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The Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling

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Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling

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Dear authors, reviewers, and readers of Positive Psychology and counselling,
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Aims and Scope

The *Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling* publishes original research on all aspects of human psychology, including life and living, health and physical sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.

The Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling is a peer-reviewed journal that attracts well-researched empirical and theoretical articles on areas of positive and counselling psychology such as psychotherapies, emotions, motivation, holistic wellness, marriage and life satisfaction, subjective well-being, leisure, interpersonal relationship, mindfulness and optimal performance, love and infatuation, excellence, aesthetics, creativity, and giftedness. The focus also includes optimism, resiliency, wellness across the life span, religions, spirituality and well-being, human strengths, virtues, metacognition, and happiness.

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Title	Author	Page
<i>Innovations in Language Education Curriculum Implementation: Teachers' Responses to the Challenge of the Covid-19 Pandemic</i>	Clement Olusegun O. Kolawole Bolape O. Olaosebikan I.T. Akinsola	1
<i>Teachers' Awareness, Perception and Utilization of Learning Styles Indicator as Predictors of Students' Achievement in Basic Science in Oyo State, Nigeria</i>	Ukoh, Edidiong Enyeneokpon Ogundare S. Ifeoluwa	11
<i>Demographic Determinants of Retirement Adjustment of Retirees in Osun State</i>	Olatomide, Onijuni Olufemi	25
<i>Braille Reading and Digital Audio-Player on Achievement in English Language Comprehension among Students with Visual Impairment in Imo State, Nigeria</i>	M. S. Eniola Egwim Gertrude	36
<i>Correlates of Students' Performance in the French Language among Ekiti State Secondary Schools</i>	Bamidele, Emmanuel Olasupo Babalola, Atinuke Titilope	50
<i>Perception of Stakeholders on Single-Type Uniform Practice in Osun State Secondary Schools and its Implication for Counselling</i>	Olukayode Olufunke Cecilia Olubukola Olukunbi Ojo	59
<i>Identities, Values and Academic Dishonesty among Secondary School Students: Implications for Educational Administration</i>	Orekelewa Olukayode Charles Okoye Joy Ijeoma	66
<i>Gender Stereotyping and Its Implication on Nigerian Female Students' Achievements in Science Subjects</i>	Oliweh Ifeanyi Solomon, Konyeme Josephine	79
<i>Sources of HIV and AIDS Information among In-School Boys and Girls in Oyo State, Nigeria: Implication for Research Intervention</i>	Olugbenga Elegbe Adeyinka Laninhun	87
<i>Effect of Stress Inoculation Therapy and Buffering Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Emotional Stress of Mid-Marriage of Bereaved Spouses</i>	Foluke Oyenike Ayansiji Victor Fehintola Umar I. Talatu	100
<i>Effective and Healthy Parenting in Mitigating Childhood trauma</i>	Odewale Bimpe Janet	109

<i>Perceived Utilization Of Social Studies Education For Social Engineering Among Secondary School Students In Ondo State</i>	Ogunfunmilakin Ifedayo Bright	119
<i>Personality Traits and Gender Determining Attitudes Of Public Secondary School Students Towards ICT Use Post-Covid -19</i>	Obisesan Oluwunmi Abolanle Monsuru Sodeeq Timilehin Mobolaji Fashola Faith Oluwabamise, Obisesan	128
<i>Effects of Two Instructional Strategies on Meaningful Learning of Solar Energy among Secondary Schools Students</i>	Edidiong Enyeneokpon Ukoh	136
<i>Environmental Health and Hygiene Practices of Makoko Residents in Lagos Metropolitan City</i>	Aaron Akinloye and Rasheed	148
<i>Understanding Roles Of Self-Efficacy And Emotional Intelligence In Mitigating Occupational Stress And School Principals</i>	Iyanda, Victoria Folake Adebayo David Oluwole	161
<i>Teacher's Goal Orientation and Gender as Determinants of Secondary School Students' Learning Outcomes in Organic Chemistry in Osun State, Nigeria</i>	Idika Mabel Ihuoma Ogundijo, Asisat Pelumi	175
<i>Impact of Substance Abuse on Socio-Adjustment of Secondary School Adolescents: Implications for Counselling Interventions</i>	Oketola Anthony Adewale Olawoyin Alimat Aderoju	183
<i>Influence of Personnel Management Functions of Principals On Secondary School Teacher Self-Efficacy in South-East Nigeria</i>	Ntamere Ifeoma Anastina	190
<i>Multi-Aetiological Factors Influencing HIV Risky Sexual Behaviours Among Market Women In The Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria</i>	Bosede Odunayo Adebayo-Oke Ojuolape Mumud Olabode Miriam MoboladeAdesokan	200
<i>Predictive role of burnout in life satisfaction and quality of life: An empirical guide for psychological health education</i>	Mojisola S. Ajayi	214
<i>Predictive influence of Locus of Control and Academic Motivation on Social Adjustment among Secondary School Students with Visual Impairment in Oyo State, Nigeria</i>	Salako Adebayo A	226

<i>Humour as a Mediating factor among Social Interaction, Well-being and Job Performance among Bank Employees</i>	Adewole Abiodun. A	235
<i>Social Media, Parental Sexual Communication, Self-Efficacy and Peer Influence as Predictors of Sexual Behaviour among In-school Adolescents in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State</i>	Abdulfatai Adekunle Owodunni	245
<i>Home Support Variables Affecting The Well-Being Of Children With Cerebral Palsy In Selected Children's Homes In Oyo State, Nigeria</i>	Mojoyinola, J.K. Afolabi, A. Adeoti, A.B	256
<i>Evaluation of Knowledge of Spiritual Nursing Care among Nephrology Nurses of Two Tertiary Hospitals In Nigeria</i>	Ashaju-Kayode Oluwatosin Christianah Afolayan Joel Adeleke	269
<i>Resilience and Associated Factors in Men with Prostate Cancer</i>	Elizabeth Akin-Odanye Motolani Ogunsanya Suleiman Lawal Faozyat Sulaiman Chidiebere Ogo	283
<i>Influence of Mobile Phone Technologies on the Instructional Process in Junior Secondary Schools In Federal Capital Territory, Abuja</i>	Odeniyi Olujinmi Adebayo Yahaya Shuaibu	297
<i>Exploring Practices of Spiritual Nursing Care and Its Challenges In Selected Renal Centres In South West, Nigeria</i>	Ashaju-Kayode Oluwatosin Christianah Afolayan Joel Adeleke	306
<i>Counselling Beyond Walls: Understanding Professional Practice In The Covid-19 Era</i>	Adeyemi Shade Vivian	320
<i>Instructional Strategies, Quality of textbooks and Environmental Awareness as Predictors of STM Knowledge and Skills</i>	Modupe M. Osokoya Adegboyega Tadese	329
<i>Integrating Information and Communication Technology in Open and Distance Learning Delivery at the Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan, Nigeria</i>	Muibi, T. G.	348
<i>Domestic and Family Violence: Intervention through Social Work Practice</i>	Omokhabi, Abiola Adiat	359

Domestic and Family Violence: Intervention through Social Work Practice

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Abstract

There is Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, as it includes threats or acts of physical or sexual assault, stalking, harassment, or psychological/emotional abuse. Women cannot practice their right to self-determination when subjected to DFV, which impacts many areas of their lives and choices. DFV has been raised to national attention by social workers by identifying risky behaviours, and increasing and strengthening protective factors through public awareness, programmes design, and delivery. Social workers can apply this public health approach through community education, practice, and programme administration. Based on this, the paper examined social work practice interventions in assisting both in preventing and managing DFV. The field has been involved in addressing domestic violence for many decades particularly in developed countries with little emphasis in Nigeria which the country can adopt apart from laws enacted to curb and manage the incidence. It recommended that Ministry of Social Welfare and Woman Affairs concerned with welfare of women and girl child should work together with social workers/social welfare officers at both public and private sectors to make wider sensitization projects to all areas through electronic and print media. Social workers can advocate for better domestic violence policies and services to ensure more awareness of violence against women and its consequences and through partnership with other organisations, such as faith-based organisations, schools, hospitals, businesses, law enforcement, criminal justice, and the military.

Keywords: Domestic and Family Violence, Intervention, Social Work Practice, Women

Introduction

One of the most prevalent problems social workers encounter is Domestic and Family violence (DFV). Social workers are adept at interacting with the entire family and can connect the experiences of each family member, including the victim, the offender, and the children. As a result, social workers are crucial in addressing the needs of those affected by DFV. Understanding the operation, accessibility, and efficacy of specialized DFV services has long been a focus of social work scholarship. When it comes to societal response to DFV, social work is at the forefront. DFV occurs within a family or kinship relationship or between intimate partners. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2019), there are numerous negative effects caused by DFV, and victims and their families must seek support to cope. In fact, according to the WHO (2018), around one in three women globally are victims of intimate partner abuse alone. A social worker's primary responsibility is to help and improve the wellbeing of people in order for them to prosper psychologically, socially, and emotionally (Spitzer, Twikirize & Wairire, 2014). In the wake of DFV, social workers offer preventative and responsive interventions to those affected. They serve as a constant support by defending the interests of the families and communities. They provide as an ongoing source of assistance for the impacted family and are frequently the first person in the community to be contacted in cases of possible family violence.

Based on the foregoing, the study examined social work practice and its role in managing and preventing DFV.

Concept of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV):

The term violence against women is defined by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVW) as any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Sano, Sedziafa, Vercillo, Antabe & Luginaah, 2018). Most (85%) of violent acts against women worldwide are committed by husbands or other intimate partners. The World Health Organization (WHO) claims that gender-based violence is a key factor in domestic violence, particularly violence against intimate partners (Sano, Sedziafa, Vercillo, Antabe & Luginaah, 2018). DFV, often known as domestic abuse or family violence is any form of abuse or violence in a marital or cohabiting relationship.

DFV, which can occur in relationships between partners, is frequently used as a synonym for intimate partner violence committed by one of the people in an intimate relationship against the other. In its broadest definition, domestic violence also includes acts of aggression directed toward young people, elderly people, or parents (Woodlock, 2017). A major misuse of power in a familial, trust, or dependency connection is DFV. People who are particularly susceptible to abuse due to their gender, age, handicap, or dependency have their fundamental rights violated. It is also described as a major social and criminal issue that can leave victims dead or disabled. In addition to death, physical or sexual assault, other harmful behaviours such as abuse, lack of resources, exploitation, and neglect may be involved. From another perspective, the term DFV comes from a family member who abuses a female member of his family by means of physical or psychological abuse (Yta, Umukoro, & Ekpe, 2020). Literature has argued that physical violence results from other abusive behaviour, including threats, intimidation, isolation, manipulation, and other restrictions on victim self-determination. (Council of Europe, 2015). As outlined in WHO (2016), emotional abuse includes minimizing, threats, isolation, public humiliation, unrelenting criticism, constant devaluation of the individual, coercive control, repeated stonewalling, and gas lighting.

A Nigerian Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 as cited by Ngozi, Iyioha, and Durojaye, (2018) defines domestic violence as the following, any act, omission, commission, or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in the event those acts occur. The act of causing physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or economic abuse or causing trends to do so. It includes causing injury or endangering the aggrieved person's health, safety, life, limb, or well-being; or has the effect of endangering the aggrieved person or anyone connected to her by any of the behaviour indicated in clauses (a) or (b); or (d) otherwise causes physical or mental injury to the aggrieved person.

Types of Domestic and Family Violence

Different types of DFV can happen, and a victim may experience more than one form of violence. It may also occur only once or repeatedly and take any of the numerous forms listed below throughout the entire world:

- **Physical abuse** is one of the most common types of abuse, partly because it is the most overt kind of violence against women (Ogunkorode, 2018). According

to Ishola (2016), using physical force to hurt or put the victim at risk of hurting someone is physical abuse.

- **Economic/Financial Abuse:** Withholding financial assistance and exerting strong control over the family's financial resources, such as money and transportation, are examples of economic abuse (Slabbert & Green, 2014). It includes depriving partner of financial support, exercising strict control over the partner money, demanding that the partner account for every amount of money a person gives the partner to spend, stealing from the partner, keeping the partner from working while withholding essentials like food, clothing, medicine and so on.
- **Psychological /Emotional Abuse:** is the use of language and nonverbal cues to psychologically or emotionally injure another person or to exert control over them (Breiding, Basile, Smith, Black, & Mahendra, 2015). Calub (2015) categorizes them into two categories: Verbal abuse (a). An individual is repeatedly humiliated and denigrated in both public and private settings. It involves yelling, screaming, slurs, name-calling, sarcasm, and making fun of her because of her ethnicity or religious views (Jura, & Bukaliya, 2015; Isirat & Abdul, 2016) and neglect or social abuse. Any behaviours that suggest a woman is less than others due of her gender or socioeconomic class (for example restricting what she does, who she sees and talks to, treating her like a servant, creating a scene in public), or that isolates and alienates her from her friends and family (Calub 2015).
- **Sexual abuse:** refers to all types of sexual assault, exploitation, and harassment fall under the category of sexual abuse. It entails coercing a person into sexual action by an intimate or non-intimate partner, with or without their voluntary agreement (Oluremi,2015,) (Kingdom & Udoh 2018,). Sexual abuse happens in a married or close relationship when a guy thinks he has authority over a woman's body and engages in sex whenever he wants, sometimes without her consent. Occasionally, if she rejects, her life is at danger. This is regarded as marital rape (Slabbert & Green, 2014; Ishola, 2016).

DFV can have devastating effects on women and children. It is also linked to a wide range of additional detrimental health effects. These include a variety of chronic illnesses that affect the heart, digestive system, reproductive system, muscles and bones, and nervous system(Niolon, Kearns, Dills, Rambo, Irving, Armstead, & Gilbert,2017).Women, more likely that they will experience depression, anxiety, substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder (Cody, Jones, Woodward, Simmons & Gayle Beck, 2017: Simmons, Knight & Menard, 2018), and decreased confidence in parenting skills (missing emotional support and inadequate responses to the children's needs (Pels, van Rooij & Distelbrink ,2015). DFV can harm children in both the short-and long-term, resulting in anxiety, depression, and psychosocial issues (Franchek-Roa, Tiwari, Lewis-O'Connor & Campbell ,2017).

Family and Domestic Violence in Nigeria and laws

According to reports from the Nigerian National Population Commission (NPC/Nigeria and ICF) (2014), women are 19% exposed to emotional DFV by their current spouse or partner, 14% by their physical partner, and 5% by their sexual partner. There has been a prevalence of psychological/emotional violence ranging from 31 to 61% in Nigeria, sexual violence ranging from 20 to 31%, and physical violence ranging from 7-31% (Mapayi, Makanjuola, Mosaku, Adewuya, Afolabi, Aloba, & Akinsulore, 2013). Additionally, DFV prevalence varies from 42% in the North (Tanimu, Yohanna

& Omeiza ,2016) to 29% in the South West (Okenwa, Lawoko & Jansson ,2009) and 78.8% in the South East (Okemgbo, Omideyi & Odimegwu ,2002); to 41% in the South South (Dienye, Gbeneol & Itimi 2014)

In Nigeria to offer a legal framework for protection against domestic abuse; however, there have been some attempts in a number of jurisdictions. However, these regulations generally fall short in offering comprehensive remedies, such as providing victims with quick and secure housing, ensuring continuous policy execution, monetary security, and public awareness. These laws consist of: The violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015: This law is solely effective in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja. However other States, including Anambra, Bauchi, Enugu, Kaduna, and Oyo, have also enacted it; only Lagos State is subject to the Protection Against Domestic Violence Law (Chapter (18), Section 1(h), Lagos Law to Provide Protection Against Domestic Violence and for Connected Purposes, 2007. (Nigeria); The Gender-Based Violence Act of Ekiti State and Fourth, the 2007 Ebonyi State Protection Against Domestic Violence and Domestic abuse and the mistreatment of widows are prohibited by the Cross River Domestic Violence and Maltreatment of Widows' Prohibition Law, which was passed in 2014. Nine states in Nigeria are the only ones that have adopted this so far: Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Bayelsa, Edo, Cross River, Rivers and Anambra.

Social Work Intervention on Domestic and Family Violence; Lessons for Nigeria

In Nigeria, as in other nations, social work is a practice-based career and an academic field that supports societal growth, cohesion, and individual empowerment. The fundamental tenets of social work are respect for diversity, human rights, communal responsibility, and social justice. Social work employs experts and structures to solve life difficulties and improve the wellbeing of people, groups, and communities. Social work theories, social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge support this. The practice of social work as an applied science is founded on the use of fundamental sciences to address social issues. Theoretically and practically, social work is implemented in conjunction with other scientific disciplines such as pedagogy, sociology, psychology, law, ethics, and philosophy. A social worker is a graduate of social work schools or programmes who works in the social welfare sector or who applies his or her training and social work expertise in related and unrelated fields, such as domestic violence using various tools or intervention. Interventions can be thought of as technically accepted procedures and guidelines that social workers use in circumstances involving individuals, such as female victims of domestic abuse (Ebue, Uche & Agwu, 2017). Interventions also involve applying professional skills and approaches during policy, planning, and development (Lone, 2016).

Since people are subjected to stereotypes, prejudice, and oppression, social workers must empower clients in general and members of oppressed groups in particular, according to Kirst-Ashman (2017). Therefore, whether on a global, regional, national, or local scale, the social worker has a crucial role in addressing domestic violence through various interventions. Crisis intervention, counseling, victim safety and protection, psychotherapy, psychoeducation, advocacy, networking, and community education are just a few possible interventions (Kam, 2014). Social workers can address domestic violence by taking an advocacy stance and attempting to change laws, structures, and other places of authority in order to reduce domestic violence (Mosley, 2013). In order to combat domestic violence, social workers commit to empowerment strategies that incorporate human, social, and economic development, which can be either direct or indirect (Lombard, Kemp, Viljoen-Toet, & Boozyzen, 2012). The social worker also offers counseling to domestic violence victims, which includes support and

direction as well as helping them resolve interpersonal conflicts or deal with changes at various stages of life (Kirst-Ashman, 2017). Working with people, families, and communities to address challenges of a psychosocial nature, such as domestic abuse, falls under the purview of this role. Information sharing on topics related to domestic abuse is part of the educator's duty (Patel, 2016).

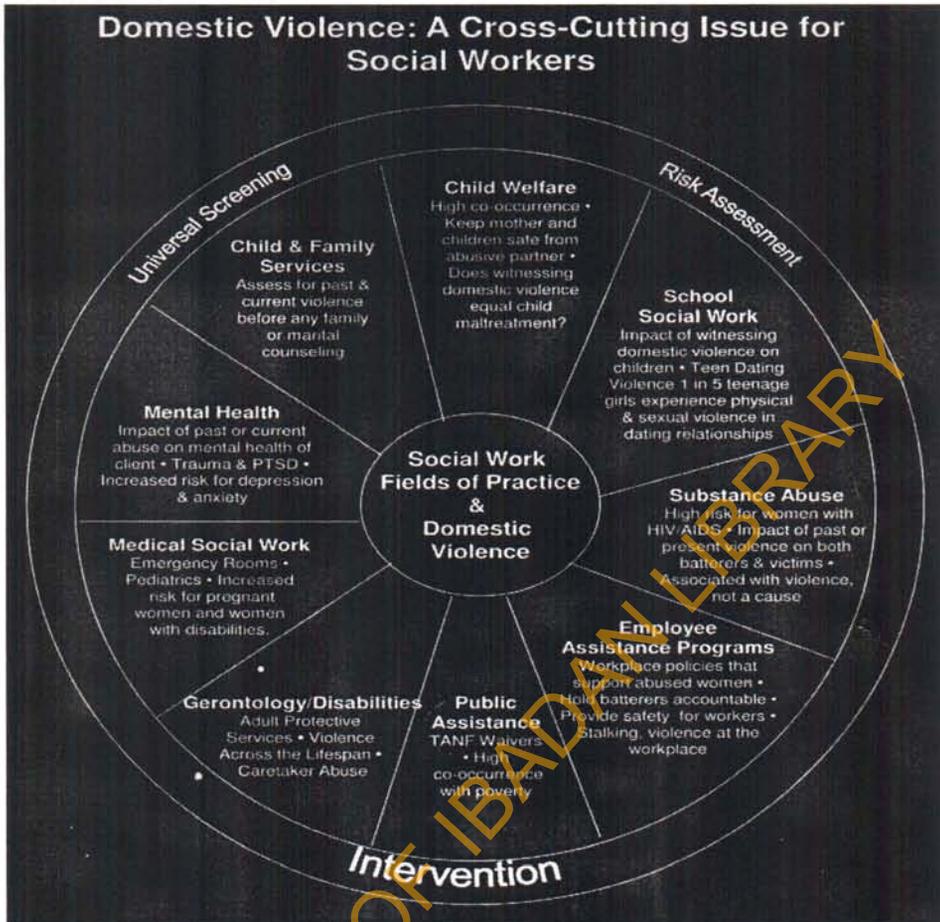
Social workers are responsible for informing the public about domestic violence concerns to raise awareness and encourage people to oppose the oppressive and exploitative power systems that support domestic violence. Additionally, social workers can aid in developing social wellness and expanding education on the effects of domestic abuse (Lombard et al., 2012). In an effort to address domestic violence and bring about long-lasting social change, social workers are frequently involved in educating people about resources and helping them develop skills like budgeting, effective communication, and violence prevention. They also facilitate workshops, awareness forums, and training (Engelbrecht, 2014).

According to the literature, social work has been crucial, particularly in the form of specialized DFV services (Mandara, Wendt, McLaren, Jones, Dunk-West & Seymour, 2021). The spectrum of complicated and interconnected challenges faced by persons affected by DFV are explicitly addressed by specialized DFV support services. DFV specialists typically provide specialized services to victims of DFV, including support services to help protect women and prevent further violence. To access a secure living environment and leave the offender, these services include interim housing (Murray, Bullen, Theobald, & Watson, 2022), as well as financial assistance to help victims build the financial capacity and budgeting skills necessary to start living independently (valentine & Breckenridge, 2016 cited in Ablaza, Kuskoff, Perales, & Parsell, 2022). In addition, they provide counsel, advocacy, and representation for women to ensure that there is equal access to the court system (Stubbs & Wangmann, 2017), as well as counseling services to help victims process their trauma and receive mental health support (Spangaro, 2017). Social workers are essential to these responses because they can refer clients to other experts and act as interventionists alongside other professionals (Spratt, Swords & Hanlon, 2022).

The Family and Child Protective Assistance Units of the Social Welfare Department offer various services for those who are various victims of domestic abuse in many different countries. The Units may be contacted directly by the victims or through referrals sources. Additionally, the Units offer outreach services and can provide housing, legal counsel, and psychiatric help as needed. On referral from physicians or the police, medical social workers will also handle domestic abuse cases at special outpatient clinics and public hospitals (Yeung, Chowdhury, Malpass & Feder, 2012). The delivery of support and intervention services for women who are victims or survivors of family violence depends heavily on social workers. The goal of social workers is to ensure that everyone in society has an opportunity to live without fear and violence. In addition to managing and designing programmes, social work practitioners plan for individuals and groups, offer counseling, crisis intervention, consult, coordinate, and manage cases, develop communities, create policies, conduct research, evaluate, and advocate for change. Social work assessment covers the complete spectrum of social and psychological needs, strengths, and stresses, ranging from targeted and brief specific-needs analysis to comprehensive psychosocial and risk assessments. Women safety, recovery, health, and wellbeing can be improved through these evaluations and focused interventions.

According to Australian Association of Social Workers (2019), the range of social work practice in family violence when dealing with women includes:

- Working on public awareness and social policy strategies at the policy level include; the promotion of respectful relationships for children, adolescents, and their families in schools, sports and community clubs, and family support services; routine health screenings during pregnancy and childbirth; research and academia to better understand and raise awareness of the complexities of family violence; development, research, and early intervention. Assessments include examinations of clients' complete biopsychosocial environments, including those of their families, partners, caregivers, and significant others; a risk assessment for intimate partner violence as well as child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and exploitation.
- Emergency interventions include: crisis and risk assessments; safety planning and risk management; telephone crisis counselling and support; after-hours assistance - telephone or in person; access to safe housing and emergency resources, advocacy and support in liaising with police and child protection authorities; as well as information about pertinent services and safety options.
- Group work, therapy, and counseling include psychoeducation, exposure therapy, and trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy. In accordance with feminist theory, there are models for social response and safe and together, mental health interventions, career attachment therapy, and grief, loss, and bereavement support through co-mentoring,
- The case management and service coordination process involves assisting clients with navigating the complex service system, providing information about pertinent services and safety planning options, referring clients to other resources, and providing assistance with accessing the appropriate information and financial aid. It also includes legal information, assistance with getting legal services and attending court, and the provision of long-term affordable and safe housing.
- Activist advocacy and social change: through submission and direct action, advocating for change at the organisational, policy, and structural levels; empowering clients to be their own advocates or speaking up for them; Department of Immigration and Border Protection; Magistrates, and Family Court; assisting other professionals with secondary consultations, professional development, and training in relation to family violence. Advocacy and support during court procedures.
- Assisting policy bodies to create social policy; promoting the rights of victims and survivors; conducting research, producing articles for peer-reviewed journals, and giving talks at conferences and workshops.



Source : Danis, F. (2003). *Social work response to domestic violence: Encouraging news from a new look. Affilia, 28(2), 177-191*

Social workers are employed by various institutions and roles to prevent, intervene early, deal with crises, and provide long-term support. Social work with family violence victims/survivors can take place in any setting while practice takes place in various settings and fields such as: aged care, pregnancy and postpartum care, child's protection services, community health centres, community legal centers, and correctional facilities. In addition to crisis accommodation and refuges, there are also disability services, drug and alcohol treatment, family support services, family violence services, homelessness services, and hospitals. Youth-oriented services, such as schools and other organisations that work with them.; services for sexual assault; organisations that work with women's health; and support services for women. Magistrate's Courts, Family Courts and other court services; services related to mental health.

Among other things, social workers' responsibilities in combating DFV include: identifying danger, giving survivors counseling and support, assisting victims in getting justice, safeguarding the protection of victims and children, intervening with offenders, supplying evidence for judicial processes, offering education and advocacy, and giving policy and programming guidance. Social workers provide assistance, support, and advocacy on behalf of women who have experienced familial violence and their children. Social workers make a special and valuable contribution by providing appropriate and targeted services to meet the whole of life needs of victims and survivors because of their focus on holistic support, understanding of family violence

as a gendered issue, and capacity to consider the complexity involved from multiple perspectives. This multifaceted approach considers human functioning and behaviour and the interaction and impact of socioeconomic and legal issues on the abuse, discrimination, oppression, marginalization, and social exclusion that women encounter. Social workers use structural, feminist, human rights-based, and strengths-based perspectives when assessing, planning, and intervening with clients. It is common for social workers to collaborate with colleagues from other disciplines when they are involved in interventions within complex social, psychological, familial, and institutional dynamics. In this regard, social workers can effectively advocate for clients' rights while educating and assisting other professionals in making decisions relating to the nuances and complexity of family violence.

Above all, social workers strive to minimize the harmful effects of DFV on both an individual and structural level. Social workers can use a variety of techniques to support victims of DFV, such as the following:

- Group work of victims of DFV can provide them with an opportunity for socialisation. Regardless, the facilitator must ensure that none of the group's members dominate it, and that participation is not hindered. (Rogers, Whitaker, Edmondson & Peach, 2020).
- The use of strengths-based techniques can help people recognize their resilience when they find themselves in stressful situations and learn how to move on from them (Cooper, 2020). Courtroom abilities can bridge the theoretical and practical gaps in domestic abuse law (Whitaker, 2020).
- Self-awareness can aid service recipients and social workers in handling conflict in cases of DFV, when tensions increase, staying focused, being straightforward and direct, and being aware of one's own sentiments and beliefs can be helpful (Edmondson & Ashworth, 2020). Domestic abuse causes a great deal of harm. Therefore, principles of cross-cultural practice, inter-agency cooperation, and the establishment of an adequate political and legal environment must reflect best practices in social work (Edmondson & Ashworth, 2020).

Conclusion

DFV is a problem that can be avoided. There are direct costs associated with violence against women on a personal, family, community, and social level. Violence against women has negative effects on people, communities, and society. Social workers purpose is to ensure that every woman has the right to live free from violence and fear, and they provide therapeutic and supportive services to women who have been abused at home. As a result, social workers are essential collaborators in tackling the global and national emergency of family violence and violence against women in Nigeria and worldwide.

Recommendations

It recommended among others that:

- ❖ Ministry of Social Welfare and Woman Affairs concerned with welfare of women and girl child should work together with social workers/social welfare officers at both public and private sectors in order to make wider sensitization projects to all areas through electronic and print media to ensure more awareness of violence against women and its consequences
- ❖ Social workers/social welfare officers through their associations can advocate for domestic violence services and policies by working in coalition with other groups such as clergy, school, hospital, business, police, and criminal justice.

- ❖ There is need for enhancing the caliber and frequency of training and education as it's an important idea to enable social workers to respond to victims' of DFV requirements and preferences promptly.
- ❖ Schools of social work are responsible for preparing their graduates with basic professional competencies, so domestic violence content must be integrated into the required foundation courses, and practicum opportunities should be provided for battered women.

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