by parents), if, through these (against the backdrop of a severe or repeatable nature), the physical, intellectual or moral development of the child is seriously endangered.

The neglect of the child's physical and psycho-educational needs by the adult responsible for its growth and development is the most common form of abuse and neglect, but also the least acknowledged, sporadically approached through prevention and resolution actions by the referral bodies (Save the Children Organization, 2010).

Abuse and neglect are undesirable behaviours and attitudinal patterns, often reinforced by well-rooted cognitive, social and cultural patterns, as a result of the interaction of risk variables, factors and circumstances in the family, institutional and community environment.

Unlike abuse, which is a conscious act, done with destructive intent, indifference, ignorance and deficiencies of the parental style, expressed and exercised sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, veiled, invisible, but with serious long-term consequences, are the predictors of neglect (Neamţu, 2003).

In specialty studies, neglect is defined as the non-physical form of violence and, as a result, the child feels that his family life is unsafe, manifested through undesirable and dysfunctional behaviors (running away from home, absenteeism, abandonment, aggression, juvenile delinquency), subsequently shaped into a disharmonic and defective personality according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2005).

We must see neglect in the social and family context in which the child is deprived of the unconditional vigilance, protection, support and love of his parents, refusing his right to food, hygiene, clothing, medicine, supervision, education, thus becoming a victim of the ignorance and impassivity of his family.

The family is, bar none, the affective and protective social center of the child, exercising over it the first educational function, with the role of imprinting and modelling its personality, facilitating the transformation from a normative behavior, driven by the exigencies and expectations from the outside, to a natural behavior, based on rational cognitions, self-esteem and moral autonomy.

Considered as an environment for generating and regenerating human potential, the family is the natural environment of the child in which the desirable foundations of its personality are formed, and which, by enhancing and streamlining its own bio-psycho-socio-cultural resources, can prevent neglect in all its aspects. "The earth can shake, people can fight, calamities can fall upon nations: the child barely perceives them as long as his personal universe continues to offer him feelings of tenderness and security, that are indispensable to him" (Bonchiş, 2011, p. 17).

Love, attachment, emotional maturity, acceptance, tolerance, responsibility and spirituality prove to be the pillars of the solidity of the perfect individuality of the child, as a member of a harmonious family.

Thus, according to the author Bonchiş (2011), the opportunities of intellectual and emotional development are attained - on the one hand - by the function of ensuring emotional security, satisfied through protection, encouragement, love, emotional support, attachment, and on the other hand, the economic function, fulfilled by the professional training of the parents, the organization of the child's home, the administration of the income and expenses budget of the family.

Against the backdrop of a sanogenic family environment, socialization patterns are created, as the child internalizes the social rules, norms and values through his first experiences, which he will value later, in another social context.

The author Killen (1998) identifies seven parental functions whose level of fulfillment determines the optimal mode and standard of moral, social and intellectual development of the child:

- the ability to hierarchize and prioritize the basic needs of the child; a responsible and assertive conversation with the child is of utmost importance;
- offering the opportunity to act in given situations, according to the age and individual peculiarities of the child, and responding empathically and assertively to his/her requests;
- the ability to give new, varied, attractive experiences, stimulating the child cognitively and emotionally, cultivating adaptive and functional cognitive, emotional and social patterns;
- ability to socialize with the child - consisting in spending quality time with him/her;

- ability to suppress aggressive pains and impulses, without contaminating the psyche and the person of the child - parents should exercise a high degree of tolerance to frustration and conflict, in order to create and maintain an affective environment, favoring the harmonious development of the child's personality;

- cultivating adaptive models precisely by setting realistic expectations, consistent with the cognitive and volitive potential of the child;

- perceiving the child in a realistic way by having a correct relationship with him/her, by rewarding and valorising desirable behaviours, without labelling and assessing the child, as the child needs consistent support and appreciation (Iovu, 2008).

All these functions are conditioned by the satisfaction of the child's needs for normal development, such as: vital physiological needs (food, water, shelter, rest, sex, security), social integration, affiliation and love (need for association, acceptance, communication, collaboration and help), the activation of existence (sensory stimulation, escape from monotony, the need for fun and adventure, the search for excitement), the need for knowledge (the need to know, to understand, explore), aesthetic needs (symmetry, order, beauty), needs for updating (self-realization and capitalizing of its own potential, according to Maslow's theory), the tendency towards social progress (ambition, competitiveness, desire to be a leader) and the normative theme (the tendency of obeying social norms and rules, including: listening to parents, preserving conveniences) (Bocoş, Gavra, & Marcu, 2008).

The needs of the child are the human needs described by Maslow, each of which is expressed in five areas: physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social:

- the need for love and security that is shaped primarily by the relationship with the reference person and gradually by more and more people from the family environment, through which the child forms his/her identity and then the feeling of belonging;

- the need for new experiences, cognitive, emotional, social stimulation that drives the development of the child's intelligence, and the quality of the experiences is seconded by the attitude, perception and qualitative input of the one experiencing them;

- the child's need to be valued and appreciated - extrinsic motivation is necessary for practicing appropriate behaviours, avoiding the deviant ones, because the respect given has become a benchmark and a rule;

- the need for responsibilities develops both the child's feeling of autonomy and accountability, as well as the decisional act and, implicitly, the responsibility of the consequences of his/her actions;

- basic, physiological needs are essential to the child's normal survival and physical development.

Neglect takes many forms: food neglect caused by deprivation of food or its insufficiency, the absence of essential foods for the development of the body or the administration of food that is inappropriate to the age of the child, irregular meals; negligence of clothing manifested by lack of clothing or by the child's wearing of clothing that is inconsistent with the size of the body and the season; neglect of hygiene consists of superficiality or lack of body hygiene, abominable odors, parasites; medical neglect is the absence of care, omission of vaccines and visits to a physician, failure to administer prescribed treatments, failure to follow recovery programs; educational neglect consists in the active non-involvement of children in the accomplishment of school tasks, in under-stimulation, in non-insurance of

school supplies by parents, disinterest manifested by them regarding school progress, not participating in school meetings; emotional neglect is caused by the lack of affection, attention, moral and verbal support provided by the child's parent; leaving the child/abandonment is the most severe form of neglect.

2.1. Physical neglect

This phenomenon appears in various forms: ■ food neglect - consisting in deprivation of food, the absence of essential food for growth, irregular meals, inappropriate or inadequate food for the child's age; ■ clothing neglect - due to lack of clothing or inconsistency with the season and measure of the body; ■ neglect of hygiene - found in the absence of body hygiene, abominable odors, parasites. Physically neglected children are pale, sometimes going for hours and days without food, without a change of clothes, crying due to a lack of food and warmth, or because of discomfort and pain.

2.2. Medical neglect

Medical neglect is caused by the absence of specific care: omission of vaccines, medical examinations, non-application of treatments prescribed by the physician, failure to attend recovery programs; in addition to these forms of manifestation, medical neglect is also caused by the indolent attitude of the parent towards the sick child and the prescribed treatment.

2.3. Emotional neglect

Emotional neglect is exemplified by the phrase "unloved child" who, although not showing obvious physical signs of this form of maltreatment, always lives and experiences an indescribable emotional wound caused by the absence or neglect and superficiality of moral-affective support (Neamţu, 2003).

Defined as the poor ability of parents to engage positively and emotionally in the child's care, emotional neglect is manifested even before birth by substance abuse (drugs, alcohol), or poor nutrition and feeding of the fetus or the baby.

A latent form, apparently understood and accepted, but with serious consequences, emotional neglect is characteristic of parents trying to counterbalance the lack of satisfaction of emotional needs resulting from insufficiency, temporary absence or total lack of emotional engagement in the affective relationship with their child, with the ostentatious satisfaction of the child's material needs, or, more seriously, with the urgent induction of secondary material needs. Through this dysfunctional attitude they feel exonerated and, they believe, efficient, precisely because of their lack, by providing their children with material welfare.

Unfortunately, the emotional void transforms the child into a fragile, impassable person with a flattened affection, incapable of affective attachment, and engagement in a solid and harmonious relationship based on adaptive and functional principles and values.

Emotional neglect acts invasively and unexpectedly on the child's socio-emotional competence and implicitly on self-esteem, and is found in several forms of exteriorization: the conscious and repetitive rejection of the child, the consequent non-recognition of his needs and merits, his emotional humiliation by ridicule, irony and minimizing emotions, projecting personal shortcomings on the child,

refusing gestures of affection, favoring a child to the detriment of the other, labelling it negatively. In conclusion, emotional neglect is the absence of empathy, assertiveness, emotional, moral and social support, acceptance, tolerance and unconditional love, of viable, adaptive patterns necessary for the successful integration of the adult in the Romanian society.

2.4. Neglect of mental health

With regard to mental health, it is preferable to prevent the generalization and grouping of different individual patterns in wider syndromes. Individual profile is the guide in an intervention program for the child and should include individual, family, educational and biological treatment (Brazelton & Stanley, 2013).

Most mental health problems are associated with a lack of adequate development experiences. Children have relational problems because they have not understood the decoding of allusions and social signals, and those who have extreme emotional reactions have not acquired relative thinking strategies (Brazelton & Stanley, 2013).

2.5. Educational neglect

Preventing access to compulsory general education is considered an offense in the New Penal Code and the New Code of Criminal Procedure, being a form of educational negligence, Article 380 clearly specifying: "the parent or person to whom a minor has been entrusted, according to the law, which unjustifiably withdraws or prevents him by any means from following compulsory general education is punished by imprisonment from 3 months to one year or a fine".

Educational neglect is found in substimulation practices, the inconsistency of the system of punishments and rewards, in the absence of follow-up of school progress, in the presence of depreciative feedback.

In Romania, according to the research conducted by Rotaru in 1966, the main forms of educational neglect are manifested by parents not providing the necessary school items (13.1% of students), by disinterest towards school (10.7%, according to teachers) and by requiring children to care for their younger siblings or to work in order to earn a living for them, as well as their family (Constantin, 2004).

It refers to adults who leave their children unattended or who forbid their children to access the home; unsupervised, they may abuse them.

2.6. Abandonment

Article 378 of the New Penal Code and the New Code of Criminal Procedure (www.program-legislativ.ro) defines abandonment as "the performance by the person who has the legal obligation to care for the person entitled to care of one of the following acts: a) leaving, chasing away or not providing help, exposing him to physical or moral suffering; b) failure, in bad faith, to comply with the care obligation stipulated by the law; c) failure to pay, in bad faith, for 3 consecutive months, the child care established by court, shall be punished by imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years or a fine."

Abandonment is a traumatic event in the life of the child, which induces a major crisis of identity and existentialism, and overwhelms his cognitive, emotional, physical and social potential, as well as his adaptation and coping mechanisms.

3. Methodology

Our paper entails theoretical research that observed the specific research strategies, according to the main research objectives. The main research method was represented by thematic analysis, through which we envisaged to construct a theoretical-explanatory vision in order to render possible an explanation for “neglect” as a phenomenon.

4. Conclusion

Neglect - in all its forms - affects the socio-emotional profile of the child, reducing his cognitive and relational skills and weakening his physical and mental health. Deficient in transmitting his own needs, the child calls for protection, attention and requires support in setting up and operationalizing his own long-term aspirations.

Unsatisfied needs, humiliation, harassment cause not only tendencies of self-harm of the victims, but also the modification of their genes and the way their genes control their lives, being the inheritance they leave to the next generations (Moalem, 2016).

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