ABSTRACT
This paper focused on the consequential implications of the violence and harassments employees faced within the home front with a view to emphasizing the need for workplace policies to manage domestic violence. Firms may usually strive to make employees comfortable at work in order to bring out the best of their work behaviors so as to meet or even surpass industry standards and boost firms’ chances in competitiveness. However, the discomforts employees experience outside the workplace are brought into the workplace which may adversely affect their work behaviors and jeopardize all firms’ efforts at achieving success. It is apparent that employees would prefer to manage in silence their private concerns and firms themselves seem averse to interfering in the private lives of their employees. Nevertheless, this paper contributes to unique dimensions of the study discourse on occupational health and safety management as well as corporate philanthropy. The reliance on the Centeredness Theory and the Theory of Collective Empathy to underscore the need for firms to be interested in the distress experienced by employees within and outside the workplace made this possible. This Paper suggested open communication and social
orientation, amongst others, as strategic workplace solutions to the menace of domestic violence from which specific workplace policies could be drawn.

**Keywords:** Culture, Gender, Health, Management, Nigeria, Safety.

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Victims of domestic violence who work for corporate entities would preferably leave their domestic issues at home. In spite of anyone’s best intentions, domestic issues do not remain at home. Employees’ domestic experiences are many and varied which are more often than not brought into the job context in workplaces in varying degrees. Domestic issues have crept into and do affect workplaces and concerted attempts have been made to address home-work issues in the past (Ugwuzor, 2019). Suffice it to say that none of those issues has been as apparently overwhelming as domestic violence. Domestic violence has been defined as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit, irrespective of biological or legal family ties, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence as the victim (Council of Europe convention, 2011). The impact of domestic violence on the world of work has been globally recognized (ILO, 2019; Pillinger, Schmidt and Wintour, 2016). Domestic abuse, especially on female employees in Nigeria, is a criminal matter under assault in the Criminal Code in which the victims can bring a civil action under the tort of assault (Oni-Ojo, Adeniji, Osibanjo & Heirsmac (2014) In spite of the foregoing, domestic violence is still being treated as a private family affair without recourse to any spillover consequences in the workplace. There seems to be a vicious cycle of the reasons for the level of levity in which cases of domestic violence are treated. On one angle the victims are reluctant to report the cases because they feel whoever they report to will not take the case seriously. On the other hand the authorities being reported to take the case as acceptable norms and minor private matter not worth taking seriously. In firms, managers may be unsure about how to address domestic abuse or reluctant to get involved in something they believe to be an employee’s personal problem. When workers experience domestic violence at home, within an intimate relationship by an intimate partner, impacts are felt in the workplace with victims being bothered in some way by their abuser while at work (Wathen, MacGregor & MacQuarrie, 2015). Domestic violence can be perpetrated by and on any gender and victims could also be of any gender. However, reports show that women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than men. (Eze-Anaba, 2007; Kwanga, Enefu, Ikyernum, Ali & Makyur, 2021). Victims may tend to want to act smart and compartmentalize dimensions of their home–work lives. In spite of this and apart from obvious physical signs in forms of bruises, fractures, cuts and so on, the victims also exhibit signs that depict emotional and psychological destabilization.

The need for financial security and the maintenance of desirable standard of living, amongst others, are lofty reasons for persons to take-up paid employment or go into private business ownership. Being in paid employment, for example, gives victims more opportunities and capacity to manage violent relationships. However, victims of domestic violence, especially the female victims, tend to be more likely to be late to and absent from work, perform dismally as evidenced by poor work outcomes and tardiness, due to anxiety, tiredness, stress...
and so on that will attract more reprimands and other disciplinary issues that will culminate to increase in voluntary and involuntary turnover intentions. All of these situations will further deplete the financial status and ability of victims to surmount the challenging situation. The impact of domestic violence on workers’ physical and mental health is devastating. It could be expressed as emotional and psychological distress, suicide attempts and, in its worst case scenario, resulting in loss of life. In Nigeria, the statistical data on workers who are experiencing domestic violence are shady with the Naira value of the impact in workplaces more under-assumed than eventual actual quantification. Also, deliberate health care and social assistance and workplace policies to cover victims of domestic violence seem non-existent in public and private firms in Nigeria. This situation is perhaps because domestic violence in workplaces in Nigeria is one of the usually talked-about issues in hushed tones. The victims would rather not want to ‘expose private issues’ and the workplaces themselves are so inundated by other challenges that such supposedly private matters are relegated to oblivion. However, the impacts of domestic violence are engraved in the minds of the victims who in trying to go about their normal work lives exhibit some abnormally dismal work outcomes.

Violence and harassment are a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm and includes gender-based violence and harassment ILO (2019). This work contributes to the growing discourse on the implications of domestic violence in workplaces and aims at highlighting the travails of victims of domestic violence and harassment while encouraging more victims to speak-up. Also the workplace implications of domestic violence and harassment are emphasized to trigger the decision direction of firms to urgently enact proactive workplace policies and practices to address its impact in workplaces in Nigeria.

VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT MANAGEMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW

Employees have to be healthy to do proper work but domestic violence increases the health risk of employees and undermines their health status. Terms such as intimate partner violence, domestic abuse and family violence have been used interchangeably with the term domestic violence. Even though each term has its unique meaning, domestic violence will more appropriately fit as a broad term which comprises the other terms. Intimate partner violence is the physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse while family violence refers to child maltreatment, sibling violence, intimate partner violence and elder abuse (Aborisade, 2021; Adebowale, 2018; Akangbe, 2020). In this work domestic violence refers to any form of hurtful or discomforting behavior perpetrated by a current or former partner or spouse. It as a pattern of abusive behaviors, endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment as well as stalking to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner by one partner in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, or cohabitation (Ogunmosunle, 2012). Domestic violence in its physical, emotional and psychological contexts constitutes torture of women, an attack on their integrity and a grand design to undermine their humanity (Bazza, 2010). Intimate partner violence against women has been recognized as a public health problem with far-reaching consequences for the physical, reproductive, and mental health of women (Benebo, Schumann & Vaezghasemi, 2018). Livingston, Delavier and Banaben
(2021) opined that intimate partner violence affects virtually every aspect of a victim’s life, including their work life and that organizations should be empathetic and attempt to prevent the occurrence of such violence.

The World Health Organization defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1946). Thus, apart from employees’ physical health, firms must be concerned about the emotional and mental health as well as the general wellbeing of their employees who are regarded as their assets for success. This work relied on the Centeredness Theory (Bloch-Jorgensen, Cilione, Yeung & Gatt, 2018) which proposes a health paradigm that focuses on wellbeing at a systems-level across the core life domains of an individual. The core life domains include the self, the family unit, relationships, community and work. Employee wellbeing has been identified to be of beneficial effects on the firm’s performance, growth and profitability, in both absolute and relative terms (Krishantha, 2018). Seligman, 2012 conceptualized wellbeing to include a number of elements such as Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning as well as Accomplishment. All of these elements will culminate into enabling persons get the most out of life. Domestic violence destabilizes employees in several life domains and for an employee to be stable and in the right state of mind to work efficiently, the five life domains as specified by the Centeredness Theory must be adequately covered. This theory thus becomes very apt.

Victims of domestic violence go through a lot of physical, emotional, psychological and even financial imbalances and will need various dimensions of support to do productive work. Such victims may not find succor and support anywhere else but the workplace. Gberevbie, Osibanjo, Adeniji, and Oludayo (2014) noted that perceived female expected performance is a function of emotional stability, psychological status and total physical and mental energy. Domestic violence de-optimizes all of these variables. This work also drew from the theory of collective empathy (Muller, Pfarrer & Little, 2014) to emphasize the need for work organizations to provide employees going through such trying times with adequate support. The theory of collective empathy integrates arguments from affective events theory, intergroup emotions theory, and affect infusion theory to develop a framework in which organization members' collective empathy in response to the needs of unknown others infuses executives' decisions. Workplaces already feel inundated by the myriads of provisions and assistance they give to their employees at work. However, the theory of collective empathy makes firms responsive to such matters, as domestic violence that may technically not be their direct primary obligations. Also, using this corporate philanthropy platform, the workplace could be a veritable avenue to address social behavioral norms. By this stance employers can become proactive to such workplace challenges and contribute to positive societal change. This theory has serious implications for redefinitions of corporate philanthropy and its nuances within organizations as well as for organizations role in society.

**Workplace Solutions to Domestic Violence**

Violence, as a human behavior, is an ill-disposed act that causes physical injury as well as emotional and psychological harm to another. The International Labour Organization defines violence and harassment as behaviors, practices or threats that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm and has recognized and emphasized that domestic violence and harassment have tremendous impact in workplaces.
and thus adopted the Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 (ILO, 2019). Convention No. 190 requires Member Nations to recognize the effects of domestic violence and to take measures to minimize its impact in the world of work. The convention noted that domestic violence can affect employment, productivity as well as health and safety, and that governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations as well as labour market institutions can help, as part of other measures, to recognize, respond to and mitigate the impacts of domestic violence.

In this regard, Recommendation No. 206, Article 10(f) of the Convention includes leave for victims of domestic violence; flexible work arrangements and protection for victims of domestic violence; temporary protection against dismissal for victims of domestic violence, as appropriate, except on grounds unrelated to domestic violence and its consequences; the inclusion of domestic violence in workplace risk assessments; a referral system to public mitigation measures for domestic violence, where they exist; awareness-raising about the effects of domestic violence. Countries that ratify the recommendations of the Convention undertake to adopt its measures set out. Quite unfortunately as at date Nigeria is yet to ratify the said recommendations. The following are suggested strategic workplace solutions to the menace of domestic violence from which specific workplace policies could be drawn.

**Open Communication and social orientation**

Open channels of communication should be made available as report avenues in workplaces so that victims of domestic violence could feel free to report the cases without shame or fear. Although domestic violence is increasingly being recognized as a typology of workplace violence, the level of openness in the reporting and handling of such matters in the workplace is not without a taint of dauntlessness and embarrassment. Victims of domestic violence often have a sense of shame and the open discussion of such an issue that is sometimes regarded a social stigma, could seem embarrassing. They may also fear the perpetrators reaction if such matters are reported to third parties. A workplace culture that encourages open communication will make it easier for employees to report such issues at work. Domestic violence issues should be treated with dispatch as timely reporting and interventions are encouraged to mitigate the degeneration of the situation.

A general orientation of the knowledge and awareness of the workplace implications of domestic violence should be made available to all employees. The reporting channels and support service providers should be clearly stated. Chances are that firms’ employees could be perpetrators of domestic violence unbeknown to the perpetrators themselves. Firms could help employees remodel their hitherto domestic violent behaviors by exposing the characteristic features of the perpetrators and the workplace implications. Having perpetrators as employees also have cost implications for firms as such employees could have issues similar to the victims such as lateness to work, lack of concentration on tasks, absenteeism due to arrests and time off to attend issues of law enforcement, involuntary turnover due to such aforementioned workplace violations and possible incarceration. The orientation programme could make perpetrators desist from such behaviors.

**Corporate Support**

Firms could assist their employees by providing counseling or other corporate support where necessary. Firms can support their employees if they have adequate knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence. The managers and immediate supervisors are not professional
counselors but could be trained and their capacity built to have knowledge enough to recognize the signs of victims of domestic violence and appropriately counsel victims within the workplace. All employees should also be made to be aware of the tell-tale signs of victims of domestic violence so that coworkers who suspect the occurrence domestic violence are encouraged to report to the appropriate workplace authorities for further action. It should be noted that managers and supervisors could be victims themselves thus the need for firms to make provision for professional counselors to handle such matters for everyone.

If viewed as a social challenge, a unique dimension of corporate philanthropy could be conceptualized through firms’ resolved fight against the social menace. Although the scope of this work addresses the issues concerning the victims of domestic violence and the workplace implications for victims’, colleagues and the work organization as a whole, firms could also make provisions to cover the rehabilitation of the perpetrator as part of her corporate philanthropy stance.

Policies should make options such as short leave, flexible work arrangements, relocation opportunities to other firms outlets and so on. Domestic violence is an ill wind that blows nobody good. Firm should encourage employee prosocial and workplace citizenship behaviors, where coworkers help one another in nonobligatory ways. Colleagues of victims of domestic violence could also be scotched in the heat wave of violence while at work. They may have to increase their workload or change work schedule to cover up for victims of domestic violence. This could sometimes create conflict and tension between victims and their colleagues.

Domestic violence would not have been a workplace issue if it had remained at home. However, many employers seem completely unprepared to address the workplace implications. Victims of domestic violence usually have negatively skewed work performance outcomes. These may be owing to distractions and lack of concentration, physical injury, ill health, tiredness, anxiety, depression, stress and exhaustion. Domestic violence victims usually require paid days- and time- offs as well as other flexible timings to attend health care facilities, law enforcement, court sessions, resolve relocation or accommodation issues and so on.

SECURITY AND COLLABORATIONS

Victims of domestic violence may often use the workplace as place of safety, sanctuary and a means of temporarily getting out of the situation at home. However, the workplace may be endangered as the perpetrator knows where to attack the victim. This may also endanger the victims colleagues who may be caught up in the crossfire/ quagmire. Thus the need to beef-up security in the workplace by not allowing uninvited persons to come to the work premises securing parking lots and walk ways within a certain radius, blocking of harassing phone calls and emails, involving Federal law enforcement agencies and so on.

Domestic violence has economic as well as growth and developmental implications for individuals, firms and the nation. The man-hours lost, the economic waste due to diminishing productivity of individual victims as well as other extraneous effects of domestic violence has made firms and the nation collective victims of domestic violence. Nevertheless, change can begin with corporate entities. The Government, through the appropriate legislations, ought to spear head the initiative of the fight against domestic violence. However, as part of their corporate philanthropy stance, firms could in collaboration with government, religious and
traditional institutions sponsor anti-domestic violence and anger management campaigns in form of jingles in media, educational institutions to children and young persons as well as health care facilities.

Violence could be perpetrated as cultural induced violence or societal induced violence. In such situations cultural practices or societal norms tend to encourage brutality and battery at home. In Nigeria there is currently no federal law prohibiting domestic violence and despite the provisions of Sections 34 and 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended which guarantees respect for the dignity of one’s person and the fundamental right of every person against discrimination, respectively, persons still suffer from domestic violence and the discriminatory effects of certain provisions of the Criminal Code Act and Penal Code. Section 353 of the Criminal Code Act Cap. C38 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (2004) regards assault on a man as a felony and punishable with three years imprisonment while Section 360 of the same Act regards assault on a woman as a misdemeanor and punishable with two years imprisonment. Legal respite sought hinged on these provisions are discriminatory and unconstitutional. Section 55(1) (d) of the Penal Code of Northern Nigeria on the correction of Wife states that nothing is an offence which does not amount to the infliction of grievous hurt upon any persons which is done by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife, such husband and wife being subject to any native law or custom in which such correction is recognized as lawful. Section 241 of the Penal Code defines grievous hurt as emasculation; permanent deprivation of the sight of an eye, of the hearing of an ear or the power of speech; deprivation of any member or joint; destruction or permanent impairing of the powers of any member or joint; permanent disfigurement of the head or face; fracture or dislocation of a bone or tooth; any hurt which endangers life or which causes the sufferer to be during the space of twenty days in severe bodily pain or unable to follow his ordinary pursuits. Also, in parts of Nigeria and Africa, where patriarchal norms are prevalent, there are some cultural norms and laws that grant men the right to correct or discipline their wives and control their behavior. There is also the ideological position that wife beating is seen as sign and demonstration of a man’s love for his wife (Odimegwu,2001; Onwe, Odio, & Eze ,2019; Tenkorang, Yeboah, & Owusu,2013). Legislative and executive directives to develop model policies and promote best practices particularly in the public sector. Nevertheless, employers have been slow to respond with policies that would protect workers. Governments should take proactive steps at stemming the tide of such issues as domestic violence. Attempts aimed at prevention of such acts by legislation, assisting/rehabilitating perpetrators in behavioural change and the protection and support of victims, if need be should be made.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence often walks into workplaces unannounced and jeopardizes the health, safety and wellbeing of employees, their colleagues and the workplace as a whole. It has become a momentous social, economic and psychological concern without border that transcends all spheres of life and pervasive in the Nigerian society with an increasing preponderance. The implications of its workplace impact should be of concern to firms and could be checked through workplace initiatives and collaboration with relevant societal influencing institutions as all hands will have to be on deck for the general orientation of the socio-cultural ecosystem on beliefs on domestic violence to be overhauled. From the
foregoing, it becomes imperative for workplaces to design and implement timely and proactively responsive corporate policies in workplace policies aimed at prevention, intervention and possible termination of the impact of domestic violence for the optimum health, safety and wellbeing of employees, the firms and society as a whole.

References


