

Communication and Crime Prevention from Psychological Point of View

Erika VÁRADI-CSEMA

ABSTRACT

Suffering a perceived or real victimization could be recorded as a serious traumatic event in the life of a person. However, it is important to emphasize that the chapter does not only focus on the victims of norm-violating human behaviour or crimes, but on all human conflicts where the person concerned identifies themselves as victims. (e.g. peer-group conflicts, toxic family relationships, burdensome parenting methods)

The impact of this is not only related to the course of formal proceedings. Becoming an “actor” in the judiciary can be accompanied by serious psychological pressure, stress and anxiety. To experience during the formal procedure, that there is no opportunity to share the most important psychological effects, but at the same time, to experience different new negative feelings, not only cause reliving previous events, but can even lead to new traumatization (or becoming a repeat victim). Spiritual reassurance and psychological satisfaction are lacking, as even the faith in world- just-hypothesis and in the existence of control over our own fate is broken. The person does not understand why all this happened to them – but they do not immediately receive an answer to their question.

The aim of the chapter is to present what human needs are violated in a victim situation, and to what extent and why communication-focused transformative mediation can help to free oneself from the negative effects of victimization through their restoration.

KEYWORDS

victimization, negative effects of toxic relationships, human needs, Maslow-pyramid, transformative mediation, communication

Experiencing a conflict – if it is not resolved or does not end in a win-win situation – can cause several negative effects on the person concerned. In this, we often suffer psychological damages, which, if we do not process them, can carry with us for the rest of our lives. However, the deeply buried psychological traumas preserved this way are stacked on top of each other, and in the end they are able to become a strong, hard shell that is very difficult for us to break alone. But within this hard shell, negative experiences continue to work, eventually consuming the individual’s mental health and quality of life.

Erika Váradi-Csema (2025) ‘Communication and Crime Prevention from Psychological Point of View’ in Erika Váradi-Csema (ed.) *Interdisciplinary and Child-Friendly Communication*. Miskolc-Budapest: Central European Academic Publishing. pp. 185–190. https://doi.org/10.71009/2025.evcs.iacfc_14



Therefore, in the course of these thoughts, although I use the term victim, I do not refer it to the victim of the crime in the narrow sense, but to all persons who have received wounds during their conflicts.

1. The Psychological Effects of the ‘Victim’ Situation Based of Maslow’s Pyramid of Needs

Although there is debate about the *raison d’être* of the pyramid of needs *associated with Maslow’s* name – more precisely, about the hierarchy of the individual levels and their building on each other¹ – there is no question about the existence of basic needs, which arise partly from the functional needs of man as a human organism, and partly from the continuous development of the personality and age-dependent role changes characteristic only of the human species².

In its most direct form, a victimisation situation – in terms of its psychological effects – attacks the security needs at the second most important basic level of the hierarchy of needs (the conditions necessary for subsistence, such as after eating). However, the victim may not only suffer from a loss of security; they often feel that they have lost control over their life, the predictability of everyday life, and that they are most likely able to create the life security they want with a proper, conscious lifestyle.

Although these negative experiences have the strongest effect on the affected person, the harmful consequences of victimisation do not stop at this threshold. They also affect psychological needs such as trust, which significantly affect the quality of everyday social relationships. Committing a crime can shake a number of relationships of trust: trust in the immediate or wider environment, in the community, in the members of society, or even in order, the importance of observing moral norms, and the decisiveness of justice as an ideal. In other words, these are the trust factors that are the pillars of a person’s outlook on life.

The prolonged dissatisfaction of these emotional needs alone is capable of triggering psychological problems that (also) affect everyday behaviour, such as anxiety, loneliness or abandonment. The distrust of those appearing in the victim’s environment, as a basic attitude, can not only generate serious difficulties in the management of private and professional relationships of appropriate quality, but in the long run it pushes the individual towards a passive behavioural strategy, an introverted personality. In the causal context of the loss of control and trust that is not treated in its effects, on the basis of the continuous fear of the occurrence of a new victim situation, generalised anxiety disorder³ may even develop in the last case. Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) is characterised by worrying about a wide variety of things that appear

1 For more details see: Forgács, 2017.

2 Tezcan, Aydemir and Genc, 2017, p. 217.

3 Kerekes, 2012, pp. 76–79.

for at least six months, almost daily. In addition to this continuity, a characteristic symptom of GAD is that it is often present as a kind of general feeling, without a rational cause or reason. Although in some cases this inner tension can be particularly intense, even experiencing a slight level of anxiety – precisely because of its duration – is stressful for the body. All this can cause constant fatigue, persistent anxiousness, rapid heartbeat, high blood pressure and other psychosomatic symptoms, the severity of which is amplified by the patient’s experience that he/she is unable to overcome these on his/her own, or only with great effort.

Returning to the scope of human needs, even in the “absence” of psychiatric disorders, crime can cause the impairment of a new, even higher level of need; and that is *recognition*. The category is divided into two sub-elements, depending on who we expect to manifest it: ourselves or our environment? Of the two, in my opinion, the former may be more impaired. The victim’s situation typically does not (or only indirectly, in certain special circumstances) affect the existence of respect or social prestige from others, or its specific level of appearance. On the other hand, the vulnerability and feeling of helplessness associated with being a victim, the passivity of the “suffering position”, the answer to the question “why me” are all approaches that deeply affect self-esteem and strongly influence self-image. Not accepting ourselves affects our self-confidence, even when we know and believe that there are things we are good at. Self-image is based on this. Self-rejection due to the ‘sticky’ loser position of the victim causes a loss or a significant decrease in self-esteem, which ultimately distorts the mental image we have of ourselves. In addition to self-confidence, self-esteem and self-esteem involved in experiencing a victim situation play a significant role in the quality of self-image.

A person’s outlook on life is determined by the totality of the person’s personality traits that he/she attributes to himself/herself. The closer the current self-image is to the version that embodies the self-ideal that a person wants to achieve, the more balanced their personality is, the more positive their subjective well-being, and the more comfortable they feel in their own skin. A victim’s self-image can be very far from his/her ideal self-image owing to his/her own situation. The image of a successful, proud, energetic person who is able to control his/her life and a loser (“loser”), who is ashamed of what has happened, forced into the role of living it, and passively drifting with the events, are very far from each other. And who would gladly choose the latter? Self-contempt and rejection can generate further psychological problems.

2. Without Words ...

In terms of its effects, the possible consequences of psychological problems that deteriorate into psychiatric disorders⁴ are also alarming and can have a negative impact either directly or indirectly on the affected environment, the smaller community,

4 Szabó, 2018.

and ultimately on society as a whole. Aggression or antisocial behaviour, mood and emotional disorders (such as anger, irritability) appear in the context of behavioural changes, increasing the risk of unlawful behaviour. Impairment of cognitive functions – such as attention and concentration disorders – or disorders of work and social performance (e.g. reduced work performance) affect the individual's activity and efficiency at work as a whole. Behavioural changes such as suicide attempts or psychosomatic symptoms (sleep disturbance, physical complaints) predict the likelihood of exploiting health care and sick leave. While these effects can be expressed in monetary terms, the damage experienced by a child growing up in a family where the parent is unable to pay attention to him/her or perform his/her “tasks” due to his/her inner mental problems cannot be described. In terms of its other effects, such as the incomplete social role, showing indifference towards others, deteriorating social interactions, it is a negative direction for both the narrower and wider community and society as a whole. Due to the harmful consequences directly for the victim and indirectly for the other parties involved, these psychological changes represent a serious risk factor even if the previously indicated diagnostic symptoms do not develop⁵.

‘Subjective Well-Being’ (SWB), which according to Máté Szondy is⁶ the most commonly used equivalent of the scientific concept of happiness, is *the third element in addition to life satisfaction and a high level of positive emotions*. Supporting the ability to forgive and satisfying emotional needs is one of the most important areas of victim support. “... Poor mental state, depression, or post-traumatic effects can be confirmed in those who have a low willingness or ability to forgive.”⁷

Studies of “positive health psychology”⁸ have confirmed that an individual's positive attitudes, such as self-esteem, inner harmony, or optimism, are a stronger predictor of their health behaviour. And although the relationship may seem distant, in reality, a well-functioning system of alternative solutions can itself make a significant contribution to the creation of a more successful society.

The successful resolution of conflicts and disputes has consequences that are not only observed in this area. The ability *to self-accept or forgive has become an accepted determining factor in the subjective well-being of citizens*. Those who are able to forgive are more easily able to nurture and improve their personal relationships, and cope with the negative changes affecting their lives. In fact, these people are much more satisfied with their lives on the whole⁹.

It is important to note that the fact that someone feels comfortable in their situation depends much less on the presence of positive emotions than on the absence of

5 APA (American Psychiatric Association), 2016.

6 Szondy, 2004, pp. 53–72.

7 For more details see for example: Szondy, 2006, pp. 15–34.

8 See more about this: Bagdy, 2011, pp. 49–102.

9 For more details see: Szondy, 2007, pp. 221–239.

negative ones. Thus, those who are able to accept themselves and create their inner harmony are able to experience a much stronger subjective well-being precisely because of the lack of this negative attitude¹⁰.

3. Communicating to Reach the Ability to Forgive and Self-Acceptance

The ability to forgive and self-acceptance¹¹, therefore, improves an individual's relationships, affects their psychological and emotional state, their optimistic or pessimistic attitudes, and ultimately how many happy moments they can create for themselves. At the same time, this is also true in reverse, as a pessimistic attitude, i.e. anticipating and almost expecting negative events obviously reduces the chance of the individual experiencing their social relationships as subjectively good.

Processing emotional injuries sustained during conflicts and healing psychological wounds is no small task.

Mihály Csíkszentmihályi formulated the paradox¹² that although we would assume that the most uplifting feeling of happiness hits the individual in a kind of tranquil, relaxation state, this is not really the case. These moments are related to hard work, increased physical or mental performance, which aims to complete a task or achieve a result. In this sense, the feeling of happiness is thus created by the individual himself/herself.

Each person can be described at a given moment by the challenges they experience and the skills they feel at the time, and the multitude of everyday challenges and skills determines the average level of strength in coping with the challenges and the abilities that affect them. This varies for each person and can be considered a kind of basic point. If the challenge is not high enough and the skill level is low, the individual begins to feel bad. Although relaxation is still a refreshing feeling for a while, the further reduction of challenges makes you listless and then apathetic. Another negative deviation from the baseline is if challenges are not accompanied by skill levels. This can lead to anxiety and the development of specific worry or fear.

If a person experiences all this as a result of an effort to resolve a challenging conflict situation that requires the involvement of skills outside the comfort zone, he/she will strengthen his/her assertive behaviour beyond his/her sense of flow and ability to apply consensus-seeking conflict management techniques.

10 For more details see Szondy, 2006, pp. 15–34.

11 For more details see: Csemáné Váradi, 2014, pp. 67–90.

12 Csíkszentmihályi, 2001.

Bibliography

- APA (American Psychiatric Association) (2016) *DSM-5 diagnosztikai klasszifikációs rendszer*. Budapest: Oriold és társai.
- Bagdy, E. (2011) 'Új irányok a pszichológiában: az egészségvédő megbocsátás és a poszttraumás növekedés' in Bagdy, E., Koltai, M., Pál, F., Popper, P. (eds.) *A belénk égett múlt: Elengedés, megbocsátás, újrakezdés*. Budapest: Kulcslyuk Kiadó, pp. 49–102.
- Csemáné Váradi, E. (2014) 'A megértéstől a megbocsátásig', *Studia Iurisprudentiae Doctorandorum Miskolciensium*, Tom. XV/1, pp. 67–90.
- Csíkszentmihályi, M. (2001) *Flow – Az áramlat*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Forgács, A. (2017) *Fejezetek a kommunikáció szociálpszichológiájából – (1.4.4.4. Maslow szükségletpiramisa és az elmélet kritikája)*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Kerekes, Zs. (2012) *A szorongás mint adaptív viselkedés – A szorongásérzékenység mérésének tapasztalatai különböző csoportoknál*. PhD Thesis. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem.
- Szabó, E. (2018) 'A poszttraumás stressz tünetei (PTSD) és kezelése', *Házipatika*, 27 May [Online]. Available at: https://www.hazipatika.com/betegsegek_a_z/poszttraumas_stressz_ptsd (Accessed: 10 March 2025).
- Szondy, M. (2004b) 'A szubjektív jólét és a törekvések kapcsolata késő serdülőkorban', *Alkalmazott pszichológia*, 6(4), pp. 53–72.
- Szondy, M. (2006) 'A megbocsátás pszichológiája: kialakulása, hatásai és fejlesztése', *Mentálhigiéné és Pszichoszomatika*, 7(1), pp. 15–34.
- Szondy, M. (2007) 'A megbocsátásra való hajlam kapcsolata a szociodemográfiai jellemzőkkel az optimizmussal és a boldogsággal', *Pszichológia*, 27(3), pp. 221–239.
- Tezcan, U.T., Aydemir, S., Genc, E. (2017) 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in 21st Century: The Examination of Vocational Differences – Chapter 23' in Arapgirlioglu, H., Atik, A., Elliott, R., Turgeon, E. (eds.) *Researches on Science and Art in 21st Century Turkey*. Ankara: Gece Kitapligi, pp. 211–227.