University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" from of Iasi
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
Doctoral School

Current Forms of Violence in the Educational Context - a multilayered analysis

Summary of PhD thesis

Scientific coordinator:
Prof.Univ. Dr. Constantin Cucoş

Student-PhD candidate:
Huluba(Grigore) Ana-Nicoleta

Iasi, 2014

Contents-general

Chapter I: School violence in specialty literature
1. School violence- Historical and cultural view…… 9
2. Definition of school violence concept…….....11
3. The explanatory framework of violent behavior….....22
4. An approach to worldwide research on violence……...31

Chapter II: Violence among students in current context: bullying and cyber-bullying
1. Face to face harassment and virtual environment harassment……..……..…..…..37
2. Dynamics of aggressor-victim relationship in bullying and cyber-bullying…….....56

Chapter III: The impact of school climate on violence among students
1. School climate- conceptual definition……....66
2. Variables associated with school climate…….69
3. The role of teachers……..……....80
4. Implications of school climate on students conduct…….. .84

Chapter IV: Empirical research
1. Research premises…….…….……89
2. Study 1: *Assessment of current forms of violence in educational context……95*
3. Study 2: *Assessment of students' perceptions regarding the school climate……..135*
4. Study 3: *The relationship between current forms of school violence and school climate dimensions ……..161*

Chapter V: Conclusions and openings
1. Conclusions and discussions……...182
2. Implications and recommendations…….……186
Index of tables and charts ……..…….. 191
Bibliography…….……..196
Annexes……..... 203

Introduction

The problem of violence among students is assessed by examining the perceptions of 519 middle school Romanian students in rural and urban environment, about the forms of violence that they deal with in the school context. Evaluation of new forms of violence among students, bullying and cyber-bullying in lower secondary schools, by building specific tools, and analyzing the causal relationship that can be established between school context variables and current forms of violence are the objectives that define this approach.

The paper consists of five chapters. The theoretical part consisting of the first three chapters, comprises the most important conclusions of theories and studies related to school violence in general and the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying in particular, but also theoretical conceptualizations of school context, on which it is based the design of the scientific research. The research is presented in Chapter IV, where there are exposed the theoretical premises and investigative approaches represented by three studies. These studies aim to assess students' perception on the current forms of violence among students, students' perceptions regarding school climate and the relationship between current forms of school violence and dimensions of school climate. Chapter V summarizes the research conclusions and discussion, and also implications that resonate in educational practice.

The five chapters, preceded by the introduction of the topic sums up 193 pages and together with annexes, charts index and bibliography includes 263 pages.

Keywords: school violence, bullying, cyberbullying, aggressor, victim, witness, school climate.

Chapter I
School violence in specialty literature

This chapter presents a brief overview of the history of the phenomenon of violence in educational environment, showing its age and universality.

Defining the phenomenon is based on the meanings of violence, behavior using power to harm through different ways people who interact (Michaud, 1986; Dufour- Gompers, 1992). Also, it is taken into account the meaning of aggression as tendency, potentiality to harm another (Laplache and Pontalis, 1994). Consecrated typologies of violence highlight social and individual influences, objective or symbolic manifestations, abundance of subtle forms, emphasizing the role of the victim in the qualification of a violent act, representative for a poor school climate (Debarbieux, 2001).

Among the forms of school violence, violence among students is highlighted as the most prolific (Jigău et al. 2005).The explanatory framework approaches the main theories: biological, psycho-social and socio-cultural, but also the causes and risk factors, of which we synthesize potentiality of school context influence over manifestation of violence, through the interaction of its component dimensions.

School violence research, which has been given special attention in recent years, is approached by

pointing out the main events that marked this area. There are highlighted comparative aspects of the research of this phenomenon in the world, its universal character giving the opportunity to make such analyzes, and also comparative aspects of propagation of specific behaviors in different cultures.

Chapter II

Violence among students in current context: bullying and cyberbullying

Chapter II describes the phenomenon of harassment between students conducted face to face and through the virtual environment. First it is analyzed the definition of bullying, a deliberate aggressive behavior, performed repeatedly, over time, in an interpersonal relationship characterized by actual or perceived imbalance of power or strength (Olweus, 2001). Also there are presented the main types of bullying.

The cyberbullying is described as a voluntarily aggressive act, committed by individuals who resort to electronic forms of contact, and which over time aims at the victim who can not easily defend themselves (Li, 2007).. There are listed as well the main types of cyberbullying manifested among students today.

The roles of the students involved in bullying and cyberbullying are sketched through the portraits of the aggressor and the victim (Harcey, 2007), pointing out the

existence of the witness category, although passive, involved in the perpetuation of the conduct. The changing of roles of students involved in violence refers to preserving the status of aggressor / victim in cybernetic environment, and also balancing the power disadvantage experienced in face-to-face confrontations, through virtual resources: anonymity, lack of visibility, indirect and specific character of cyber activities (Barlett and Gentile, 2012).

Chapter III
The impact of school climate on violence among student

Definition of school climate is related to: the existing rules, the physical aspects and the significance given to the whole by the symbolic interaction of its components (Fotini, 2006). Existing level of violence shows the quality of school climate.

Some variables associated with school climate describe a good climate:

- local community characteristics: size of school, residence, social categorization, local partnerships etc. (Younes et al., 2011, Fuchs, 2008);

- personality of the school: a sense of fairness and school affiliation, authoritarianism, discipline and security (Kapari and Stavrou Pilios (2011);

- specific of the class: gender characteristics, the existence of friendship, teachers' interest for extracurricular and life skills development activities.

The teacher's role in building school climate is rendered through: communication difficulties, age and socio-cultural differences between teachers and students, psycho-pedagogical methods used, their involvement in the prevention and management of violence, subjectivity in evaluation etc. (Jigău et al., 2005).

School climate implications on students' conduct are presented through results showing that student adjustment in several domains (Way et al., 2007) strongly depends on interpersonal , organizational and educational climate in secondary schools, schools with better school climate having students with higher achievements and a better social and emotional health (Guthman, 2009).

Chapter IV
Empirical research

The empirical approach is based on exploitation of the theories and studies showing the impact of school climate factors in explaining violence. In the following sections there are presented three studies conducted in the field research.

Study 1: Evaluation of current forms of violence in educational context had the following objectives:

→Developing and validating an instrument for assessing the current forms of violence in school environment

→Investigating opinion of secondary school pupils on the prevalence in school environment of traditional and cybernetic violence, differentiated according to student status role: victim, aggressor or witness

→Assessing the specific role of gender of students involved in violent behavior and the impact of the residential environment of the school

→Comparing the frequency of traditional violence with the frequency of cybernetic violence in secondary school environment

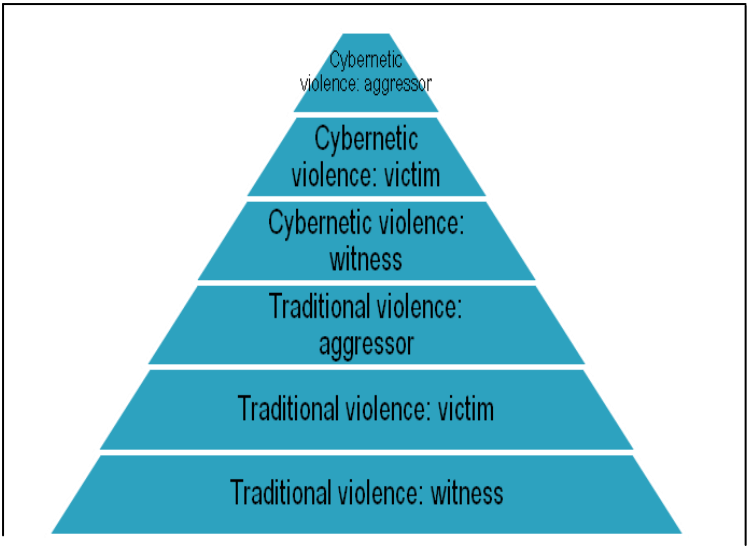
The general research hypothesis was:

There are differences in the assessment of current forms of violence, bullying and cyberbullying, in the roles of victim, aggressor or witness depending on the student's biological gender and the residence of the school.

The research methodology involved the development of the instrument *Questionnaire for assessing current forms of violence in schools (EFAVICE)* and its application on the group of participants. In conducting this survey I have considered models applied by Harcey (2007) and Jigău et al. (2005). The investigation focused on the measurement of the

dependent variable, violence among students, in traditional and cybernetic form in terms of the role of victim, aggressor and witness, using the developed questionnaire. The cvasi-experimental research plan had two independent variables, each with two levels: the biological gender of the students (male and female) and the school environment (rural and urban). Statistical analysis of data consisted in the use of specific methods (frequency analysis, independent paired samples T-tests, factorial ANOVA).

The results are synthetically represented in the following figure, which shows the highest frequency of the witnesses of traditional violence and the lowest of cybernetic aggressors; there are also presented the results of the dependent variable tested by the research plan:



		Independent Variables		
Dependent variable		**Biological gender**	**Residence environment**	**Interactions**
I.Traditional Violence	**1.Victim**	-	*Urban > Rural*	-
	2. Agressor	*Male > Female*	*Urban > Rural*	**Male(urban) > Male(rural) Female (urban) > Female (rural) Male(urban) = Female (urban) Male(rural) > Female (rural)*
	3. Witness	*Female > Male*	*Urban > Rural*	-
II.Cybernetic Violence	**1.Victim**	-	*Urban > Rural*	**Male(urban) > Male(rural) Female (urban) > Female (rural) Male(urban) > Female (urban) Male(rural) > Female (rural)*
	2.Agressor	-	*Urban > Rural*	-
	3.Witness	*Female > Male*	*Urban > Rural*	-

Figure 1: Synthetic overview on current violence among students

Study 2: ***Assessment of students' perceptions about the school climate***, had the following objectives:

→Developing and validating an instrument for assessing students' perceptions regarding the climate components of the school they study in

→Investigating the perceptions of secondary school pupils, 7th and 8th graders, on the school climate

→Identifying gender specific over perception of school climate and comparing these differences;

identifying and comparing the characteristics related to the residence environment of the school unit.

The general research hypothesis was:

There are differences in the students' perception on school climate, depending on the residence area of the school and biological gender of students.

Research methodology involved the construction of the instrument *Questionnaire for evaluating students ' perception of school climate (PECS*) and its application on the group of participants. In the construction of the questionnaire I took into account the model used by Miller (2007). The investigation focused on the measurement of the dependent variable, school climate, with its specific dimensions, using the developed questionnaire. The cvasi-experimental research plan had two independent variables, each with two levels: the biological gender of the students (male and female) and the school environment (rural and urban). Statistical analysis of data consisted of using specific methods (frequency analysis, independent paired-samples t-tests).

The following figure summarizes the results showing the interaction of factors in creating school climate, according to the level of importance given by students.

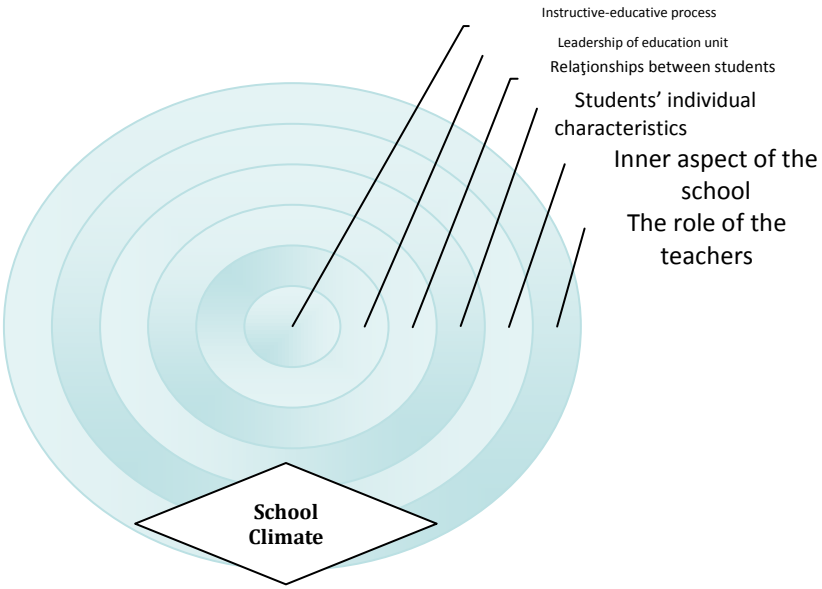


Figure 2: Interaction of variables in the construction of school climate

If we analyze these school climate dimensions, we note their ordering, in the sense that, in the description of a positive climate, students have given different weights for climate dimensions listed in the survey. Thus, they most appreciated the importance of teachers in creating a positive ambience and least the educational process. For all dimensions stated, students from villages reported better values than those from the city.

Study 3: ***The relationship between current forms of school violence and school climate dimensions*** has the following objectives:

→Establishing the relationship between school climate and traditional / cybernetic violence represented by the student in the role of aggressor, victim or witness

→Emphasizing a hierarchical model of school climate dimensions that are related to traditional/ cybernetic school violence

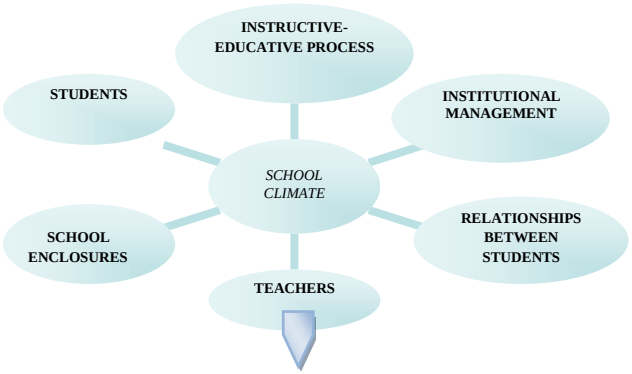
The general research hypothesis was:

There is an influence of school climate on school violence.

Research methodology consisted of a hierarchical regression analysis through the correlation between current forms of violence, found in the first study, and specific dimensions of school climate, analyzed in the second study. The resulting hierarchical models will explain violence among students on the school context variables.

The results are synthetically presented in the following figure, showing the dimensions of the prediction model for each role in the current forms of violence:

ehavior	Role	Predictors (dimensions of the model)	% prediction
Traditional Violence	Victim	Enclosures, teachers, relationships between colleagues	42 %
	Aggressor	Enclosures, training	36,7 %
	Witness	Enclosures, teachers	32%
Cybernetic Violence	Victim	Enclosures, training	34,5%
	Aggressor	Enclosures, training, teachers, relationships between colleagues, students	43,6%
	Witness	Enclosures, training, teachers, relationships between colleagues	21%



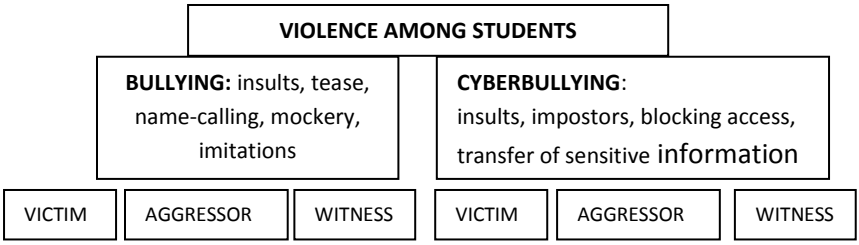


Figure 3: The relation between school climate and violence among students

Chapter V:
Conclusions and openings

Apart from theoretical inventory, analysis, synthesis and comparison of the main theories and results that represent the foundation of the current design, the investigative approach has obtained results which can be summarized around the following conclusions:

1. It has been confirmed that there are differences in the manifestation of traditional and cybernetic violence, between students in rural and urban environment, depending on the gender. Thus, the empirical research has revealed a much higher level of violence, in all forms and roles, in urban than in rural areas. In terms of the effect of gender, results have not kept the same constancy, as highlighted in the existence of two interaction effects with the area of residence. The girls said they witnessed the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying to a greater extent than boys, and boys admitted their involvement as aggressors in traditional violence, more than girls. These results are outlined in the interaction effects, in the sense that, the prevalence of male aggressors only applies to rural areas, where boys assault more than girls, through traditional forms, while in urban areas, boys and girls are equally face to face aggressors. However, in rural areas, where boys predominate as physical aggressors, girls report a greater

involvement than their colleagues in the new form of violence, cyberbullying, as cybernetic aggressors. Therefore, the evaluation panel of current forms of violence in school environment is, on one hand, ordered according to some criteria related to school climate, which require a lower or higher level of manifestation, and on the other hand, it is animated by the role dynamic of students involved.

2. It was confirmed that there are differences in the perception of students regarding the school climate, in different ways according to the residence area of the school and biological gender of the students. The big difference between the level of violence found in urban areas and the one found in rural areas, was maintained in the assessment of school climate as well. For all the proposed dimensions, students from rural backgrounds reported better averages than those of the city, and on the whole, the rural area who reported less violence, now rated a high quality school climate. However, in the hierarchy of climate components, students give primacy to the role of teachers, school enclosures and students and only then they appreciate the relationship with their colleagues, school management or instructive-educative process.

3. Finally, there has been proved the influence of school climate on violence among students. All models of prediction of student involvement in bullying and cyberbullying in the roles of aggressor, victim or witness

highlighted the importance of school enclosures in explaining this behavior. Another important predictor is represented, in traditional violence, by the role of the teachers, while for the cybernetic violence there is consistently shown the importance of the instructive-educational process.

The implications and recommendations for the educational practice are summarized around the following ideas:

- cybernetic violence is a real behavior among Romanian middle school students, traditional bullies tend to exhibit the same behavior in cybernetic environment, while some traditional victims can become dangerous cyber bullies.
- traditional violence is reported as a prevalent behavior in school space, especially by witnesses. If large number of viewers of bullying would be involved in community mediation programs, the incidence of forms of violence among students would decrease.
- it is necessary to inform the students about the existing forms of violence and their involvement in building a legal framework of sanctions and to provide opportunities for rewarding non-violent collectives.
- the big difference regarding the level of violence between rural and urban areas shows the importance of some variables in the local community. Anti-bullying programs should insist on a tight, permanent and

continuous partnership between school and local community representatives.

- awareness of school climate factors involved in harassment between students must empower school (teachers, principals, administrators) about the acts of violence among students.
- in the classroom, teachers and head teachers must pay a particular attention to arranging the school enclosures.
- building, together with students, some own labels (uniform or distinctive style of clothing hymn, logo, mascot, etc.) and promoting cultural and religious symbols of students' culture, values that students can cultivate and respect as a guarantee of their values.
- teachers should know the new technologies that students can bring to school and limit student access to these devices during school hours. Zero tolerance strategy has to be backed up by the quality and interactivity of the educational process that should not give the student available time to access them.

Even if a number of variables outside the school are involved in generating violence between students, the results show that the school still has the power to prevent and intervene in this phenomenon. Using the results obtained on actual forms of violence among students, their perceptions about the climate and models of violence prediction based on contextual factors could improve prevention and intervention programs for violence among students.

Selective Bibliography

Barlett, Christopher P. Gentile, Douglas A., (2012), „Attacking Others Online: The Formation of Cyberbullying in Late Adolescence", *Psychology of Popular Media Culture,*1(2), 123–135;

Debarbieux, E. (2001). *La violence en milieu scolaire. Dix approches en Europe*. Issy-les-Moulineaux: ESF.

Douglass, K., R., (2009), A study of the relationship between group perception of school climate and incidences of bullying at the junior high/middle school level, teză de doctorat la University of Massachusetts Lowell, accestă la: //proquest.umi.com, 09. 2013;

Dufour-Gompers R., (1992), *Dictionnaire de la violence et du crime*, Toulouse, Editions Erès.

Fotinos, G. (2006), *Le climat scolaire dans les lycées et collèges. Etat des lieux – Analyse – Propositions.* MGEN

Fuchs, M. (2008), „Impact of school context on violence at schools a multi-level analysis",în *International Journal of Violence and School,Vol. 12*

Guthman, S.,(2011), „Student perceptions of school climate in a bermuda middle school: a program evaluation study", teza de doctorat accesată online la adresa: //proquest.umi.com, 09. 2013;

Harcey, T., (2007), „Phenomenological study of the nature, prevalence, and perceptions of cyberbullying based on student and administrator responses", teza de doctorat la Edgewood College, accesată oniline la adresa: //proquest.umi.com în septembrie 2013.

Jigău, M., Liiceanu, A. & Preoteasa, L. (coord.), (2005), *Violenţa în şcoală*, Institutul de Ştiinţe ale Educaţiei, accesat la : http://arhiva.ise.ro/evaluare/VIOLENTA.studiu.TOTAL.FINAL. 27.04.2005.pdf

Kapari K., Stavrou Pilios D.,(2010), „School characteristics as predictors of bullying and victimization among greek middle school students", în *Interrnational journal of violence and school, septembre,* pp: 93-113;

Labass Lamine Dialo, (2010), *Une école violente mais pacifiée. Une étude paradoxale du climat et de la victimation scolaire entre la France et le Mali,* Univ. *Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2*, teza de doctorat;

Laplache şi Pontalis. (1994), *Vocabularul psihanalizei* Ed. Humanitas, Bucureşti

Li, Q. (2007), „New bottle but old wine: A research of cyberbullying in schools", în *Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 23, pp:* 1777–1791;

Michaud, Y.A. (1986), *Violence et politique,* PUF, Paris;

Miller, P., E. (2008), „Students perceptions of school social climate", Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago, accesată online la adresa: //proquest.umi.com

Olweus, D. (2001), „Peer harassment: A critical analysis and some important issues", în J. Juvonen, & S. Graham (Eds.), *Peer harassment in school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimized* (pp. 3-20). New York: Guilford;

Pânişoară, Ion-Ovidiu, (2009), „Profesorul de succes. 59 de principii de pedagogie practică", Editura Polirom, Iaşi.

Sălăvăstru, D., (2004), *Psihologia Educaţiei*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi

Way, N., Reddy, R., Rhodes, J., „Students' Perceptions of School Climate During the Middle School Years: Associations with Trajectories of Psychological and Behavioral Adjustment" în *American Journal of Community Psycholgy*, Vol. 40, pp:194–213;

Younes, Debarbieux, Jourdan (2011), „Le climat scolaire a l'ecole primaire etude de l'influence des variables de milieu sur sa perception par les eleves de 6 a 8 ans" în *International journal of violence and school*, pp: 112-133.