

Aggressive Behavior during Covid-19

Gabriel Tănăsescu

*University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania
gabriel.tanasescu@edu.ucv.ro*

ABSTRACT: This article describes the causal link between COVID-19 and the perpetrator's aggressive behavior, influenced by the traumatic experience of the new social conditions imposed by the pandemic. The victims of domestic violence are during this period affected by social restrictions, lack of communication with the authorities, the presence of the perpetrator in the family environment. Alcohol and drug use, temporary loss of employment, traffic restrictions, lack of livelihood, financial insecurity and poor hygiene conditions negatively affect the perpetrator's mental state. Scientific studies on suicide attempts of adolescents and adults, patients with COVID-19, as well as aggressive behavior after treatment and after discharge from medical centers are analyzed. A meta-analysis of the causal relationship between the virus and other environmental factors that may contribute to the formation of neurological disorders is also presented.

KEYWORDS: aggressive behavior, neurological disorders, COVID-19, domestic violence

Introduction

The World Health Organization considers that during this period COVID-19 can affect the mental health of the population, by increasing the level of stress and anxiety. Quarantine and the new rules imposed by the authorities can sometimes have negative effects on ordinary social activities. Ever since the state of alert was launched in order to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of illness, the death of loved ones, alarming statistics on the number of infected people, distrust in the medical system are elements that can aggravate the depression of vulnerable people, a situation that results in suicidal actions. Alcohol and drug use, isolation, lack of social relationships contribute to the development of criminal thinking and aggressive behavior. Patients and their families, victims of COVID-19, must receive compassion from society without being discriminated against or stigmatized. The stigma of patients, who are trying to recover in medical institutions, associated with the state of depression caused by the disease, leads to a general negative state of health. The intervention of mental health specialists must be urgent and effective in critical situations. The death of family members can amplify the stress and despair of patients, psychosocial help being necessary during the recovery period, but also after healing. Children and adolescents are emotionally affected by the unbalanced behavior of adults, the COVID-19 pandemic producing attitude changes that express the inability of family members to control the difficult existential situation. Emotional, medical, economic and social support, care and assistance are recommended for the elderly, as well as for people with mental disorders, residential centers for children and adults, with and without disabilities, as well as all vulnerable categories. Access to medicines and medical treatment, cleaning, hygiene, limiting social contact, exercise, maintaining routine and clear and official information on reducing the risk of infection are recommendations of health organizations to combat the effects of the pandemic.

The obligation to wear a mask and aggressive behavior

Wearing a mask in closed public spaces, in shops, in means of transport, pharmacies, banks, and accommodation units is an obligation imposed by the authorities, which can be considered by some individuals a restriction on the expression of freedom and a disturbing constraint that can

cause an aggressive attitude, sometimes difficult to control. Health control, temperature measurement by non-contact thermometer bothers a small part of the population, which sometimes opposes these protection measures, retaliates and asserts its dissatisfaction with the violation of civil rights. The mask is seen as a muzzle by those who do not tolerate the restriction of freedom. The mask is for them a tool that limits the expressiveness of the human being's face, an awkward accessory that negatively influences your behavior and health. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the pandemic, the authorities did not know how to react, some decisions were not firm, but even contradictory, and some specialists were not very convinced of the usefulness of the masks. Those who dispute the existence of the virus consider the mask a sign that is applied to the faces of those subjected, a stigma that has no medical quality, but only dishonors those who wear it, the mask highlights the power of authority and humility of those who fear. Those who do not accept the obligation to wear protective masks in enclosed public spaces, in commercial spaces and in public transport, at work or in crowded urban areas are usually people who believe in conspiracy theories, theories about the non-existence of the virus, in the conspiracy of certain powerful states or in the illegal business of the pharmaceutical industry, which seeks to increase its economic dominance. The conspiracy theory is also fueled by social networks, the misinformation about COVID-19 being considered by the World Health Organization an "infodemia". The philosopher Alain Cambier analyzed this situation for France Culture, stating that people want to find explanations for the appearance of coronavirus, want absolute certainty, make many scenarios, and it seems that there is even a parallel between infection of bodies and contamination of spirits. Laurent Cordonier, PhD in Social Sciences, University of Paris, believes that conspiracy theories give the impression of an unknown threat, and people, tired and frustrated by the state of isolation, feel encouraged to act. The conspiracy epidemic is global (Cordonier 2020), all over the world there are groups that support the non-existence of coronavirus, I think governments are to blame for the difficult situation of society, because they have secretly agreed to support the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic, to impose measures reducing individual freedoms (Cordonier 2020). The conspiracy focus is difficult to combat, because the epidemic causes concern among the population, the fear of death is present, and the risk of disease appears as a disturbing threat (Cordonier 2020). The feeling of helplessness in the fight against the disease was also created among the population, as well as the illusion that we can act to remove the danger (Cordonier 2020).

In some public areas, non-contact thermometer temperature measurement is mandatory, but this can lead to violent behavior on the part of those who refuse. There are even conspiracy theories that consider the thermometer a means of delisting the population, and medical treatment in specialized institutions is seen as an experiment that can affect the health of the population.

In France, a 59-year-old bus driver from Bayonne was punched violently in the upper body and head after being insulted and thrown from the bus for checking the ticket of one of the suspects and he asked three other young men to wear protective masks. The bus driver was left unconscious on the sidewalk and died a few days later.

The mental process of crime

The suspects acted directly, instantly, without the psychological barrier that the Moral Ego should impose (Tănăsescu 2012). The lack of inhibition is justified only by the action of the destructive drive and the deadly drive that pushes the will of the criminal self towards the act. The neurotic always turns his back on reality, because he finds it unbearable (Freud 2017). Taking action is a process of finding the object; the suspects free themselves from stress and anxiety by acting against the law imposed by the authorities, against the humiliating living conditions, against the existential failure and fatality caused by an uncontrollable virus. They

respond to provocative death by discharging the death drive. Psychic activity is unbalanced and he wants pleasure. In the abysmal darkness of consciousness, in the dark space of preparation dwells the primordial image of evil (Jung 2011). The mental process of crime is revealed as a physiological process of the action of the criminal personality. Each act committed shows the meaning and significance of the representation of criminal thought for the commission of the criminal act. Aggressive epilepsy is an uncontrollable condition that wears out only when the aggressive tension decreases in intensity (Sacks 2017). Oliver Sacks describes this phenomenon of personal epilepsy, considering that its origin is found in the temporal lobes, when there is a fine electrical stimulation of the points prone to attacks in the cerebral cortex. Sometimes the homicidal ideation creates a certain state of pleasure for the subject, who is aware of living the images of violent acts. These images, although not produced in reality (violent acts are committed only in the author's imagination) can de-stress the perpetrator and at the same time strengthen and justify the process of carrying out the aggressive action plan (James, Beauregard, Proulx 2019). Social exclusion and isolation generate feelings of despair and failure. Life appears meaningless, the human being has no purpose, and this favors the appearance of negative personality traits that influence the decision to act and the materialization of violent behavior (James, Beauregard, Proulx 2019). Sex killers experience social isolation, loneliness and low self-esteem (James, Beauregard, Proulx 2019).

Philosophical interpretation of aggressive behavior

Psychologist Helene Romano made an analysis for the French station Cnews, claiming that the mask also has a mortuary, funerary dimension. Symbolically, what we wear now to protect ourselves from coronavirus has long been a mortuary mask, this dimension being present in all cultures and is buried in the collective unconscious (Romano 2020). The obligation to wear a mask awakens the instinct for fear, and at the same time reminds people that the virus is still present, circulating and spreading, which can cause the risk of death; this situation is unbearable for many people, the Ego of the being, dominated by the fear of death, does not accept it (Romano 2020). This constant reminder of the presence of the coronavirus bothers and frightens certain subjects (Romano 2020), which determines the appearance of a certain opposition to reality and insubordination to the voice of authority. Fear of the effects of the disease and the risk of death become unbearable, vulnerable people reject the cruel reality, do not want to adapt, deny the existence of victims and more easily accept the solutions proposed by the conspiracy theory. The new rules imposed by the pandemic limit freedom of movement, without mobility the human personality transforms; limiting social contacts can cause depression and aggressive behavior. People are aggressive because they are mentally exhausted (Romano 2020). The refusal to wear a protective mask means the unconscious presence of the aggressive drive, born of anxiety and distrust, waiting only for the triggering event to manifest itself violently, especially when the authority asks the perpetrator to comply. Most people accept the mask and consider it a means of protection, the obligation is not viewed with hostility as a command imposed by the authorities, which destroys freedom of action. Thus, aggressive behavior is inhibited, because the action on health protection is considered to be much more important (Romano 2020).

Aggressive behavior develops when cities are closed and quarantine is imposed; isolation in the home, maintaining social distance, interrupting social contacts with family and loved ones, suspending personal affairs and losing a job can turn a state of anxiety into an act of aggression, sometimes degenerating into violent activities that relieve the perpetrator of tension accumulated by accepting the impulses of destruction. The victims are assaulted in car washes, shopkeepers in shops, nurses in medical institutions (two women start a conflict in the tram for social distancing that degenerates into violent acts).

Coronaviruses and psychiatric disorders

Respiratory coronaviruses have the ability to infect nerve cells, can remain in the human body for a long time, and can destroy the activity of the human brain (Zandifar, Badrfam 2020). The highest birth rate among schizophrenic patients occurred after the flu epidemic of 1957 (Zandifar, Badrfam 2020). The virus can cause neurological problems; prominent spongiform degradation has been observed that can initiate basic neuropathology (Zandifar, Badrfam 2020). The link between the effects of birth time and schizophrenia is based on the theory of the influence of environmental factors on the formation of psychiatric disorders (Zandifar, Badrfam, 2020).

Judith Allardyce and Jane Boydell published a study in 2006 examining the influence of the social environment on health, especially the onset of schizophrenia. The evidence presented in the study shows a significant increase in the number of cases of schizophrenia in urban areas compared to rural areas. The highest rates are found in areas characterized by ethnic conflict and social disorganization (Allardyce, Boydell 2006). In areas characterized by high levels of disorder, fear of death, fear of violence, there are higher rates of schizophrenia. Single people are more vulnerable, and were most at risk for psychiatric disorder or schizophrenia (Allardyce, Boydell 2006).

Turhan Canli conducted a study in 2014 to support the reconceptualization of major depressive disorder as an infectious disease. Major depression can be caused by a parasitic, bacterial or viral infection (Canli 2014). The presence of inflammatory markers in the brains of depressed patients or those suffering from major depressive disorder has been reported by several post-mortem studies (Canli 2014). Victims of female suicide had high levels of IL-4, and victims of male suicide had elevated IL-13 levels in the Brodmann area, a region of the brain associated with suicidal ideation (Canli 2014).

During COVID-19, doctors reported cases of aggressive patients during medical treatment. A woman committed suicide after coronavirus infection, although the body responded positively to the effect of the drugs and her health had improved. Situations of domestic violence and aggressive behavior of patients who have been cured of coronavirus have been reported after discharge.

Intimate partner violence increased during COVID-19, so there were several cases of physical or sexual violence, emotional abuse (Mazza, Marano, Lai, Janiri, Sani 2020). During the quarantine, the victims of domestic violence were women (Mazza, Marano, Lai, Janiri, Sani 2020). Due to feelings of frustration and agitation, sometimes caused by quarantine, acts of domestic violence have increased (Mazza, Marano, Lai, Janiri, Sani 2020).

Conclusions

A legitimate question is whether in this serious period, influenced by profound social and economic changes, the aggressive Ego chooses to move on to the criminal act without being influenced, or if its discernment is diminished, reasoning is affected by the internal transformation of emotional impulses, and sometimes in more severe cases, the virus can impair brain function and personality (a 49-year-old nurse from Jesolo, Venice, committed suicide; she worked with coronavirus patients. The medical director of the emergency department at New York committed suicide without a history of mental illness, the woman was infected with coronavirus but recovered very well, she continued to work and treated many people with coronavirus, but the end is unfortunate. The 20-year-old from London committed suicide with an overdose of drugs and worked in the intensive care unit, where many deaths. A 70-year-old woman infected with coronavirus committed suicide in hospital, although she was receiving medication for depression).

The state of aggression is sometimes manifested instinctively, the destruction drive, repressed for a period by the Ideal Ego, can no longer be inhibited. At the moment of projecting the criminal ideation, the perpetrator discovers through the will power of evil the essence of his personality. In this essence, the will would be closest to itself (Kierkegaard 1999). The project of criminal ideation is a reflection of the criminal Ego that comes to discover in a moment of despair the essence of the criminal will of its own Self. By the criminal Self I mean the personality of the perpetrator. Criminal ideation opens into the being as an appearance from the dark space of preparation (Jung 2011).

The International Committee of the Red Cross has recorded more than 600 incidents of physical violence, threats, attacks, harassment and discrimination against health professionals. The triggering event was caused by fears of the spread of the coronavirus, or by grievances over the death of relatives. There have been violent situations triggered by the revolt against the rules prohibiting funerals and rituals. Esperanza Martinez, the ICRC's chief of health, believes patients and healthcare professionals should not be stigmatized or blamed for the spread of coronavirus and the death of those infected.

References

- Allardyce, Judith and Boydell, Jane. 2006. "Review: The Wider Social Environment and Schizophrenia." In *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, vol. 32, no. 4.
- Atkinson, Rita L., Atkinson Richard C., Smith, Edward E. and Bem, Daryl J. 2002. *Introduction to Psychology*. Bucharest: Technique S.A. Publishing House.
- Canli, Turhan. 2014. "Reconceptualizing major depressive disorder as an infectious disease." In *Biology of Mood & Anxiety Disorders* 2014:10.
- Costello, Stephen J. 2017. *The Pale Criminal: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. Bucharest: Three Publishing House.
- DSM-IV-TR. 2003. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, edited by Aurel Romila, The Free Psychiatric Association in Romania Publishing House.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2014. *About Psychoanalysis*. Bucharest: Three Publishing House. German translation Daniela Ștefănescu.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2017. *Psychology of the Unconscious*. Bucharest: Three Publishing House.
- James, Jonathan, Beauregard, Eric and Proulx, Jean. 2019. "Sexual murders in everyday life." In *Journal of Criminal Justice* 60 (2019) 64-73.
- Jung, Carl. 2011. *The Red Book*. Bucharest: Three Publishing House.
- Mazza, Marianna, Marano Giuseppe, Lai Carlo, Janiri Luigi and Sani Gabriele. 2020. "Danger in danger: Interpersonal violence during COVID-19 quarantine." In *Psychiatry Research* 289 (2020) 113046.
- Sacks, Oliver. 2017. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.
- Schaffer, Jack B. and Rodolfa, Emil. 2019. *ICD-10-CM: Casebook and Workbook for Students: Psychological and Behavioral Conditions*. Bucharest: Three Publishing House.
- Tănăsescu, Camil. 2012a. *Criminology*. Bucharest: Universul Juridic Publishing House.
- Tănăsescu, Camil. 2012b. *Judicial Psychology*. Bucharest: Universul Juridic Publishing House.
- Zandifar, Atefeh and Badrfam, Rahim. 2020. "COVID-19: Considering the prevalence of schizophrenia in the coming decades." *Psychiatry Research*, Volume 288, June, 112982.