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EDITORIAL

Abusive Behavior in the Workplace

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Abuse is any action that intentionally harms or injures another (Guha, 2007). An abusive behavior is a behavior that usually causes harm to someone or something regularly or repeatedly. For an abuse to happen there is therefore an 'abuser' and an 'abusee'. People can be abused in homes, schools, playgrounds, workplaces and many other places. So far as there are two objects occupying a space, one can abuse the other.

An abusive behavior can be in the form of physical, sexual, emotional, economic or financial, threats, intimidation, isolation, and denial, minimizing and blaming. Physically, one can be: burned with fire, iron, cigarettes, or oven; strangled; suffer from a weapon attack; choked; bit, pushed, punched, kicked, hit with an object, slapped or pinched. Similarly, you are sexually abused when: you are denied of having an abortion or forced into having one; you are pushed into prostitution without your consent or choice; your partner withholds affection for you; your partner stops you from using contraceptives; you are forced to put on a revealing attire or forced to wear a dress which covers the part of your body that you want to be revealed.

Additionally, the ways that one could be emotional abused include but not limited to: your partner continually accusing you of having an affair; your partner calling you names and humiliating you; having to endure criticism on your domestic skills; somebody belittling your gender status; an abuser telling you that nobody will take your abuse report seriously; and somebody undermining your confidence or making you to doubt yourself and your abilities. Subsequently, you can also be economically or financially abused when: a major financial decision is taken for you without your consent; somebody prevents you from securing a job; somebody denies you access to your own money and monitors your spending behaviour either you being aware of it or not; somebody harasses you by phone, email, social media handles, or in person.

Threats are also considered abusive behavior and it can be in the form of: you being threatened to commit suicide; written or verbal intimidations to kill or harm you, your pet, family, children or even a friend; written or verbal bullying geared towards influencing you to turn against others; threats carried out in a written or verbal form by an ex-lover to find you wherever you go; your partner threatening to leave you; and threats of violence sent via social media.

In terms of denial, minimizing and blaming, you can be abused when: your abuser denies the occurrence of the abuse totally or even partially; the magnitude of the abuse being belittled by the abuser; the abuser unapologetically insisting that the abuse was your fault and you deserve it; the abuser downplaying the abuse by insisting that the

Citation: Oppong Peprah E. Abusive Behavior in the Workplace. Social Behavior Research & Health (SBRH). 2020; 4(1): 436-439.

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[DOR: 20.1001.1.27832104.2020.4.1.7.4]

[DOI: 10.18502/sbrh.v4i1.2821]

abuse is your imagination; the abuser blaming you or somebody else for the abuse; and the abusing telling others that your injuries from the abuse due to your own clumsiness (Types of abusive behavior, 2020).

Abusive behavior in the workplace relates to physical harm, antagonistic nonverbal or verbal behaviors which are directed by an individual or group of persons towards another individual or group of persons, aimed at ensuring compliance (Adler, 1989). Hence behaviors such as harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence are all forms of workplace abuse which causes workers emotional or physical harm. A person's attitude about another is not only communicated through words but also through vocal qualities such as tone and other non-verbal channels such as facial expression, eye contact, and body posture (Adler & Elmhorst, 2018). Some examples of verbal and nonverbal abusive behaviors are yelling or screaming at a person for disagreeing, engaging in explosive flare-ups (e.g. temper tantrums), engaging in derogatory and offensive name-calling, giving the 'silent-treatment' to others, threatening others by intimidation and use of aggressive eye contact (glaring), and humiliating a person whiles in the company of others. On physical harm, examples include physical violence in the workplace such as being pushed, slapped, objects being thrown at a you, fears of physical harm and the like (Diaz & McMillin, 1991). In terms of the workplace, the three main forms of abuse which needs special attention are Physical, Sexual and Emotional abuse.

Physical abuse in the workplace is any unwelcomed or unsolicited physical contact which happens in a working environment. Physical abuse may result between employees, or between an employee and superior, or even between an employee and a client of the company. Whiles workers can be physically abused in any working setting, people in particular work forms are more probable and likely to be assaulted physically in the course of discharging their duties. Social service staff, workers in Law enforcement, providers of health care, and public service personnel (particularly those tasked with enforcement and inspection) as well as those in-charge of valuables and money are some of the employees who are at a higher risk of encountering physical abuse in their workplace. In spite of the nature of job, other working environment variables can also intensify the possibility of physical abuse even in seemingly harmless and nontoxic professions such as working in an isolated setting, working late night or early morning shifts, and working in crime-prone areas (Cornett, 2017). Typical, examples of physical abuses at the workplace include: items being thrown at you; being pushed, grabbed, kicked, pinched, slapped, or punched; intimidated by unreasonable demands; threatened unfairly with termination; asked to do things which makes you uncomfortable; frightened by a superior or client's behavior toward you; subject to angry outbursts; sworn at; and being deprived of food or sleep due to an assignment at work.

On the other hand sexual workplace abuse is undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another in a working environment, usually by a superior to a subordinate. This behavior is unwelcomed and could make the target feel frightened, shamed and scared. It can take the form of verbal, written or physical. Sexual assault is one of the most common causes of harm and even death among American women (McGregor et al., 2009). After sexual assault, the abused employee may experience fear, anxiety, depression, somatic symptoms, self-destructive behavior, headache, rape trauma syndrome, gynecologic complaints, sexually transmitted infections, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), increased alcohol or drug abuse, fibromyalgia, pregnancy, and irritable bowel syndrome (Luce, et al., 2010). This form of abuse is perhaps the most deadly in terms of long term effect both physically and emotionally. Whiles women are more likely to be sexually abused in the workplace than men, sexual harassment is prevalent with research in this area of study estimating that almost more than eight in

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ten women experience it in their working lifetimes (Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016). Examples of typical sexual abuses at the workplace include: compromised sexual relation with a superior to save your job; rape; being touched and grabbed (especially at private places); sexual jokes about you; promotion being tied to sexual favors; being made to wear revealing clothes; and being accused of having an affair in the workplace.

Similarly, Emotional workplace abuse can be in the form of a verbal assault, isolation, humiliation, making an adult feel like a child, intimidation, or any such conduct that can reduce one's sense of self-worth, dignity and identity. Individuals experience an abuse emotionally are inclined demonstrate changes in of their known personality traits and become withdrawn, develop a low self-esteem, become suicidal, anxious and depressed. Employee emotional abuse is usually a targeted, repetitive, and a negative communication form which is directed by an influential and powerful member or members at work at those who are not. Examples of emotional abuses in the workplace are: criticized for taking initiative; being denied of a pay increment without a reason; intelligently belittled; given a deliberate order to stay late at work; humiliated in front of others; not being credited for work done; being told you are not competent; being yelled at; jokes made at an your expense; blamed wrongly for misconduct; being told your feelings are not important; being told your ideas are unwanted; given the silent treatment; your abilities being persistently criticised; sarcastically being addressed; frowned at; tantrums being aimed at you; negative rumors being spread about you; being held liable for other's errors; and being accused of intentionally making a mistake.

Exposure to workplace abusive behaviors can have a number of negative effects on the abused. Some of the physical effects include illness, sleep disturbance, fatigue, headaches, high blood pressure, maiming or disfigurement, stress and burnout. Psychologically, the abused can suffer from low self-esteem, anxiousness, nervousness, job-related tension, feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness, and suicidal tendency. These depicted adverse outcomes can result in absenteeism, caring less about the firm and properties, regular intent to leave, voluntary turnover, bad representation to client and low productivity, which are all job-related effects (Keashly et al., 1994).

In order to identify an abusive behavior in the workplace, one needs to look out for certain cues. First of all, behaviors are abusive when they are unwelcomed and unsolicited. Also, behaviors are abusive when they result in harm or injury to the target and when the actor intends to harm the target. It should also be noted that abusive behaviors can be expressed verbally and nonverbal. Additionally, a behavior can be abusive when the behavior originator is in a more powerful position relative to the target and the target cannot respond but endure. Furthermore, behaviors are abusive when they violate a standard of appropriate conduct towards others and also when they are of a repeated nature or part of a pattern of behaviors which makes the receiver or target uncomfortable.

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