

Dehumanization in Workplace: Counselling Approach to Gender-Based Violence

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Abstract- This paper looks at dehumanization in workplace and the implication of counselling approach to gender based violence. Dehumanizing attitudes and behaviours frequently occur in workplace, this often led to devastating psychological, health, and economic consequences on employees and the organization. One of the benefits of workplace counselling is having a professional and an impartial person who is mindful of the context in which the employees work and have a crucial understanding of the environment to which the employees will be returning. Major activities of a counsellor are listening, supporting, empathizing, exploring client potentials, and empowering client to self-help. The paper concludes that negative interaction in the workplace will negatively impact on employees' productivity, whereas with availability of counselling services, employees' moral and potentiality will be fully utilized which will improve the organizational performance. To enhance trust in counselling service in workplace, counsellors need to diligently observe the code of ethics.

Index Terms- Dehumanization, Workplace, Counselling; Gender-Based Violence

I. INTRODUCTION

Workplace violence is the exercise of physical force by a person against a colleague, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker. Gender based violence, including workplace violence, is exceptionally dehumanizing, pervasive and oppressive representing a clear violation of basic human rights. Dehumanization can range from blatant and severe to subtle and relatively mild form. Such relatively mild dehumanizing behaviours can manifest themselves in the form of subtle disrespect, condescension, neglect, social ostracism and other relational slights, often evident in looks, gestures and tones of voices (Christoff, 2014)^[8]. Gender based violence sadly reflects and reinforces the wider inequalities between women and men. The various manifestations of gender based violence at work, such as sexual harassment, verbal or psychological abuse, intimidation, mobbing and bullying, and domestic violence impacting on the workplace can be prevented (UN, 2014)^[40].

The myth that human world is a 'men's world' is founded upon the practical reality of the complete over-riding and dominant influence of the male over the female gender in all facets of public life. Modern education together with the advancement in science and technology, which processes have accelerated in tandem especially in the last century, have

tremendously increased the skill acquisitions and enhanced the productive efficiencies and capabilities of women as much as men. Armed with these two, women have expanded their roles from procreation and social care giving within the family to major and significant contributions to development in all fields of human concern and endeavours. Yet in spite of their significant contributions in the modern society, women have continued to be regarded and treated as a second fiddle and unequal partners in the modern human development process. (Ochoga, 2015)^[34].

It could also be argued that the very notion of people as a human resource is in itself is dehumanizing (Colling & Terry, 2010)^[10]. There is a considerable irony in the fact that attempts to emphasize the significance of people in the workplace and the success, or otherwise, of organizations in itself is dehumanizing. This is partly the importance of creativity, a particularly important factor in these hi-tech days where so many routine jobs are being replaced by the use of technology. Also, there is no account of the importance of meaning in people's lives (Moss, 2009)^[31].

Gender based violence in the workplace is a means of unacceptably asserting power over another and cuts across race, class, sexual orientation, and economic status. Put simply, intimate partner violence and other forms of gender based violence and abuse endanger an organization's most important asset- its employees. The violence can follow victims and perpetrators, resulting in incidents of abuse or harassment in the workplace, or its effect can impact the workplace through decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, health and safety risk and increased healthcare costs for the employer (Expert Group Meeting, 2011)^[13]. Therefore, it is essential that violence be seen as a critical and preventable problem, and that it is given the attention given to many other workplace health and safety issues.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of dehumanization

Dehumanization is a system of orientation in a person's world by which people of other groups or categories are not perceived as human as oneself. This is a process by which members of a group of people assert the inferiority of another group through subtle or overt acts or statements and may be directed by an organization or may be the composite of individual sentiments and action. According to Baron and Richardson (1994)^[2] dehumanization occurs when an individual views another person in negative ways, which leads to the belief

that the other person is undeserving of the respect and kindness usually afforded to one self and another person. It is as if that individual is compared to being nonhuman (Haslam, Kashima, Loughnan, Shi & Suitner 2008).^[18] As such, dehumanization is a psychological process of making some people seem less than human or not worthy of human treatment, dehumanization therefore serves to morally exclude individuals from the norms of society.

There are three different ways in which people are dehumanized. Haslam, et al. (2008)^[18] points out that people can be compared to animals, in which uniquely human attributes are denied and the person is described as being coarse, uncultured, amoral, irrational, and childlike. Bandura (2002)^[1] adds that attributing demonic or bestial qualities to a person also makes them less than human. A second way in which people are dehumanized is by comparing a person to a machine (i.e., "mechanistic dehumanization"), in which human attributes are removed, and the person is perceived to be unfeeling, cold, passive, rigid, and lacking individuality (Haslam, et al., 2008)^[18]. By doing this, the person is denied of emotionality and desires (Haslam, et al., 2008)^[18]. Controlling or manipulative interpersonal relationships have been identified as one antecedent of mechanistic dehumanization (Moller & Deci, 2010)^[30].

The third way that a person can be dehumanized is by perceiving the other person as being the enemy. Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson and Mihic (2008)^[12] state that the enemy is constructed to exemplify manipulation and is described as being opportunistic, evil, immoral, and motivated by greed. The enemy is shown to take advantage of the weak, which in turn justifies any action taken against the enemy (Esses, et al., 2008)^[12]. These authors go on to describe the barbarian image, which includes the perceptions of a ruthless, crude, and unsophisticated individual that is willing to cheat to reach glory.

III. NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF EVERYDAY DEHUMANIZATION

There is overwhelming evidence for the wide-reaching negative consequences of relatively mild dehumanizing attitudes and behaviours. Dehumanizing others leads to increased anti-sociality towards them in the form of increased aggressive behaviours such as bullying (Obermann, 2011)^[33] and harassment (Rudman and Mescher, 2012)^[37], as well as hostile avoidance behaviours such as social rejection (Martinez, Mendoza-Denton & Hinshaw., 2011)^[23]. This increased hostility and aggression are accompanied by reduced moral worth attributed to those who are dehumanized (Haslam and Loughnan, 2014)^[19] and they are therefore judged less worthy of protection from harm (Bastian & Haslam, 2011)^[3]. The perpetrators of such interpersonal maltreatments themselves may experience negative emotions such as guilt and shame (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)^[5], which may lead to even stronger dehumanizing attitudes towards their targets in an attempt to downplay their suffering and justify their maltreatment. Such dehumanization in response to guilt has been demonstrated in intergroup contexts (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006)^[7]. A vicious cycle may emerge, whereby dehumanization promotes maltreatment and aggression, which further promotes dehumanization.

The negative consequences for those who are dehumanized are also striking. Everyday interpersonal maltreatments can leave its victims feeling degraded, invalidated, or demoralized. There is extensive research into the negative consequences of being denied autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000)^[38], betrayed (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro & Hannon, 2002)^[15], humiliated (Miller, 1993)^[29], socially excluded (Baumeister and Leary, 1995)^[41], Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Bartels, 2007)^[39], or not recognized as a person (Honneth, 1992)^[20] – all situations that are likely to be experienced as dehumanizing (Bastian & Haslam, 2011)^[3].

When people are mechanically dehumanized by being treated as objects, as means to an end, or as lacking the capacity for feeling, they tend to enter into "cognitive deconstructive" states that are characterized by reduced clarity of thought, emotional numbing, cognitive inflexibility, and an absence of meaningful thought (Bastian & Haslam, 2011)^[3]. Experience from this type of dehumanization leads to pervasive feelings of sadness and anger. Also dehumanizing are status-reducing interpersonal maltreatments such as condescension, degradation, or being treated as embarrassing, incompetent, unintelligent, or unsophisticated (Vohs, Baumeister & Chin., 2007)^[41], which lead to feelings of guilt and shame (Bastian & Haslam, 2011)^[3].

Such dehumanizing maltreatments are likely to have a detrimental effect on psychological wellbeing in workplace. According to self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000)^[38], psychological wellbeing requires that the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. Dehumanizing maltreatments, however subtle, lead to impaired ability to satisfy these needs and may therefore directly contribute to mental illness such as depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders which may lower workers' productivity.

IV. IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES AT WORK

Domestic abuse is the most prevalent form of gender-based violence. It typically occurs when a man beats his female partner. A 2005 study using data from a national telephone survey of 8,000 women about their experiencing physical intimate partner violence victimization reported an average of 7.2 days of work-related lost productivity and 33.9 days in productivity losses associated with household chores, child care, school, volunteer activities, and social/recreational activities (CIPD, 2013)^[9]. In this study, 98 percent had difficulty concentrating on work tasks; 96 percent reported that domestic abuse affected their ability to perform their job duties; 87 percent received harassing phone calls at work; 78 percent reported being late to work because of abuse; and 60 percent lost their jobs due to domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse not only impacts on the well-being of women, but also affects the financial strength and success of the companies for which they work. Seventy-five per cent of those experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work and it is often possible for perpetrators to use workplace resources such as phones, e-mail and other means to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partner. One in four women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. This means, it is likely that all workplaces will have staff that have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse as well as those who are perpetrators of abuse (Cipd, 2013)^[9].

Domestic abuse causes a significant loss of paid and unpaid work time, lost work productivity and safety hazards for employees. As a result, efforts by employers to prevent domestic violence can positively impact their bottom line. Domestic abuse negatively impacts the physical and mental health of victims and sometimes even leads to death. Another less known, but highly prevalent, effect of domestic violence is the inability of victims to fully participate in the workforce. Studies show that domestic violence causes victims to miss work, lose their jobs, and have difficulty performing on the job (Eze-Anaba, 2010)^[14].

Also, in the study of Gberegbe, Osibanjo, Adeniji, and Oludayo (2014)^[16] on "Gender Discrimination and Employee Performance, they reiterated that perceived female expected productive/performance is a function of variables such as emotional stability, psychological status and total physical/mental energy that when there is any form of violence against women, it is expected that there would be a shift in their emotional status, which tends to affect their productivity and overall performance.

Domestic abuse not only affects victims, but employers as well. Increased absenteeism, higher turnover, and poor performance result in lower productivity and higher costs for employers. Although domestic abuse usually occurs within the home, the effects of the violence spill over into the workplace in numerous ways. As a result, domestic violence has a considerable impact on victims, employers, and co-workers. The multiple connections between domestic abuse and work make the workplace an important and effective avenue for domestic violence intervention (WHO, 2013)^[45].

V. MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The victims and perpetrators of men's violence against women are in every workplace. One survey finds that two thirds of women victims of men's violence are in paid employment (McFerran 2011:5)^[27]. In turn, it is likely that many if not most of the men who perpetrate violence against women and girls are in paid employment. Whether it occurs outside or within the workplace, men's violence against women has a direct impact on women's and men's participation at work, and workplaces themselves may contribute to or tolerate violence against women. Men's violence against women has both direct and indirect impacts on work and employment. Domestic violence has significant negative consequences for women's physical and mental health, both short and long-term, and in turn these diminish their workforce productivity and participation (Murray and Powell 2008:3-5)^[32]; Women's Health Victoria 2012: 1-13)^[44]. Economic costs associated with victimization includes absenteeism, lost productivity related to use of sick leave, distraction and lack of concentration, underperformance, poor workplace relationships, access to employment support services and staff replacement.

Domestic abuse not only affects the well-being of women but also the financial strength and success of the organization where they work. Oni-Ojo, Adeniji, Osibanjo and Heirsmach (2015)^[35] reported that 75% of women experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work and often perpetrators use workplace resources like phones, e-mail to harass or threaten their partner. Domestic abuse will result into significant loss of paid and

unpaid work time, lost work productivity, safety hazards, negative on workplace interpersonal relationships and decreased concentration on job performance, difficulty in meeting basic needs of self and family and trauma from witnessing the violence.

VI. IMPACT OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

GBV seriously affects all aspects of women's health-physical, sexual and reproductive, mental and behavioural health. Health consequences of GBV can be both, immediate and acute as well as long lasting and chronic; indeed, negative health consequences may persist long after the violence has stopped. The more severe the level of violence, the greater the impact will be on women's health. Furthermore, exposure to more than one type of violence (e.g. physical and sexual) and/or multiple incidents of violence over time tends to lead to more severe health consequences (WHO 2002)^[43].

GBV can result in women's deaths. Fatal outcomes may be the immediate result of a woman being killed by the perpetrator, or in the long-term, as a consequence of other adverse health outcomes. For example, mental health problems resulting from trauma can lead to suicidality, or to conditions such as alcohol abuse or cardiovascular diseases that can in turn result in death. HIV infection as a result of sexual violence can cause AIDS and ultimately lead to death (WHO 2013)^[45].

The World Bank estimates that rape and domestic violence account for 5% of the healthy life years of life lost to women age 15 to 44 in developing countries. Every year lost due to premature death is counted as one disability-adjusted life year (DALY) and every year spent sick or incapacitated is counted as a fraction of DALY, depending on the severity of the disability. At the global level, the number of disability-adjusted life years (DALY) lost by women in this age group is estimated at 9,5 million years, comparable to other risk factors and diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV, cardiovascular diseases or cancer (World Bank 1993)^[42].

VII. THE CONCEPT OF COUNSELLING

Counselling is used in a variety of ways to support clients in solving their problems. It is a process through which a counsellor, who is professionally and well trained, assists a person in need to solve his problems. It is a helping relationship, in which the counsellor enters into a relationship with the counsellee mainly for the purpose of providing help to the latter on whatever issue that is at hand. Ipaye (1990)^[22] noted that it means helping the individual to sharpen his or her perception of the issues at hand with a view to facilitating his getting into grips with the issue. This relationship is characterized by an intimate interaction in which each person is sensitive to other. This relationship is necessary because one needs information, instruction, understanding and advice in solving the problems and issues at stake. This can be achieved through co-operative efforts involving communication and interaction.

Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client

in having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose (BACP, 2006a)^[6]. Acceptance and respect for the client are essentials for a counsellor and as the relationship develops, so also does trust between the counsellor and client. The counsellor may help the client to examine in detail the behaviour or situations which are proving difficult and to find an area where it would be possible to initiate some changes. The counsellor may help the client to look at the options open to them and help them to decide the best for them. Counselling therefore is not about giving advice, but about providing a non-judgmental, empathic and accessible means to allow an employee to find a way forward (Hughes, 2015)^[21].

VIII. COUNSELLING IN WORKPLACE

McLeod and Henderson (2003)^[26] define workplace counselling as the provision of brief psychological therapy for employees of an organization, which should be paid for by the employer. Workplace counselling offers the employer a service that is valued by employees, has the potential for savings by reducing sickness absence, takes pressure off managers through the availability of constructive means of dealing with difficult staff or situations, and contributes to its reputation as caring employer. To the employers, workplace counselling is viewed as an insurance policy against the threat of compensation claims made by employees exposed to work-related stress.

McLeod (2001)^[25] in a review of research into the outcomes of workplace counselling identified 34 studies, including controlled studies, naturalistic studies in which reliable pre-and post- counselling data were collected, and case studies. Employees presented for counselling have high levels of psychological symptoms. Those who received counselling were highly satisfied, and believed it had helped them resolve their problem. Clinically, significant improvement in levels of anxiety and depression was reported in 60-75% of clients. Counselling was associated with reduction in sickness absence and improvement in other organizational outcomes such as more positive work attitudes, fewer accidents and enhanced work performance.

Also, in a quantitative study, Millar (2002)^[28] interviewed police officers and support staff who had received counselling for work-related difficulties. Most of the participants reported that counselling had helped them to overcome the problem that had led to them seek help. More striking, though, was the finding that all of these informants described themselves as learning something new and useful about themselves as a result of counselling.

Counselling helps people identify issues, difficulties and problems caused by thoughts, feelings and emotions and encourages them to respond and make progress towards resolution. Whilst a little bit of stress provides workers with the motivation to increase productivity and efficiency, too much stress can be counterproductive (Martins, 2012)^[24]. Providing psychological therapy for stressed employees can have many beneficial effects. Counselling in the workplace can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, improve mental health, lower levels of sickness and increase job satisfaction and commitment. It provides an effective method of understanding

the pressure caused by occupational stress and offers a supportive remedy

Offering formal counselling sessions to stressed employees equally help them feel valued, and will enable the individual to identify the cause of their problems and issues. Counselling can help increase staff morale, boost confidence and self-esteem, improve productivity and efficiency and create a more relaxed working environment (Martins, 2012)^[24]. Counselling in the workplace can take place in person or by telephone, and provides a facilitating services. It opens up communication between staff and employers, and encourages frank discussion. Counselling also enables the worker to identify what can and cannot be changed, and to explore alternative solutions. Workplace counselling services are meant to deal with issues that occur within an organization such as conflict, stress-related absence, work-related trauma and harassment/bullying.

According to Hughes (2015)^[21], organizations sometimes think that the counselling provision they are paying for should only be used to address issues directly relating to the employee's work life. Employers should note that while work-related issues, including stress, overwork, bullying and difficult colleagues can also impact an employee's performance, personal issues can equally have a similar negative impact. He concluded that employees' access to a free, confidential, workplace counselling service can potentially be viewed as part of an employer's duty of care.

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender based violence has experienced by millions of women worldwide does not only affect their relationship in the homes and communities, but also places of work and largely their productivities in their various places of primary assignment. All negative interaction in the workplace therefore is likely to be experienced as dehumanization.

In order to address social stigma in workplace, there is need to sensitize staff on the need to support and encourage each other to seek counselling in times of distress and to make it private and confidential the counselling process. With the possibility of employee's improved well-being impacting performance positively, organizations in Nigeria should consider workplace counselling services as a tool to restore employees' morale and potentially to improve organizational performance. Observing confidentiality is thus the key in enhancing attendance to counselling services by workers in organization. The fact that the advancement and sophistication of the world in many angles have brought increased pressure and stress to many people, counselling in workplace should be put in the fore-front in both private and public settings to help people maintain the required mental health necessary to enhance workers' productivity.

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