

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE (WPV): THE PATTERN OF ABUSE AMONG NURSES.

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ABSTRACT

Background of the study: Workplace violence is a public health problem confronting many countries of the world with no particular professional group exempted and no race spared.

Aim: The study was aimed at assessing the pattern of workplace violence and severity of abuse against nurses working at a selected secondary health facility of Nigeria.

Material and methods: Descriptive research design was employed where a structured questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 200 nurses from which 150 were duly filled and returned.

Results: Findings of the study revealed that, all nurses working in the facility have experienced violence in their working place, majority of the respondents (46.6%) reported the experience of emotional violence while 33.1% experienced sexual violence in their working place and 20.3% reported that, they have experienced some form of physical abuse in the last 12 months. Violence was mild in 97.1% of cases and there were no cases of severe violence reported by the respondents.

Conclusion: It was concluded that, there was a high prevalence of workplace violence and emotional violence was the most prevalent of all forms of violence followed by sexual violence and both were mild in severity in majority of cases.

Keywords: *Violence, Workplace, Nurses, Pattern*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The World Health Organization (WHO), for its part, defines violence and harassment at work as “those incidents in which the person is subjected to abuse, threats or attacks in circumstances related to their work, including on the journey between home and work, with the implication that their safety, well-being or health is explicitly or implicitly threatened” .^[1]

Violence against women at workplace is real and it happens every day, in every profession group, in every corner of the world. It takes many different shapes as emotional, verbal and physical abuse to sexual assault and even murder ^[2]

One of the most common forms of violence at work is sexual harassment and what is worrying is that between 74% and 75% of women with vocational training or those who occupy senior leadership positions have experienced it at some time in their lives according to a study carried out in 2014 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). It adds that work environments and exposure to situations where there is a high risk of aggression are among the reasons for this, as well as the lack of awareness among professional women of what is considered sexual harassment and very few women still dare to tell or report cases of harassment, most of the time for fear of losing their jobs. According to the report, among the women who have experienced sexual violence since age 15, 32% mentioned that the perpetrator was either a co-worker, a supervisor or a client. However, just 4% reported this situation to their employer or a superior. ^[1]

While the WHO reported a global prevalence of workplace violence as 12%, in Nigeria, a study showed that 69.4% of health care professionals have experienced workplace violence and the highest prevalence was among nurses 59.2% ^[3]

Violence against nurses is complex and persistent occupational hazard facing the nursing profession as the job sector with the mission to care for people appears to be at the highest risk of workplace violence and all categories of healthcare workers are at risk of violence though at different degrees with the nurses having up to three times higher than others ^[4].

Workplace violence may adversely affect the personal and professional well-being of nurses as victims of workplace violence may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, impaired work performance and insomnia ^[45]. Workplace violence has also been found to influence nurses' turnover and turnover intentions ^[6]. Even though the fact the workplace violence against nurses has become a topical issue in the last couple of decades, there is paucity of research on the problem in Nigeria.

Violence against women at the workplace is a major problem, though the statistical evidence is not well developed for many countries of the world including Nigeria. This study aims at gaining insight into the pattern of violence nurses are facing at work in a Nigerian public health institution.

II.MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive research design was used and data was collected from a sample of 150 nurses working at General Hospital Katsina, Katsina State of Nigeria selected using proportionate sampling technique. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect data and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods.

III.RESULTS

		Frequency	Percentage
1	Age		
	20-24	25	16.7
	25-29	40	26.7
	30-34	23	15.3
	35-39	22	14.7
	40-44	10	6.7
	45-49	13	8.6
	50-54	14	9.3
	55-60	3	2
	Total	150	100
2	Gender	39	26
	Male	111	74
	Female	150	100
	Total		
3	Religion		
	Islam	125	83.3
	Christianity	25	16.7
	Total	150	100
4	Marital status		
	Married	106	70.7
	Single	44	29.3
	Total	150	100
5	Years of service		
	a 1-4	52	34.7
	b 5-10	24	16
	c 11-14	28	18.6
	d 15-19	13	8.7
	e 20-24	13	8.7
	f 25-30	12	8
	g 31-35	8	5.3
	Total	150	100

From Table 1, majority of the respondents were female (74%) and were within the range of 25-29 (26.7%), 83.3% were Muslims and 70% were married, 34.7% of the respondents worked for 1-4, 18.6% worked for 11-14 years and only 5.3% had a working experience of 31-35 years.

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Table 2: Frequency distribution of respondents based on pattern of violence.

S/N	Pattern of violence	Frequency	Percentage
1	Sexual violence	98	33.1
2	Emotional violence	138	46.6
3	Physical violence	60	20.3

As shown in Table 2, emotional violence was the most experienced form of WPV (92%), 65.3% of the respondents submitted the experience of some form of sexual violence at their working place while 40% reported the experience of physical violence.

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Table 3: Frequency distribution table showing the prevalence of WPV and the distribution of respondents based on degree of WPV experienced.

S/N	Degree of WPV	Frequency	Percentage
1	Mild	142	94.7
2	Moderate	8	5.3
3	Severe	0	0
	Total	150	100

As shown in Table 3, all the respondents have reported the experience of some form of WPV which was mild in 94.7% and moderate in 5.3% of the cases within the last 12 months of work in the hospital. There were no reported cases of severe violence.

IV.DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 2, emotional violence was the most experienced form of WPV (92%) however, another large proportion of the respondents (65.3%) submitted that they have experienced some form of sexual violence at their working place and although sexual violence was not the most common as found in this study which did not support the position of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights that identified the burden of sexual violence in workplace as between 74%^[7] and 75%^[1] though both were higher than the WHO's global average of 12% for all type of workplace violence. The findings are as well slightly higher than, although close to the 59.2% prevalence rate for sexual violence against nurses in workplace reported by another Nigerian study^[3]. Generally however, the findings were higher than those reported by previous Nigerian studies on prevalence of

WPV among healthcare providers such as the 86% ^[8], 88% ^[9] and the 54.4% ^[10] reported by various studies across the six geopolitical zones of the country.

Although all the respondents have reported the experience of some form of WPV with 92% being emotional, 65.3% sexual and 40% physical as shown in Table 2, 94.7% of the episodes were mild in degree of severity and moderate in 5.3% of the cases as depicted in Table 3.

V.CONCLUSION

It was concluded that, there was a high prevalence of workplace violence and emotional violence was the most prevalent of all forms of violence followed by sexual violence and both were mild in severity in majority of cases. This informs the need for workplace policies aimed at prevention of WPV, protection of healthcare provider against violence to yield a safe workplace environment for nurses in the hospital.

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